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Alina T. Hudak  
County Manager's Office



# MEDICAL EXAMINER DEPARTMENT Business Plan

**Fiscal Years: 2010 and 2011**  
(10/1/09 through 9/30/11)

Plan Date: January 26, 2010

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce A. Hyma, M.D.", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce A. Hyma, M.D.  
Department Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alina T. Hudak", written over a horizontal line.

Alina T. Hudak  
Assistant County Manager

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT PURPOSE/MISSION</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>INTERNAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>3 to 5 YEAR OUTLOOK</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Attachment 1</b>	
<b>DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE</b>	
<b>Table of Organization</b>	
<b>Financial Summary</b>	
<b>Capital Budget Summary</b>	
<b>Business Environment</b>	
<b>Attachment 2</b>	
<b>BUSINESS PLAN REPORT</b>	

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Medical Examiner Department exists to provide statutorily mandated medicolegal death investigative services for the residents of Miami-Dade County. The work of the department focuses on what is generally termed "forensic pathology." This field of work combines the efforts of legal and law enforcement investigations with those of medicine and science to ascertain the facts surrounding deaths, particularly the cause and manner of death, as defined in Florida Statute, Chapter 406. This mandate translates into a workload of investigating approximately 11,000 deaths annually. Forensic medical and toxicological consultation services, education, and research further define the department's mission. Apart from our core mission, the department directs the County's Public Interment Program (PIP) and serves as the project manager for contractual Driving Under the Influence (DUI) laboratory services.

The Public Interment Program provides low-cost disposition for abandoned, unclaimed human remains and for deceased members of indigent families. The DUI Laboratory services are contracted locally as required by the State Attorney and the County's 30-plus police agencies for enforcement of DUI laws. This contract requires department supervision of off-site forensic human performance drug testing of DUI offenders, toxicological interpretation and court testimony.

The department interrelates with many local, state and federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), State Attorney's and Public Defender's Offices, Life Alliance Organ Procurement, University of Miami Bone and Tissue Bank, Florida Lions Eye Bank, law enforcement departments, medical offices and hospitals, funeral homes, and the media. The Medical Examiner Department currently has sixty-nine (69) employees (including two (2) part-time employees) in its various bureaus, which include: administration, business office, computer services, pathology, toxicology, records, morgue, photography, investigations, training and public interment.

This business plan focuses on the current challenges the department is experiencing just to fulfill our core mission. Limited resources and significant recent budget reductions in the face of steady, relentless workload demands places the department in a precarious position of not fulfilling our statutory requirements.

### **DEPARTMENT PURPOSE/MISSION**

The mission of the Medical Examiner Department is to provide accurate, timely, dignified, compassionate and professional death investigative services for the citizens of Miami-Dade County, together with education, consultation and research for local and national medical, legal, academic and law enforcement communities.

Additional departmental information can be found in the Departmental Profile (Attachment 1).

## Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

Department Name:

Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11

### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- I. The Department's mission aligns with the following Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan Goals:
  1. Effectively provide the necessary and appropriate technology, buildings, equipment and people for delivery of quality services now and in the future (PS1)
  2. Improve the quality of service delivery through commitment to ongoing employee training (PS3)
  3. Capitalize on technology to improve service, increase efficiency and provide greater information access and exchange (ES4)
  
- II. Department-related Strategic Plan Outcomes, Departmental Objectives, and Programs & Initiatives:
  - 1.1 Public Safety facilities and resources built and maintained to meet needs (priority outcome) (PS1-1)
    - Renovate laboratory (GOB) and purchase specialized equipment including liquid chromatograph/mass spectrometers (Capital Outlay Reserve Fund)
    - Attempt to maintain and facilitate coordination of unidentified decedents and missing persons; and, review and process the county's unidentified decedents through the Federal DNA initiative
    - Attempt to replace 34 aging digital cameras
  - 1.2 Reduced response time (priority outcome) (PS1-2)
    - Attempt to maintain timely evidence collection and investigative services, completion of autopsy protocols, toxicological analysis and body disposition approvals
    - Attempt to maintain Forensic Evidence Removal Team (FERT) response time to under 60 minutes.
    - Review and process the county's unidentified decedents through the Federal DNA Initiative
    - Provide quality, relevant and professional training programs
    - Maintain death scene investigative services by certified medicolegal death investigators
  - 2.1 Professional and ethical public safety staff: minimal occurrence of public safety corruption incidents (PS3-1)
    - Support and maintain required professional certification for appropriate staff
    - Renew accreditation with Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

### ***Strategic Alignment (cont.)***

- Train qualified pathologists (4) annually in the ACGME-accredited Forensic Pathology Fellowship program. This program provides service delivery to the department and is a consistent, reliable source for quality medical examiners.
- Mentor young toxicologists through a tiered organizational structure within the department's toxicology laboratory.
- Train qualified dentists through the contractual services of the department's forensic odontologist.

#### **3.1 County processes improved through information technology (priority outcome) (ES4-6)**

- Continue development of a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), and maintain VertiQ® Medical Examiner database software, in order to provide efficient access of toxicology data to law enforcement, criminal justice and legal communities
- Attempt to upgrade VertiQ® Medical Examiner database software, a web-enabled, 24-hour Medical Examiner information access for law enforcement, criminal justice and legal communities

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS**

For ease of reference, specific information regarding departmental objectives and performance measures including the targets for FY 2009-10 and FY 2010-11 can be found in Attachment 2 – Business Plan Report.

## **CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS**

The continued success of the department is directly dependent upon factors that support our core mission. It is imperative to maintain funding to support proper staffing to meet our legal obligations and professional standards per Florida Statute, Chapter 406, the State Administrative Code 11G, the Florida Medical Examiners Practice Guidelines and the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). Restoration of recent personnel reductions, including one pathologist, one forensic technician, two evidence recovery technicians, one forensic investigator, one forensic photographer, and one forensic records technician is a primary success factor. Upgrading laboratory, photographic and morgue instruments and equipment, and computer hardware is mission-critical. Maintaining service contracts on sophisticated, electronic laboratory instruments is responsible laboratory management. Continued medical education and training of department staff is required to maintain professional licensure and certification. Fiscal support of the department's information technology infrastructure is critical to our daily and long-range success. Our long-range success will also be achieved by maintaining department accreditation by NAME, the American Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and acquiring accreditation by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT).

In order to maintain quality service delivery, the department must receive administrative and fiscal support for keeping our core mission clean and focused. Fluctuating costs of the DUI Laboratory services and the PIP services cannot impact the department's operating budget; at

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

the same time, the department will strive to obtain the most cost-effective solutions for these services.

### **INTERNAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS**

1. Maintain staffing levels to successfully deliver service excellence and fulfill legal requirements of Florida Statute, Chapter 406 and State Administrative Code 11G.
2. Continue implementation of data backup capabilities and off-site data warehousing (Acquire additional hardware to provide off-site backup of existing and increasing amounts of data and to protect mission-critical department functions and maintain continuity of operations)
3. Maintain functional physical plant (GSA)
4. Acquire sufficient C.O.R.F. dollars to upgrade laboratory instruments, photographic equipment, computer hardware and other mission-critical capital items (Continue upgrades to stay current with mission-critical technology)
5. Utilize efficient, cost-effective, flexible planning and design and remodeling services (supports objective to develop and implement detailed project plan to remodel and upgrade the toxicology laboratory to be funded through the GOB program).
6. Retain high quality employees (applies across department).
7. Attempt to restore funding for required professional certification of medical staff.
8. Update department fee schedule.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

1. The department will strive for 100% commitment to recycling department paper, glass, and metallic products.

### **3 to 5 YEAR OUTLOOK**

The top priority of the department is to restore personnel and operating funding sources to the proper service levels. As a state Medical Examiner Commission mandate, the department will complete the review and processing of all county unidentified decedents through the Federal DNA Initiative and maintain current data in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs.gov). Disaster and mass casualty preparedness will be a continuing challenge in light of our current staffing levels. As time and our limited budget permits, the department desires to accomplish the following in the next three to five years:

1. Implement digital X-ray imaging
2. Replace studio photography lights in Receiving bay
3. Achieve toxicology laboratory accreditation by ABFT
4. Develop, implement and integrate a billing module into the existing case management software (CME)
5. Integrate forensic evidence collection team with county-wide death scene investigative services by certified medicolegal death investigators
6. Host the Florida Association of Medical Examiners (FAME) Annual Meeting in the next five years

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

7. Implement a multi-year plan to convert all existing Medical Examiner case files into a state certified, digital database
8. Become a web host for statewide Medical Examiner data management

*Attachment 1*

**DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE**

**Department Description**

The Medical Examiner Department, which has existed for more than 50 years, provides statutorily mandated medicolegal death investigative services for the citizens of Miami-Dade County. The work of the department focuses on what is generally termed "forensic pathology." This field of work combines the efforts of legal and law enforcement investigations with those of medicine and science to ascertain the facts surrounding deaths, particularly the cause and manner of death, as defined in Florida Statute, Chapter 406. Forensic medical and toxicological consultation services, education, and research further define the department's mission. Apart from our core mission, the department directs the County's Public Interment Program and serves as the project manager for contractual DUI (Driving Under the Influence) laboratory services.

Pursuant to Florida Statute, Chapter 406, the department annually investigates approximately 11,000 deaths. Approximately 3,200 bodies are transported to the department for proper certification and investigation. Of this number, approximately 2,400 bodies have an autopsy as part of the investigation process. The department is prepared to serve Miami-Dade County residents in the event of disasters resulting in mass casualties and is recognized throughout the United States as a leader in the field of forensic pathology.

The Toxicology Laboratory performs over 40,000 analyses annually and, in addition to Miami-Dade County, serves other Florida Medical Examiner districts and law enforcement agencies in the Caribbean.

The Medical Examiner Department currently has various bureaus, structured by the following organizational outline (see Table of Organization, page 9).

1. Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
  - a. Administration
  - b. Business Office
  - c. Computer Services
2. Death Investigation
  - a. Pathology
  - b. Toxicology
  - c. Morgue
  - d. Photography
  - e. Investigations
  - f. Evidence Collection
  - g. Training
  - h. Records
3. Public Interment Program
4. Special Services

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook****Department Name:****Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11*****Departmental Profile (cont.)***

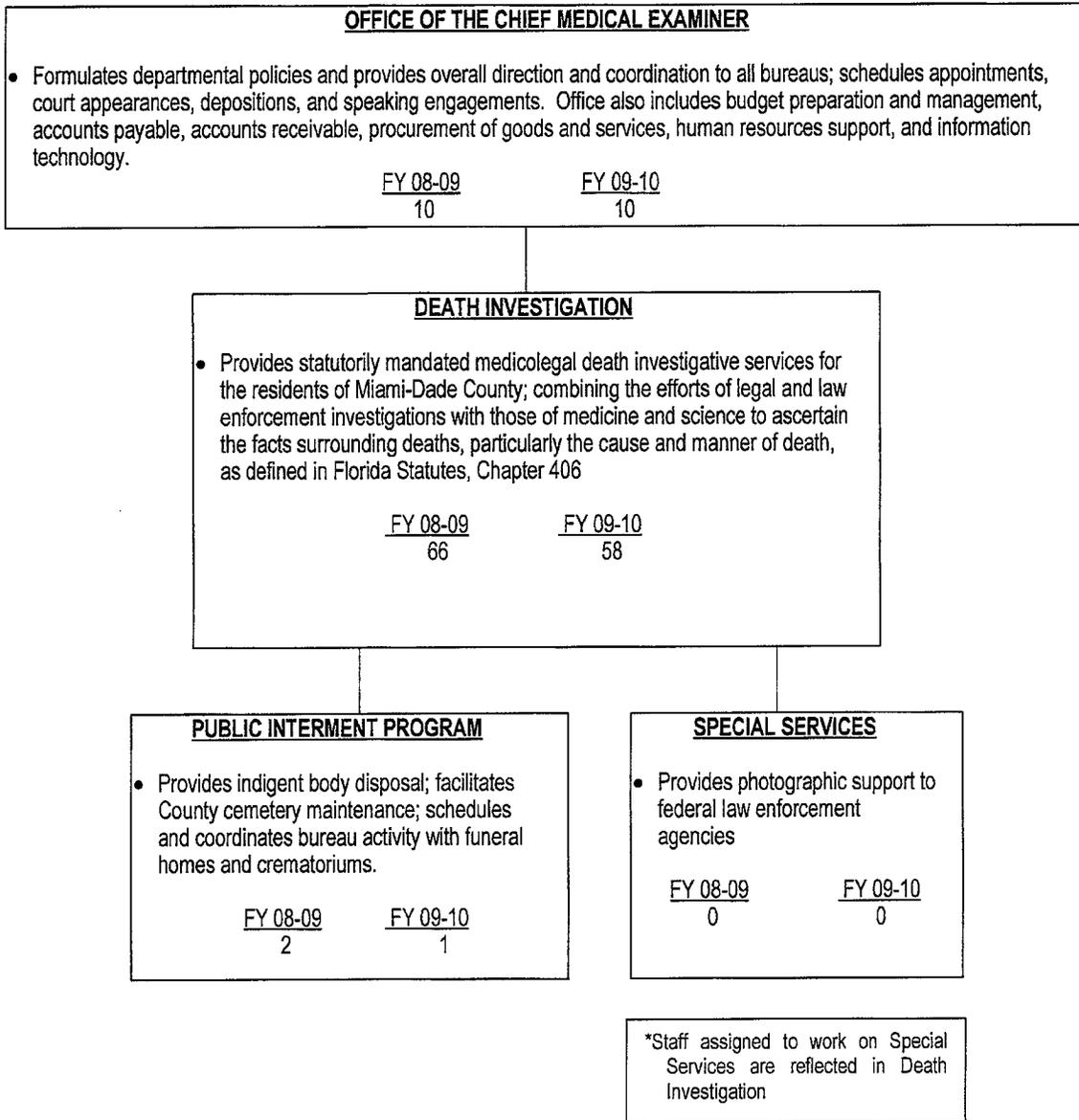
The most significant initiatives to be achieved in the current and next fiscal year continue to be the completion of the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), upgrading VertiQ® Medical Examiner database software to provide 24-hour, web-enabled access for law enforcement, criminal justice and the legal communities, review and process the county's unidentified decedents through the Federal DNA Initiative and complete toxicology laboratory renovations under the current General Obligation Bond (GOB). In addition, the department will work to acquire mission-critical instruments and equipment in Toxicology, Forensic Imaging, and Morgue bureaus, strengthen network connectivity, enhance data backup capabilities and off-site data warehousing, upgrade personnel timekeeping technology and digital xray. The current economic climate has challenged the department by limitations in human and capital resources. Vital to the department's success is the continued support for the department's evidence collection team, support for certification and training of medicolegal investigators, attraction and retention of quality employees, and the acquisition of sufficient Capital Outlay Reserve Fund (CORF) dollars and procurement of other applicable grant funding.

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

**Table of Organization**



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

(dollars in thousands)	Actual FY 07-08	Budget FY 08-09	Adopted FY 09-10	Total Funding Budget FY 08-09	Adopted FY 09-10	Total Positions Budget FY 08-09	Adopted FY 09-10	
<b>Revenue Summary</b>				<b>Expenditure By Program</b>				
General Fund Countywide	7,550	10,179	8,854					
Interest Earnings	2	0	0					
Other Revenues	190	94	89					
Photographic Sales	21	12	12					
Special Service Fees	63	55	55					
Toxicology Testing	70	68	68					
Carryover	780	234	257					
Cremation Approval Fees	293	300	300					
Forensic Imaging	48	6	6					
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>9,017</b>	<b>10,948</b>	<b>9,641</b>					
<b>Operating Expenditures Summary</b>				<b>Strategic Area: Public Safety</b>				
Salary	4,935	6,297	5,290	Administration	1,550	867	10	10
Fringe Benefits	2,102	2,297	2,128	Death Investigation	8,739	8,104	66	59
Other Operating	1,491	2,290	2,201	Public Interment Program	425	413	2	1
Capital	66	64	22	Special Services	234	257	0	0
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>8,594</b>	<b>10,948</b>	<b>9,641</b>	<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>10,948</b>	<b>9,641</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>70</b>

**CAPITAL BUDGET SUMMARY**

(dollars in thousands)	PRIOR	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FUTURE	TOTAL
<b>Revenue</b>									
Capital Outlay Reserve	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	250
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>									
<b>Strategic Area: Public Safety</b>									
Equipment Acquisition	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	250
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>250</b>

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2009-10 & 2010-11**

### **Current Business Environment**

The Medical Examiner Department's responsibilities are statutorily mandated as defined in Florida Statute, Chapter 406, and Chapter 11G of the Florida Administrative Code. Medical Examiner Practice Guidelines are contained within Chapter 11G of the Florida Administrative Code and are promulgated by the Florida Medical Examiner Commission. The department complies with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules and regulations for employee safety. Recent reduction of personnel to critical levels significantly challenges the department in fulfilling our legal mandate and results in professional staff exceeding established workload guidelines. Further personnel reductions will have an adverse effect on the toxicology laboratory accreditation (ABFT) and cripple our core mission.

The area of forensic toxicology services is a competitive environment with private and public sectors competing for contracts. The department's Toxicology Laboratory has participated in the competitive bid process for laboratory services for other Medical Examiner jurisdictions and has been successful in being awarded contracts with other counties. Such bids have been competitive with the private sector. Maintaining a competitive edge has been challenged by rising costs of petroleum-based products together with the personnel and operational limitations of the toxicology laboratory.

The department serves the residents of Miami-Dade County, many local, state and federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), State Attorney's and Public Defender's Offices, Life Alliance Organ Procurement, University of Miami Bone and Tissue Bank, Florida Lions Eye Bank, insurance companies, private not-for-profit organizations, law enforcement departments, medical offices and hospitals, funeral homes, and the media.