

**PRESENTATION OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
ARIEL M. SMITH
VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE’S
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET
THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS, AND
FINANCE**

Good morning Chairperson Donna Frett-Gregory, members of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, other members of the 35th Legislature, the Virgin Islands Department of Justice management and staff present with me at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Chambers, those present in the St. Croix Legislative Chambers, as well as the Virgin Islands community joining us in the listening and viewing audience.

I am Ariel M. Smith, the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands. I appear before you today to provide testimony and to defend the proposed FY2024 operating budget for the Virgin Islands Department of Justice. Accompanying me today are members of the Department’s senior leadership team who will assist in providing additional information specific to their respective areas of oversight:

- William Appleton, Jr., Deputy Attorney General of the St. Croix District
- Pamela Tepper, Solicitor General
- Venetia Velazquez, Chief of Civil Division in both districts
- H. Timothy Perry, Chief of Criminal, St. Thomas, St. John & Water Island District
- Amie Simpson, Chief of Criminal, St. Croix District
- Patricia Lynn Pryor, Director of White-Collar Crime and Public Corruption
- Julita DeLeon, Director, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (“MFCU”)
- Ronan David, Director, Division of Gaming Enforcement
- Kathryn Jensen-Delugo, Director, Paternity and Child Support Division

- Kaj Christopher, Chief Financial Officer
- Beverly Hermon Wallace – Human Resource Director
- Monique Simon, Operations Manager, St. Thomas District

The Virgin Islands Department of Justice (“Department” or “Justice”) unequivocally supports Governor Bryan’s proposed operating budget for the 2024 fiscal year which, if fully funded, will enable the Department to continue to fulfill its statutory mandates efficiently and effectively.

Four months ago, when I was entrusted with leadership of the Department of Justice, I quickly realized that the Department was not adequately and sufficiently staffed. At this point, I wish to acknowledge my DOJ management team as well as staff, including our financial team, our AAGs, investigators and agents, administrative legal staff, our Medical Examiner’s Office staff and all those in the Department who by showing up and doing their jobs every day, reaffirm their commitment to this agency and the People of the Virgin Islands.

Today, I am pleased to say that we have augmented our recruitment efforts and are currently hiring qualified candidates to fill our outstanding vacancies. The interest in the Department of Justice is robust and once candidates are vetted and determined to be qualified, it is expected that we will be able to fill several vacancies by the end of the fiscal year.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Virgin Islands Department of Justice consists of several divisions in the St. Thomas/St. John District and the St. Croix District, and each is responsible to fulfill our mission codified at 3 V.I.C. § 111, *et. seq.* These divisions include:

- Office of the Attorney General
- General Legal Services which includes the Criminal and Civil Divisions
- Solicitor General Division
- White-Collar Crime and Public Corruption Division
- Inspectional Services Division
- The Office of Sexual Offender Registry
- Paternity and Child Support Division
- Office of the Medical Examiner
- Division of Gaming Enforcement
- Budget and Accounting
- Human Resources Division

The Department, pursuant to 3 V.I.C. § 114, has various duties and functions. Among these include: to prosecute offenses against the laws of the Virgin Islands; to investigate violations of the Virgin Islands law for which the executive branch of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands may invoke penalties, fines or forfeitures, or deny, suspend or revoke licenses; to appear for and represent the executive branch of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands along with departments, boards, commissions, agencies, instrumentalities or officers thereof before all administrative tribunals or bodies of any nature, in all legal or quasi-legal matters, hearings or proceedings; to furnish legal advice to the Governor

and all executive departments, boards, commissions, agencies, instrumentalities and officers of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands; to render written legal opinions on any legal question to the Governor, Legislature, or any other department, board, commission agency, or instrumentality of the Virgin Islands Government; to render opinions on the legal sufficiency of all contracts and other instruments in which the Government of the United States Virgin Islands is interested and the best interests of the people of the Virgin Islands is served; and to administer and enforce laws pertaining to ethics and conflicts of interest.

FY2024 OPERATIONAL BUDGET

The Department's FY2024 proposed operating budget request in the General Fund is \$19,936,110.00, which is a 3.51% increase from last year's appropriated budget of \$19,260,621.00, and the Department's overall budget including federal funds is \$28,518,315.00. The breakdown is as follows:

PERSONNEL AND FRINGE:

The FY2024 recommended allocation is \$10,946,831.00 for personnel services, and \$4,106,199.00 for associated fringe benefits, which covers salaries and fringe benefits for 175 positions comprising 171 filled positions and 4 vacant positions as of March 31, 2023.

As of July 21, 2023, the Department staffing consists of 84 regular employees, 70 Federal/Program Fund employees, 8 vacancies, and new 13 hires. All 4 vacancies

proposed for FY 2024 have already been filled or reallocated. As of July 21, 2023, there are 10 remaining vacancies (6 on St. Thomas, 4 on St. Croix), resulting from various actions to include separations, promotions, or position reallocations. Additionally, there are 18 recruitment actions currently in process to include new hires as well as promotions.

SUPPLIES:

Under the FY2024 budget \$ 319,116.00 has been allocated for supplies. This includes: general supplies such as copy paper and pens; operating supplies such as body bags and autopsy supplies; vehicle supplies such as tires, batteries, oil, and filters; small tools such as scanners and laptops; data processing software such as adobe and TeamViewer; and professional books and periodicals for our attorneys such as LexisNexis, Thompson and Pacer publications.

OTHER SERVICES:

Under the FY2024 budget request, \$4,265,848.00 has been allocated “other services”, this budget sum includes rent obligations for Main Justice facilities in both the St. Thomas and St. Croix Districts, our 34% contribution to rent obligation for the Paternity and Child Support facilities in both districts, professional services for computer and cybersecurity systems, attorney Virgin Islands Bar Association annual dues, professional and national association membership dues, stenographic services, mortuary and testing services, and other expenses directly related to Justice

operations. The rent at our St. Thomas GERS location has increased dramatically, in significant part, because our former lease was last negotiated in 1999, thereafter we were month to month tenants, and the new lease represents current market rental value for this location.

UTILITIES:

The FY2024 proposed budget for utilities is \$298,116.00 which includes WAPA and water expenses for the St. Thomas morgue facility, our 34% contribution to PCSD in both districts, and utility expenses for the Main Justice complex for the St. Croix District.

FEDERAL GRANTS:

Another \$8,400,705.00 of the Department’s budget is funded by federal grants which is a 4.64% decrease from last year’s federal appropriated funds of \$8,790,117. This FY2023 variance exists because PCSD 66% reimbursement to the Virgin Islands Government is based on sums expended by PCSD during the previous fiscal year. The breakdown of the federal grants is as follows:

Grant Title	Type of Grant	FY 24
Child Support Enforcement	Formula	7,136,008
Adam Walsh Act Implementation	Formula	400,000
State Medicaid Fraud Control Unit	Formula	500,000
Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Grant	Formula	264,698
Access and Visitation Grant	Formula	100,000

Total		8,400,705

FEDERAL FUNDS:

Many of the Department’s personnel services are supported by federal grants and program funds. The FY2024 Federal Fund recommended allocation for personnel services and fringe benefits will support salaries and associated fringe benefits for 71 full time employees with 70 filled positions and 1 vacancy. We are currently recruiting through the Division of Personnel for the remaining vacancy.

This year’s proposed budget also includes \$181,500.00 of program income which was added based on PCSD’s program’s performance and which has been earmarked to pay for the buildout of PCSD’s St. Thomas Nisky Center location.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The myriad of departmental changes that have occurred over the past six months have been particularly challenging for the Human Resources Division (“HR”). One key objective for this division is to increase staff retention by enhancing our agency culture and employee morale thus improving the overall employee experience. We have organized and participated in various teambuilding activities such as Battle of the Agencies in both districts and the St. Croix bowling tournaments to promote an atmosphere of comradery and bonding, to the point that one employee has commented: “the healing has started.” Daily motivational messages are shared

with and appreciated by staff. Additionally, HR staff ensures personal interaction with each member of the DOJ team to ensure that all feel valued.

The Department has also recently negotiated salary increases which currently extends to members of the Steelworkers International Union (SIU), Our Virgin Islands Labor Union (OVILU) and employees covered by the General Services Pay Scale (Non-Union). We are pleased to report that all 30 SIU salary increases have been implemented to include back pay. Non-Union increase implementations were unfortunately delayed, but we anticipate processing in the coming weeks. OVILU is currently negotiating salary increases.

During FY 2023, the HR division processed 145 NOPA actions to include 13 new hires: 10 utilizing the general funds and 3 under federal grant or program funds, representing \$1,053,294.12 in salaries. Similarly, 9 promotions are detailed as follows: 5 utilizing the general funds and 4 under federal grant or program funds, representing \$776,000.00 in salaries. There have also been 14 separations distributed as follows: 9 Resignations (5 in the St. Thomas/St. John District and 4 in the St. Croix District); 1 Retirement in the St. Thomas District; 2 Deceased (1 St. Thomas District and 1 St. Croix); and 1 Involuntary Separation from the St. Thomas District.

CRIMINAL DIVISION

The Criminal Division remains committed to ensuring that crimes are prosecuted and those that perpetrate them are held accountable and that justice is

rendered in an ethical, fair, and consistent manner. Within the Criminal Division are the General Criminal section, Family/Special Victims Unit and the White-Collar Crime and Public Corruption Division. The family/special victim prosecutor handles matters such as juvenile delinquency, child custody, guardianship, and involuntary commitments matters; while the latter targets financial-related crimes and public corruption.

In the St. Thomas district, there are currently 11 prosecutors—including the Criminal Chief, along with five legal support staff and two witness/victim advocates. In the St. Croix District, there are 11 prosecutors—including the Criminal Chief and the Deputy Attorney General—assisted by administrative support staff and one victim/witness advocate. Our proposed budget will continue to support these staff, encourage their retention, and continue the necessary training to keep them abreast of current trends in criminal law. Currently, in the St. Croix District there are 505 open felony cases; 139 open misdemeanor cases; 91 open family cases; and 51 open white-collar crime cases. Conversely, in the St. Thomas/St. John District there are 317 open felony cases; 92 open misdemeanor cases; 73 open family cases; and 8 white-collar crime cases open.

CIVIL DIVISION

The Civil Division represents the Government in a diverse number of cases which vary in level of complexity in the Superior Court, the District Court, and

administrative tribunals. Because of the number of cases filed yearly against the Government, the attorneys spend most of their time performing general defense and malpractice defense on behalf of the Government. The attorneys also represent and provide support to the Governor Juan Luis Hospital and Roy Lester Schneider Hospital in their litigation and arbitration matters when requested. Currently, the Civil Division has five assistant attorneys general in the St. Croix district—including the Civil Chief—and two attorneys general in the St. Thomas district. There are two administrative support staff in each district. Currently, the St. Croix District has 103 open civil cases and 32 medical malpractice cases. The St. Thomas/St. John District has 83 open civil cases and 10 medical malpractice cases open. Since the beginning of the current fiscal year the Civil Division has closed 12 cases in the St. Croix District and six in the St. Thomas/St. John District.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

The Special Investigations Division (SID) is a specialized enforcement unit within the Department staffed with Special Agents who aid the civil attorneys in their investigations when claims are brought against the government; who investigate white collar crime fraud and corruption; who conduct background investigations for new hires, boards, commissions, and judges; and who perform witness protection operations prior to and during trials and support certain security details as needed. Currently, SID is staffed with an Assistant Director along with

three investigators in the St. Croix District and one investigator in the St. Thomas/St. John District to perform these functions. We have recently hired another investigator in the St. Thomas District who will be joining our team in the coming weeks. To date, there are 47 cases divided among the staff. During the FY 2023 these agents served 525 subpoenas; performed one extradition; participated with SORNA agents and US Marshals in sex offender round-ups; provided support to the Office of the Medical Examiner; and they are currently responsible for the safety and security of persons in the Witness Protection Program.

SOLICITOR GENERAL DIVISION

The Solicitor General Division has a myriad of legal responsibilities to the Government. Not only does it represent the Government in all its appeals, but it also prepares legal opinions; reviews all contracts for legal sufficiency; advises all boards and commissions; and represents the Government in bond matters. The Solicitor General must prioritize the work because of the decreased number of assistant attorneys general in the division. Although years ago, the division had twelve attorneys, today it only has four including the Solicitor General—along with three support staff. We have interviewed several candidates and expect to be making offers in the next week or so to fill the vacancies. To date, this fiscal year, the division has received: 230 contracts and closed 220 of these, also it has received eight opinion requests and 42 appeals.

OFFICE OF SEXUAL OFFENDER REGISTRY

The Department of Justice is also tasked with enforcing the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (“SORNA”) and the Virgin Islands Sex Offender Registration and Community Protection Act. Virgin Islands SORNA staff are responsible for registering and tracking sexual offenders in the Territory. The Sexual Offender Registry Office consist of three individuals: the Territorial Sex Offender Registry Program Manager; the Territorial Sex Offender Registry Investigator; and the Sex Offender Registry Coordinator.

Recently, the sex offender verification operation—“Keeping Watch”—occurred in the St. Thomas/St. John District. This operation is a partnership between DOJ SORNA; DOJ SID; the United States Marshals Service; and the Virgin Islands Police Department.³ There are a total of fifty-four registered offenders in the St. Thomas/St. John District. Fifty offenders were located in this latest operation, four of whom provided proof of travel and obtained approved “Out of Territory” forms for travel at the time of the operation. Four offenders were unable to be verified due to no contact, however, we expect contact will be made within the next week to verify and update their information. As a result of this year’s operation, SORNA will be enhancing its operations to implement electronic compliance forms within the next 60 days. Utilizing the electronic forms will help to maintain electronic files for

each offender. There are 62 registered sex offenders in the St. Croix district and a similar “Keeping Watch” operation will be conducted there later this year.

PATERNITY AND CHILD SUPPORT DIVISION

The Paternity and Child Support Division (“PCSD”) works to provide our children with the support to help them thrive and become responsible and successful adults in our community. PCSD functions include: the establishment of paternity; enforcement of support obligations; implementation of centralized collections process; distribution of support payments; and the establishment and maintenance of case records. PCSD’s primary funding source is the federal government, which reimburses the Virgin Islands for 66% of its expenditures for program operations and, as such, PCSD must meet minimum established criteria, which if not met, can put such federal funding and support in jeopardy. Currently, PCSD is staffed with two hearing officers, five attorneys, and 51 support staff divided among the two districts.

Funding of the Department’s FY 2024 Budget will support PCSD’s initiatives to update its website; to complete its standard operating procedures; and to complete build out projects to accommodate staff in the St. Thomas district. PCSD has also recently launched two campaigns namely, the “Undistributed Funds Campaign” and the “Incarcerated Parents Engagement Campaign.” The former is a renewed effort to contact those parents or guardians who are unaware of support money being held

on their behalf and the latter will readjust child support payment obligations for incarcerated persons during periods of incarceration. During this fiscal year, PCSD opened 357 new cases—295 in the St. Thomas/St. John District and 63 in the St. Croix District. PCSD currently has 7193 active cases in the territory; 3389 in the St. Thomas/St. John district and 3304 in the St. Croix district.

Within PCSD is the Access and Visitation Program which receives separate grant funding to facilitate noncustodial parents' access to their children. Grant funds support services such as: mediation, development of parenting plans, education, counseling, visitation enforcement (including monitored and supervised visitation, with neutral drop-off and pick-up) and development of guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements. To date, twenty-four mediations and eight parenting workshops have been successfully completed.

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

The role of the Medical Examiner's Office ("MEO") is to, among other things, investigate the circumstances surrounding any death that occurs under unusual or suspicious circumstance; perform autopsies and external examinations; determine the cause and manner of death; assist attorneys preparing for trial; and be prepared in the event of a mass casualty. Currently, the MEO has one Administrative Specialist and two Forensic Technicians stationed in the St. Thomas/St. John district and two Medicolegal Death Investigators in the St. Croix District.

We have reprogrammed monies from our budget that would have formally supported two Medical Examiners in each district to hire now one Territorial Medical Examiner. Our recruiting efforts have included the following: increasing the salary of the medical examiner to \$250,000; engaging in recruitment efforts through career fairs; actively advertising that vacancy through various public and private mediums, including social media pages such as, Indeed and LinkedIn; and postings to national and international professional sites including the International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners, the American Association of Forensic Scientists, and the National Association of State Medicare Directors. Should these efforts prove ineffective over the coming weeks and months, other strategies will be considered such as sign-on bonuses and relocation allowances. Several members of our staff will be attending a Forensic Conference in August and we are hoping that while they are being trained, they will also be able to assist with our recruitment efforts. Unfortunately, as the Committee can see from *Addendum A*, Medical Examiners are increasingly difficult to hire.

The needs of this office need to be reassessed as we are also responsible for the collection of decomposed persons and natural deaths which often require special handling. This office is highly susceptible to employee turnover and burnout so we will eventually need to hire a third Forensic Technician to combat these issues.

Nevertheless, the work continues, and our remaining staff continues to

perform. For this fiscal year alone, the MEO staff have collected 234 bodies, 154 in the St. Thomas District and 80 in the St. Croix District. Autopsies performed total 78 with 54 in the St. Thomas-St. John District and 24 in the St. Croix District.

MEDICAID FRAUD CONTROL UNIT

The Virgin Islands Department of Justice Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (“MFCU”) was established in 2018 pursuant to federal legislation and is funded 100 percent by a grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). The Virgin Islands MFCU is the only MFCU in the country that is not funded on a 75 federal/25 local match. MFCU’s mission is to investigate and prosecute all aspects of fraud in connection with the provision of medical assistance and the activities of providers under the Virgin Islands State Medicaid plan, to recoup misspent Medicaid funds and to review and act upon complaints of abuse and neglect and financial exploitation of elders and vulnerable persons living in health care facilities and at home. Pursuant to federal legislation, HHS-OIG funds the following four staffing positions: Director, Investigator, Auditor, and Legal Assistant. All these funded positions are filled.

DIVISION OF GAMING ENFORCEMENT

The Division of Gaming Enforcement (“DGE”) serves as the investigative and enforcement arm of the Casino Control Commission (“CCC”), ensuring compliance with the Virgin Islands Casino and Resort Act of 1995. Its general duties and powers

are set forth in 32 V.I.C. § 428. The DGE is staffed by two investigators and the Director. Despite DGE's staffing shortfalls, in this fiscal year, DGE employees have opened approximately 170 Employee Application files; completed and transmitted 38 Employee Due diligence Investigations to the CCC; completed and transmitted to the CCC 14 Casino Servicing Entity and Qualifier's Due Diligence Investigations; and opened 36 Casino Servicing Entity and Qualifier Files.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department is committed to excellence through continued training and knowledge. It proudly promotes and encourages career advancement and fully supports these endeavors. Our most recent training is the Interview and Interrogation Training where the Office of the Attorney General partnered with POST in training law enforcement officers throughout the territory. By all initial indications this training was well received. Thirty-four (34) members of DOJ staff attended to include, AAGs, investigators and support staff. Additionally, the Department remains committed to ongoing training and a schedule of past and present training for FY 2023 is attached as *Addendum B* for your review.

FY2024 OUTLOOK

One of the Department's immediate goals is to complete installation of the modular morgue in the St. Croix District. Good news is that the Modular Unit arrived on St. Croix in January, and expected installation was to have occurred by this past

May. Unfortunately, issues related to the proposed payment schedule as well as the lack of required permits prevented the achievement of that goal. The contract issues are now resolved, and it is expected that the vendor will execute the contract within the next few days. I have previewed the contract as finalized by the Department of Property and Procurement and upon receipt of the contract signed by the vendor, I will execute to be forwarded in accordance with GVI contract protocols. Completion of installation of the St. Croix modular morgue facility is expected by December 2023, possibly earlier.

During FY2024 each division should have developed or updated its Standard Operating Procedures (“SOP”). These procedures will enable consistency in results, better time management overall, and increase the level of understanding of employees as to their role as they collaborate to fulfill Department objectives.

Additionally, the Department remains committed to advanced and continuing education and training. For example, in the Civil Division, expansion plans are on the way in the areas of consumer protection and law enforcement actions. Expansion into consumer protection focuses on initiation of law enforcement actions and actions on behalf of consumers who have been subjected to fraudulent business practices; defective products or services; and dangerous goods or services. The Virgin Islands is one of the few attorneys general offices which does not have a consumer protection team as part of the department’s functions. Such enforcement

actions, when penalties are assessed, potentially bring significant revenues into the territory.

The Criminal Division will dedicate more resources to the initial proceedings and collaborate with VIPD to ensure that critical information—such as victim contact information, subpoenaed video surveillance, and the like, are retrieved, and shared promptly. The Criminal Division will continue to collaborate with the Forensic Unit and the Police Commissioner to develop standard operating procedures for search and arrest warrants as well as to formalize other procedures relating to the collection and preservation of forensic material. The goal is effective, efficient, and successful prosecutions.

The Department remains committed to combating sex and human trafficking in and around the Territory. Favorable consideration of Governor's Bryan legislation on this issue is respectfully requested.

Finally, the Department is also negotiating the purchase of a case management system that will assist with the assignments of cases and to organize and store case documents and court orders.

FY2025 CONSIDERATIONS

One long-term objective for future budget discussions and supplemental appropriations is the rebuild of the Toro Building site in Estate Orange Grove, to house all the St. Croix Department of Justice operations. Our archives contain

architectural plans which were completed in 2011, but never brought to fruition. To get the project off on the right foot, Justice will need to retain an architectural design and engineering firm to review the 2011 plans and provide feedback and guidance as to whether plans need to be amended based on the Department's current needs or changes in the building codes. The Department will then return to this Body requesting appropriation based on a construction cost proposal, seeking your favorable consideration. Notwithstanding the initial investment costs, we anticipate that this undertaking will result in significant cost savings for the Government.

With that, I want to thank the Committee for allowing myself and my team the opportunity to justify the proposed budget presented to you. This concludes my formal remarks—thank you and my team and I remain available for questions.

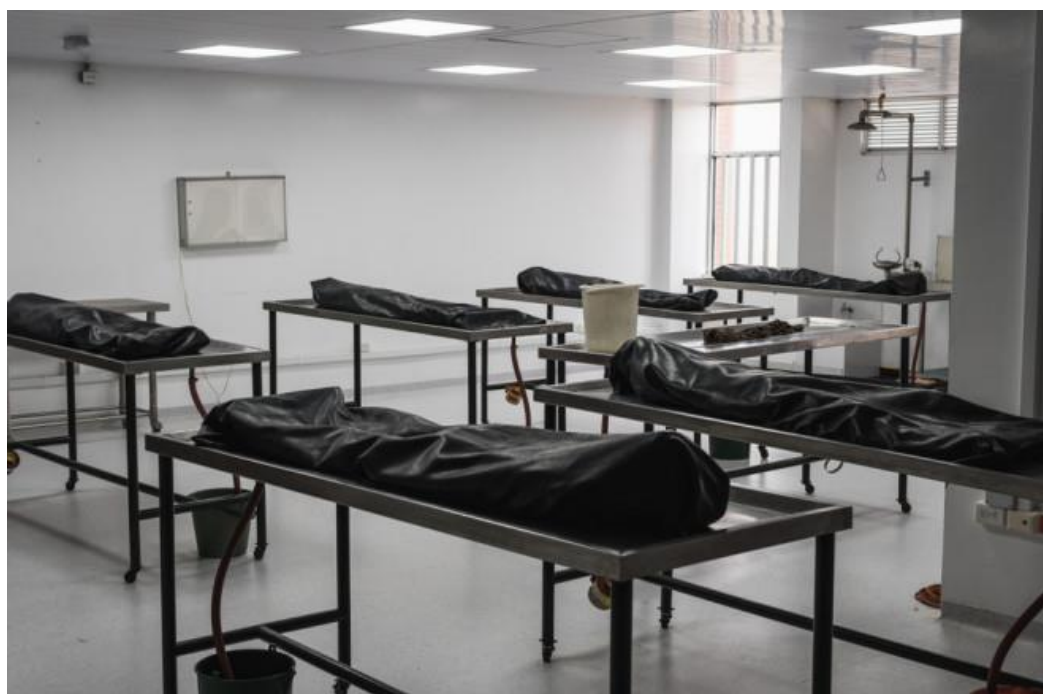
ADDENDUM A

Autopsies on Hold: Why We Need More Medical Examiners

Too many deaths and too few forensic pathologists trigger a surprising workforce crisis.

By Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi Sep 22, 2021 10:00 AM

<https://www.discovermagazine.com/the-sciences/autopsies-on-hold-why-we-need-more-medical-examiners>



Felipe Mahecha/Shutterstock)

Newsletter

It's been said that the dead can wait, but as a practical matter, they really can't, not indefinitely. Yet cities like Los Angeles and Austin have had to rent

refrigerated tractor trailers to store bodies. Why? Because medical examiner offices are understaffed and overloaded.

The bodies in those trailers, and in places in other cities, are waiting ... to be evaluated by a forensic pathologist. There simply aren't enough of them to do the work, and a surge in homicides and accidental drug overdoses are pushing medical examiners' offices across the country past capacity.

"There is a critical workforce shortage," says James Gil, a forensic pathologist and president of the [National Association of Medical Examiners \(NAME\)](#). "Currently there are estimated to be about 500 board-certified forensic pathologists working full-time. In order to cover all the jurisdictions in the country, there would need to be over double that number."

Bodies of Evidence

Although the shortage has been building for years, events in the last year inundated medical examiner offices with cases. Besides pandemic deaths, homicide rates in some cities have doubled. And in 2020, fatal drug overdoses increased [30 percent](#), according to the CDC.

Accidental drug overdoses typically involve toxicology tests. Homicides usually require an autopsy. NAME, the accrediting agency for medical examiners' offices, limits a forensic pathologist to conducting 325 autopsies a year (250 is considered the ideal maximum). That means some offices don't have enough forensic pathologists to begin with, and those on staff have limits as to how much they can do.

Victor Weedn, chief medical examiner for the state of Maryland, says those limits are important, especially when analyzing complex cases where the cause of death is not obvious. "You need time to investigate and think about the cases and look at your microscopic slides and talk to your colleagues about the case, or look into the literature for the case," says Weedn.

But the pandemic as well as the surge in homicide and drug overdoses has forced NAME to temporarily relax the standard so that medical examiner's offices can keep up. "My forensic pathologists are doing 400 per year," Weedn says.

With the exception of suicide, Weedn notes his office has seen an increase in every type of death including homicide, accidental drug overdose, and motor vehicle accident. “We are very overwhelmed,” Weedn says.

Priorities and Pay Gaps

Other ME offices are also reporting surges in cases. In Chicago, for example, the Cook County Medical Examiner’s office typically sees between 6,000 and 6,500 cases per year. In 2020, they saw 16,049 cases — half were related to the pandemic. Homicide was up by **50 percent** and drug overdoses were up by 40 percent, according to spokesperson Natalia Derevyanny.

As a result, forensic pathologists have to prioritize autopsies and investigations so the remains can be transferred to a funeral director. That means reports are shelved until the pathologist can find a quiet moment to work on them. The result is a delay in the time it takes to send complete autopsy reports to police, district attorneys, or grieving family members.

For the fiscal year ending on June 30, Weedn says 78 percent of autopsy reports were completed within 60 days. Just two years earlier, the completion rate was at 85 percent.

On good days, offices like Weedn’s are able to bring in a per diem forensic pathologist to help ease the burden. That person is typically a retired pathologist, and Weedn says there need to be incentives to attract young pathologists to the specialty. For example, on NAME’s job board, medical examiner offices in places like Arkansas are offering up to \$100,000 in student loan assistance in order to attract job candidates. Others are increasingly raising salaries, but forensic pathologists lag behind their hospital counterparts when it comes to income.

“We still make much less than our hospital colleagues,” Weedn says. “You can make \$100,000 more for pathology, and in forensic pathology you have to do an extra year of training to make \$100,000 less.”

Other offices have taken to courting forensic pathologists already employed with other medical examiners in the hopes they can be wooed by higher pay or a more desirable location. “You’re finding that some offices are stealing from other offices because there is such a need,” Weedn says.

ADDENDUM B

Criminal, SID, Medical Examiner, MFCU

- VIDOJ and Public Agency Training Council (PATC) & Virgin Islands Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Partnership - Interview and Interrogation Training Course (**34 attendees from DOJ in both districts**)

Criminal Division – St. Thomas and St. Croix Districts

- White Collar - 2022 NAAG/NASCO Charities Conference (**Director of White Collar**)
- White Collar - NAGTRI National Anticorruption Academy Training - New York Law School (**Director of White Collar**)
- White Collar – 2023 National Cyber Crime Conference (**Director of White Collar**)
- 2023 National Center on Forensics Conference – (**1 AAG and St. Croix Operations Manager**) (Scholarship no cost to the Government)
- Navigating Section 1983 Litigation: Insights and Guidance for State Attorneys General (**2 AAGs**) (Scholarship no cost to the Government)
- NAAG Core Leadership Competencies for First Line & Mid-level Managers Training (**Chiefs of Criminal for St. Thomas and St. Croix Districts**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)

Special Investigations Division (SID)

- Firearms Qualification (**All SID Agents**) (Peace Officer Standards and Training - POST)
- Oleoresin capsicum (OC or pepper spray), Taser, and Baton Certification (**All SID Agents**) (Peace Officer Standards and Training -POST)
- Domestic Violence, Ethics, Use of Force and Legal Update Training (**All SID Agents**) (Peace Officer Standards and Training - POST)

Medical Examiner

- 75th Annual American Academy of Forensic Science (**Medical Examiner**)
- 2023 National Center on Forensics Conference (**Medicolegal Death Investigator**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)

Sexual Offender Registry

- United States Marshal Service State and Local Sex Offender Investigator Class (**1 SID Agent**) (Paid by USMS, no cost to the Government)

Division of Gaming Enforcement

- 2023 Annual Gaming Laboratories International Gaming Regulators Round Table Conference (**Director of Gaming Enforcement**) (Casino Control Fund)
- 2023 North American Gaming Regulators Association Annual Conference (**Director of Gaming Enforcement and 2 DEG Employees**) (Casino Control Fund)

Solicitor General

- Third Circuit Judicial Conference (**Solicitor General**)
- Bi-Annual Third Circuit Court of Appeals Conference (**Solicitor General**)
- 2022 NAAG Training: Veteran's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Summit (**1 AG**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)
- 2023 NAAG Training: Tobacco 101. Intro. To the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (**1 AAG**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)
- 2023 NAAG Bi-Annual Consumer Protection Seminar (**1 AAG**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)
- NAAG Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Annual Meeting (Third Circuit) (**1 AAG**) (Scholarship, no cost to the Government)

Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) – 100% Federally Funded

- National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (NAMFCU) Annual Training Program Third Circuit Judicial Conference (**MFCU Litigation Specialist and Auditor/Analyst**)
- NAMFCU Directors Meeting and Symposium (**MFCU Director**)
- NAMFCU Introduction to Medicaid Fraud and Resident Abuse Training (**MFCU Investigator**)
- NAMFCU Civil Fraud Training (**MFCU Director and MFCU Auditor/Analyst**)
- NAMFCU Civil Eastern Regional Meeting (**MFCU Investigator**)

Paternity and Child Support Division – 100% Federally Funded

- ERICSA 60th Annual Training Conference and Exposition 2023 Annual Gaming Laboratories International Gaming Regulators Round Table Conference (**9 PCSD Employees**)
- 2023 Eastern Grants Forum (**Federal Grants Coordinating Specialist and 1 Administrative Specialist**)
- 2023 National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Leadership Conference (**Attorney General, PCSD Director, 2 PCSD Assistant Attorneys General**)

Support Staff – All Divisions

- DOJ support staff in all divisions are able to receive year-round online training through Pryor Learning. They have access to over 20+ training categories, including administrative assistant, reception, customer service, communication training, computer software, time management, personal development, and many others.

HR Trainings Attended:

- CIGNA Webinars (Various)
- Critical Hiring Challenges
- Division of Personnel's Reentering Retirees Process/Procedures
- Division of Personnel's ERP Upgrade and Human Resources Training
- ESGR Breakfast with the Boss
- Face It! Confronting Critical Hiring Challenges and Creating Sustainable Talent Strategies for Future Success
- Growing Your talent Pool
- GVI Security Awareness (Various Modules)
- Recruiting HBCU Graduates
- Remote Hiring Practices
- ***HR also conducts In-House Orientations, CIGNA Open Enrollment Briefings, and provides managers with labor relations guidance and support.***

Division of Personnel Trainings Available for All Staff:

- Brilliance is the C.U.R.RE.
- N.E.W. Employee Orientation
- **Sexual Harassment Prevention Training**