GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

FINAL REPORT OF INSPECTION

CHARLES C. MADDOX, ESQ.
INSPECTOR GENERAL
The Inspections and Evaluations (I&E) Division of the Office of the Inspector General is dedicated to providing District of Columbia (D.C.) government decision makers with objective, thorough, and timely evaluations and recommendations that will assist them in achieving efficiency, effectiveness, and economy in operations and programs. I&E’s goals are to help ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, to identify accountability, recognize excellence, and promote continuous improvement in the delivery of services to D.C. residents and others who have a vested interest in the success of the city.
September 22, 2003

Jonathan L. Arden, MD
Chief Medical Examiner
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
1910 Massachusetts Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Dr. Arden:

Enclosed is our final Report of Inspection of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). Your agency’s comments on the 41 findings and 74 recommendations by the inspection team are included in the Report. Please note that because you interspersed many of your comments among the words of our text, we were unable to include them in the Executive Summary because they would be read out of context. They are included verbatim, however, in the body of the report following our findings and recommendations. The Executive Summary does contain all of the comments you made that specifically address our recommendations.

We are pleased to note your agreement with more than 80% of our recommendations. This clearly reflects your interest in taking the actions necessary to create a more efficient and well-run OCME.

In accordance with Mayor’s Order 2000-105, District agencies are responsible for taking action on all agreed-upon recommendations in this final Report. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has established a process to track agency compliance and to facilitate our follow-up inspection activities. Enclosed are Compliance Forms on which to record and report to this Office any actions you have taken concerning each outstanding recommendation. These forms will assist you in tracking the completion of actions taken by your staff, and will assist this Office in its inspection follow-up activities. We track agency compliance with all agreed-upon recommendations made in our reports of inspection, and we request that you and your administrators establish response dates on the forms and advise us of those dates so we can enter them on our copies of the Compliance Forms.

In some instances, things beyond your control, such as budget decisions, impact on trying to set specific deadlines. In those instances we request that you assign target dates based on whatever knowledge and experience you have about a particular issue. Please ensure that the Compliance Forms are returned to the OIG by the response date, and that reports of “Agency Action Taken” reflect actual completion, in whole or in part, of a recommended action rather than “planned.”
action. We will work closely with your designated point of contact throughout the compliance process.

We appreciate the cooperation shown by you and your employees during the inspection, and we hope to continue in a cooperative relationship during the upcoming follow-up period.

If you have questions or require assistance in the course of complying with our recommendations, please contact me or Alvin Wright, Jr., Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations at (202) 727-5052.

Sincerely,

Charles C. Maddox, Esq.
Inspector General

CCM/AW/JCS/jcs

Enclosure

cc: See Distribution
DISTRIBUTION:

FULL REPORT

The Honorable Anthony A. Williams, Mayor, District of Columbia (1 copy)
Mr. Herbert R. Tillery, Acting City Administrator, District of Columbia (1 copy)
Mr. Kelvin J. Robinson, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor (1 copy)
Mr. Tony Bullock, Director, Office of Communications (1 copy)
The Honorable Linda W. Cropp, Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia (1 copy)
The Honorable Vincent B. Orange, Sr., Chairman, Committee on Government Operations,
   Council of the District of Columbia (1 copy)
Ms. Phyllis Jones, Secretary to the Council (13 copies)
Ms. Deborah K. Nichols, D.C. Auditor (1 copy)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY1

Mr. Robert J. Spagnoletti, Corporation Counsel, District of Columbia (1 copy)
Dr. Natwar M. Gandhi, Chief Financial Officer (4 copies)
Mr. Jeffrey C. Steinhoff, Managing Director, FMA, GAO (1 copy)
Ms. Jeanette M. Franzel, Director, FMA, GAO (1 copy)
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C. Delegate, House of Representatives
   Attention: Rosalind Parker (1 copy)
The Honorable Tom Davis, Chairman, House Committee on Government Reform
   Attention: Peter Sirh (1 copy)
Ms. Shalley Kim, Legislative Assistant, House Committee on Government Reform (1 copy)
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman, House Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations
   (1 copy)
Ms. Carol Murphy, Staff Assistant, House Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)
The Honorable Chaka Fattah, House Subcommittee on D. C. Appropriations
   Attention: Tom Forhan (1 copy)
The Honorable George Voinovich, Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of
   Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia (1 copy)
Ms. Theresa Prych, Professional Staff Member, Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of
   Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia (1 copy)
The Honorable Richard Durbin, Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government
   Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia (1 copy)
Ms. Marianne Upton, Staff Director, Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government
   Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia (1 copy)
The Honorable Mike DeWine, Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)
Mr. Stan Skocki, Legislative Assistant, Senate Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)
The Honorable Mary Landrieu, Senate Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)
Ms. Kate Eltrich, Staff Director, Senate Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)

1 If you desire the full version of this report, you can read it online and download it from our website at
   www.dcig.org. You can also contact Relita Morgan at (202) 727-2540 for assistance in receiving a printed copy of
   the full report.
Mr. Charles Kieffer, Clerk, Senate Subcommittee on D.C. Appropriations (1 copy)
The Honorable Susan M. Collins, Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs
    Attention: Johanna Hardy (1 copy)
The Honorable Joseph Lieberman, Committee on Governmental Affairs
    Attention: Patrick J. Hart (1 copy)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ........................................................................................................... 2
  Scope and Methodology ........................................................................................................ 2

**INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................... 18
  Background and Perspective ............................................................................................ 18
  Scope and Methodology ................................................................................................. 18
  Compliance and Follow-Up .......................................................................................... 18

**EMPLOYEE SURVEY** .......................................................................................................... 20

**KEY FINDINGS** ................................................................................................................... 24
  Long-standing Problems Continue Under Current CME ...................................................... 24
  OCME Is Not An Accredited Facility .............................................................................. 27
  Autopsy Reports Are Significantly Backlogged ................................................................. 28
  Unidentified, Unclaimed Bodies Are Not Disposed of Timely ........................................... 30
  Autopsy Policies and Procedures Are Inadequate ............................................................. 31
  Dangerous Fumes Cause Closure of Histology Lab .......................................................... 34
  Child Fatality Review Committee Relationship Marred by Problems ............................... 35
  Staffing for Critical Positions Is Inadequate ..................................................................... 39
  CME Is Not Providing Required Annual Statistical Reports ............................................ 44

**HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES** .......................................................................................... 47
  Careless X-ray Practices Endanger Employees ................................................................. 47
  Old, Broken Stretchers and Carts Pose Safety Hazards ...................................................... 49
  Employees Dispose of Biohazardous Waste Without Training ......................................... 49
  No Precautions Taken Against Biohazard Contamination ................................................. 50
  Required Hazardous Communication Program Is Not In Place ........................................ 50
  Autopsy Suite Tissue Storage Areas Are Not Adequately Ventilated ............................... 51
  Unsafe Handling of Personal Protective Equipment .......................................................... 51
  Mortuary, Lab Workers Lack Adequate Shower Facilities ................................................. 53
  Odors From Autopsy Suite Permeate Public Access Areas ................................................. 53

**MORTUARY** .......................................................................................................................... 55
  Death Pronouncements Are Not Always Timely ............................................................... 55
  No Procedures Developed for Body Handling and Transport ............................................ 56
  Body Intake Processing Procedures Are Insufficient ......................................................... 57
  No Action Taken on Unidentified Skeletal Remains ......................................................... 57
  Fingerprinting Delays Slow Identification of Bodies .......................................................... 58
  Body Identification Policies Are Inconsistent ................................................................. 59
  Body Release Policies Are Not Standardized or Written ................................................ 61
  Decedents’ Personal Effects Are Not Adequately Safeguarded ......................................... 61
  Mortuary Technicians Do Not Receive Differential Pay .................................................... 64

**FORENSIC INVESTIGATIONS** ............................................................................................... 67
  Some MPD Officers Said to Impede OCME Investigations ............................................... 67
  OCME Death Scene Investigations Are Not Standardized ................................................. 68
TABLE OF CONTENTS

OCME Fails to Obtain MPD, FEMS Investigative Reports.........................................................70

OFFICE OF THE CME .............................................................................................................72

Required Workplace Safety Program Has Not Been Established ........................................72
OCME Does Not Have a Mass Fatality Plan .........................................................................76
OCME Is Not Prepared to Handle After-Hours Autopsy Requests ......................................77
Public Inquiries, Complaints Not Tracked and Responded To ...............................................78
OCME Lacks a Quality Assurance Program.........................................................................79
Extensive Use of Term Employees May Violate Personnel Regulations ..............................82
Consultant Improperly Given Supervisory, Managerial Responsibilities .............................83
Employees Do Not Receive Annual Evaluations ..................................................................86

ADMINISTRATION ................................................................................................................88

Case Records Are Not Properly Secured and Controlled.......................................................88
New Automated Case Management System Is Behind Schedule .........................................89
Toxicology Lab Lacks Sufficient Electrical Power .................................................................91

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Findings and Recommendations
Appendix 2: Sample Employee Survey
Appendix 3: Washington Post Articles on OCME
Appendix 4: Excerpts from Employee Interviews
Appendix 5: Management Alert Report (MAR 03-I-005)
Appendix 6: CME’s Response to MAR 03-I-005
Appendix 7: Management Alert Report (MAR 03-I-003)
Appendix 8: CME’s Response to MAR 03-I-003
Appendix 9: Letter to [redacted] confirming elevated levels of contaminants in the Histology Laboratory of the OCME.
Appendix 10: Property/Evidence Form for Transfer of Decedents’ Property
Appendix 11: OIG Special Report: How OCME Handled the Autopsy of Sniper Victim Pascal Charlot
Appendix 12: CME Memorandum Appointing IT Consultant as OCME Chief Technology Officer With Supervisory/Managerial Responsibilities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 13:</th>
<th>CME Cover Letter to Draft Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 14:</td>
<td>Charles Ramsey, Chief of Police, Metropolitan Police Department response to Finding 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFRC</td>
<td>Child Fatality Review Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CME</td>
<td>Chief Medical Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Case Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMR</td>
<td>District of Columbia Municipal Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC OSH</td>
<td>District of Columbia Office of Occupational Safety and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOM</td>
<td>Executive Office of the Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>District Personnel Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR</td>
<td>Management Alert Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCU</td>
<td>Mobile Crime Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Medical Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLI</td>
<td>Medicolegal Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPD</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>National Association of Medical Examiners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCME</td>
<td>Office of the Chief Medical Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTO</td>
<td>Office of the Chief Technology Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPM</td>
<td>Office of Personnel Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSHA</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Labor Occupation Safety and Health Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Chief Medical Examiner (1)*

- Executive Support (1)
  - Child Fatality Review Committee (6)
  - Deputy Chief Medical Examiner (1)
    - Toxicology (7)
      - Medical Examiners (6)
      - Mortuary
    - Histology (1)
    - Medical Transcription Histology (2)
    - Medical Transcription (1)
    - Mortuary
    - Histology (1)

- General Counsel (1)
  - Paralegal (1)
  - Mental Retardation Developmental Disability Admin. (MRDDA) (4)

- Deputy of Administration (1)
  - Toxicology (7)
  - Forensic Investigations (6)
    - Communications (7)
      - Medical Records (3)
    - Forensic Imaging (2)
  - Administration/Financial Support (7)
  - Information Technology (1)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY