Department *of* Health
& Human Services
Medical Examiner

Office of the Medical Examiner
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Morgue Internship Program

Program Overview

- **Who We Are:** Established in 1972 as a division of the Utah Department of Health, the OME serves the entire state of Utah. Our central office staff includes forensic pathologists, investigative staff, autopsy technicians, and office support staff. Our primary role is determining the cause and manner of death for cases within OME jurisdiction.
- **Objective:** To expose undergraduate and graduate students to real-world criminal justice and forensic science operations, bridging classroom theory with actual workplace practice while helping interns make informed career choices.
- **Program Details:**
    - **Status:** Volunteer (Unpaid, no benefits)
    - **Capacity:** 1 intern per term
    - **Hours:** Minimum 16 hours per week (Office hours are Mon–Fri, 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM; schedule must be pre-approved)

Qualifications & Eligibility

- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- Enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program in biology, health science, criminal justice, forensic science, or a related field.
- Strong interest in forensics and a desire to learn.
- Solid communication and customer service skills.

Duties & Learning Opportunities

Assignments vary based on operational needs and may include:

- Potential scene attendance with a medico-legal death investigator.
- Observation of autopsies and morgue operations.
- Research and writing projects assigned by the Internship Coordinator.

- Special administrative or operational projects.

Internship Tracks (Credited vs. Non-Credited)

- **Academic Credit:** Interns seeking college credit must coordinate requirements through their university.
- **Non-Credited (Personal Interest):**
    - Capped at a maximum of **200 total hours**.
    - At **180 hours**, the Intern Coordinator and Morgue Operations Manager will conduct an evaluation meeting to review progress and determine whether to complete or extend the remaining hours.

What We Offer

This program is structured to educate students through direct, hands-on training at the Office of the Medical Examiner (OME). Over the course of the internship, students learn morgue operations and gain practical experience. Following a 1-to-2-day orientation, interns rotate through four core operational modules while continuously practicing case documentation in UMED and attending morning reports.

This track is built upon five foundational tenets:

- **Forensic Photography & Identification (Module 1)**
    - Take identification, overall, and specific detail photographs during autopsies.
    - Observe homicide photography protocols and learn proper evidence handling procedures.
    - Obtain thumbprints from decedents during autopsy to assist with identification.
- **Toxicology & Specimen Collection (Module 2)**
    - Collect vitreous, blood, and urine samples from decedents during autopsy.
    - Accurately complete and label toxicology forms and viral forms when applicable.
    - Attend and create morning reports to gain insight into specific cases, and spend a dedicated day shadowing the tox lab.
- **Autopsy Assistance & Radiologic Imaging (Module 3)**
    - Learn basic autopsy assistant techniques, observe full eviscerations, and see how evidence is handled in a diener role.
    - Perform 1 to 2 supervised full eviscerations.
    - Observe and assist staff in taking postmortem X-rays of decedents.
- **Morgue Receiving & Case Setup (Module 4)**
    - Observe and assist with the formal receiving and releasing of decedents.
    - Observe how medications are collected and learn morning case setup procedures.

- **Cross-Departmental Shadowing:** Time permitting, expand your understanding of death investigation by shadowing a forensic pathologist, death investigator, or epidemiologist, touring the crime lab, or attending a death scene with an investigator. (Note: Certain opportunities, such as attending a death scene, are not guaranteed).
- **Academic Projects:** Complete OME-assigned projects, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) reviews, quizzes, historical spot cards, suicide study research articles, a case study, and a PowerPoint presentation.
- **Testing:** Demonstrate your progress through module tests, a final phase combining all learned skills across the morgue, a comprehensive final exam, and an exit interview.

Expectations & Policies

- **Professionalism:** Internships are held to the same professional standards as full-time employment.
- **Attendance:** Punctual, reliable attendance (minimum 16 hrs/week). If you are unable to work a scheduled shift, prompt advance notice by phone is required.
- **Equipment:** Personal laptop required for work during downtime.
- **Feedback:** Receptiveness to supervision, guidance, and constructive feedback.
- **Performance Reviews:** Periodic evaluations will be conducted. If goals or expectations are consistently unmet by either party, the internship may be terminated early.

How to Apply

Application Deadlines

- **Spring Semester:** Opens Sept 1 | **Deadline:** 2nd Friday in November
- **Summer Semester:** Opens Jan 1 | **Deadline:** 2nd Friday in March
- **Fall Semester:** Opens May 1 | **Deadline:** 2nd Friday in June

Interviews are typically scheduled within one week after the submission deadline.

Submission Instructions

Complete the application form, and submit it along with your resume via mail or email:

Mail:

Utah State Office of the Medical Examiner
ATTN: Shelby Petty
4451 South 2700 West Taylorsville, UT 84129

Email:

OMEinternship@utah.gov or
Shelbypetty@utah.gov