

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coroners, State Medical Examiners, and State Forensic Anthropologists are the medicolegal death investigators in Kentucky. They are part of the state's criminal justice system. Coroners investigate and certify deaths within their jurisdiction, and possess the full power and authority of peace officers. The role of the Kentucky Coroner crosses traditional boundaries, and encompasses a broad spectrum of responsibilities ranging from law enforcement to public health

# Coroner's legal qualifications In Kentucky

- Must be 24 yrs of age
- Citizen of Kentucky
- Resided in the state for 2yrs
- Resided in the county in which they are a candidate for one year
- Not fought in a dual
- 4 yrs term

# Coroners in Kentucky

- Are required to enroll in a 40 hrs Basic Medicolegal Death Investigation course within 1yr of election.
- They have to complete the class and pass the test.
- Every year after that they must take an 18hr continuing education class.

What is considered a

**Coroner's Case?**

## **72.025 Circumstances requiring **post-mortem** examination to be performed by coroner.**

Coroners shall require a post-mortem examination to be performed in the following circumstances:

- (1) When the death of a human being appears to be caused by homicide or violence;
- (2) When the death of a human being appears to be the result of suicide;
- (3) When the death of a human being appears to be the result of the presence of drugs or poisons in the body;

(4) When the death of a human being appears to be the result of a motor vehicle accident and the operator of the motor vehicle left the scene of the accident or the body was found in or near a roadway or railroad;

(5) When the death of a human being occurs while the person is in a state mental institution or mental hospital when there is no previous medical history to explain the death, or while the person is in police custody, a jail or penal institution;

- (6) When the death of a human being occurs in a motor vehicle accident and when an external examination of the body does not reveal a lethal traumatic injury;
- (7) When the death of a human being appears to be the result of a fire or explosion;
- (8) When the death of a child appears to indicate child abuse prior to the death;

- (9) When the manner of death appears to be other than natural;
- (10) When human skeletonized remains are found;
- (11) When post-mortem decomposition of a human corpse exists to the extent that external examination of the corpse cannot rule out injury or where the circumstances of death cannot rule out the commission of a crime;
- (12) When the death of a human being appears to be the result of drowning



(13) When the death of an infant appears to be caused by sudden infant death syndrome in that the infant has no previous medical history to explain the death;

(14) When the death of a human being occurs as a result of an accident;

(15) When the death of a human being occurs under the age of forty (40) and there is no past medical history to explain the death:

(16) When the death of a human being occurs at the work site and there is no apparent cause of death such as an injury or when industrial toxics may have contributed to the cause of death;

(17) When the body is to be cremated and there is no past medical history to explain the death;

(18) When the death of a human being is sudden and unexplained; and

(19) When the death of a human being occurs and the decedent is not receiving treatment by a licensed physician and there is no ascertainable medical history to indicate the cause of death.

**Effective: July 15, 1998**

Death Notification is  
Performed by the  
Coroner

To avoid some survivors hearing from the news first through the media or a reporter calling, it is the responsibility of the **coroner** alone to notify the next of kin. They are also responsible for notifying the news since the coroner makes sure the next of kin has been notified before the release of names.

# Jefferson County Coroner's Office

Coroner  
Barbara Weakley-Jones MD

Administrative  
deputy  
coroners

Cindy Thoene  
(Cremations)  
Steve Moran  
(Office works)  
Kim Smith( IT)

Indigent  
Program

Jackie Smith

Personnel/  
Rotating  
deputies

Joann farmer(Chief)  
Larry Carroll  
Eddie Robinson  
Jack Arnold  
Rita Taylor  
Scott Russ  
Mike Haag  
Wayne Pryse  
David Wood

# Coroner statistics 2014-2015

- Number cases                      2014                      4,723
- 2015                      4,924
- Average bodies in morgue were 5
- The indigent burial program
  - Cremations
  - Burials

# 2016 statistics

- Numbers of cases 5,500
- 15 cases per 24hr period
- Average 6 bodies in morgue per day, some stay in morgue for 2-3 wks.
- Cremations 152
- Burials 137
- Increase in homicides and drug overdoses



# Coroner statistics 2014-2015

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  4,723                   4,924
- Average bodies in morgue were 5 daily
- The indigent program   2014                   2015
  - Burials                   134                   161
  - Cremations              180                   172

Our rotating deputies rotate on a 24hr period starting at 9am in the morning until 9am the next morning, then off 60 hours. They get paid a yearly fee no matter many cases they do a year or hours they work. They get no counted vacation or sick leave. They get no overtime pay even though they are never finished at 9 am the next day.

**They must love what they do for this type of schedule**

# The Coroner's office Since 1977

The office has had the same number of rotating deputies (9).

The same number of staff people or actually less now.

Only one major increase in pay except for cost of living raises.

Had to change some policies so we could handle the load of cases

There has been a marked increase in homicide and drug overdose cases.

We have never not had a morgue  
to store our bodies

We need a MORGUE and more  
working Live Bodies