



2005 Census of Medical Examiners and Coroners (CMEC)

RTI International has conducted research on crime, violence, justice systems, and behavioral health for over 30 years. Using rigorous multidisciplinary approaches, RTI research advances knowledge and informs policy, practice, and programs nationally and internationally.

Professional backgrounds of RTI researchers span a wide variety of disciplines including criminology, economics, law, psychology, public health, and sociology. Crime, violence, and justice staff are located in RTI's main office in Research Triangle Park, NC, and in offices throughout the United States. RTI maintains a presence in Washington, DC, for consultation on crime, violence, justice, and behavioral health topics.

Overview

Medical examiners and coroners are a valuable and unique source of information for a wide variety of criminal justice and public health-related issues. They provide critical information on violent deaths, drug-related deaths, infectious disease and bioterrorism, missing person cases, and other important societal problems. Yet data from medical examiner and coroner offices have been limited, vary widely in form and content, and are often difficult to obtain. Although most of these organizations are publicly funded, there are no national databases to facilitate the identification of emerging trends and patterns, particularly for infrequent or rare events that may otherwise escape detection. Before effective plans and strategies can be designed and implemented to systematically collect such information, it is essential that we improve our understanding of the operations of medical examiners and coroners across the nation.

Sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the **2005 Census of Medical Examiner and Coroner Offices (CMEC)** focuses on micro-legal death investigations in the United States, providing a national picture of medical examiner and coroner offices, including personnel, expenditures, workload, capabilities and procedures, and resource needs. The goals of the project are to develop improved information on the capabilities of U.S. medical examiners and coroners and the types of data systems and record retention procedures they use, as well as to identify the resource needs of these offices. One of the key



objectives of this Census is to enumerate specialized death investigations handled by medical examiner and coroner offices, including unidentified human decedents and infant death cases, as well as policies and procedures related to the processing of these cases. Mail, Web, and telephone modes of data collection were used to collect information from approximately 2,000 medical examiner and coroner offices across the country.

RTI's multidisciplinary project team includes forensic experts who understand the medical examiner and coroner systems, as well as staff with expertise in criminal justice operations, survey administration, and Web development. As part of the project, RTI has developed collaborative relationships with key organizations in the field, including the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) and the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME). This project strongly positions RTI for future work that involves routine collection of data from these entities, as well as the establishment and administration of a national medical examiner and coroner reporting system.

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