

Coroner Investigations (3316P)

Program Locator

County

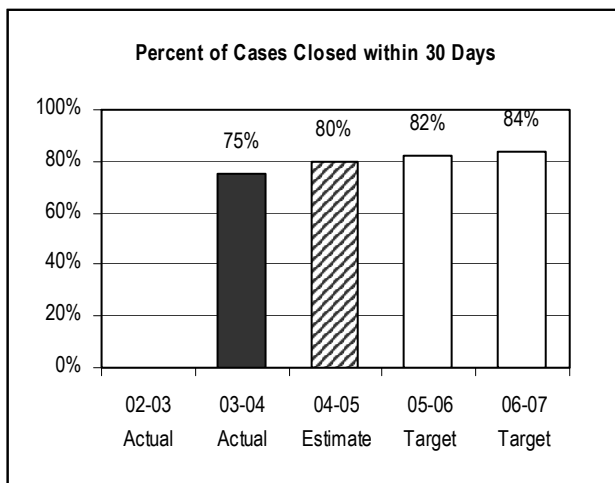
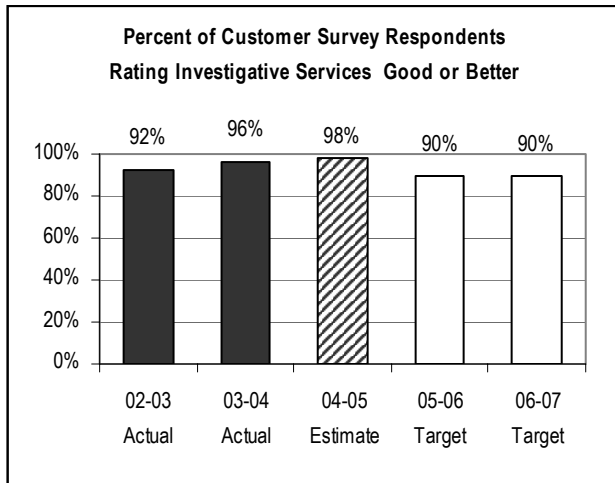
Criminal Justice

Coroner's Office

▷ **Coroner Investigations**

Coroner Pathology

Headline Measures



Program Outcome Statement

The Coroner's Investigations Program provides responsive and collaborative investigative services to law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, the funeral industry and families to assist in determining mode, manner and cause of death.

Services and Accomplishments

The Coroner's Investigations Program contributes to the goals of the Shared Vision 2010 commitment to Ensure Basic Health and Safety for All by responding to calls for service and determining modes and manner of death in collaboration with Coroner Pathology. Investigators conduct thorough investigations upon request by law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, the funeral industry and families and provide pamphlets to families with important information as to why autopsies are performed, how to contact a funeral home and available services.

The following are major accomplishments in the current year:

- Improved percent of customer survey respondents rating Investigative Services good or better
- Initiated replacement of the Coroner's Case Management System
- Improved the time it takes to make Coroner's Office reports available to decedents' families
- Improved disaster preparedness
- Educated stakeholders about the roles and responsibilities of the Coroner's Office

Story Behind Baseline Performance

The Investigations Unit has seen improvement in overall customer satisfaction, achieving a 98% satisfaction rating. This increase is due in part to the greater number and consistency with which the customer surveys are sent out, the time spent with family members either on scene or at the office, the central location in the County, and the willingness of all Coroner's Office staff to help customers however possible. The Coroner's Administrative Office is located at the County's Crime Lab facility; the building is centrally located, enabling investigators to respond to the scene of a death in a timely manner. This location also makes it easier for family members to pick up the property of their loved one and the reports generated by this office. The Investigations Division maintains good working relationships with law enforcement, funeral homes, hospitals and the families of decedents who died in San Mateo County.

Every effort is made to expedite the closure of cases in order to help ease the burden on survivors. This was added as a program performance measure in FY 2004-05 with a target of closing 75% of all cases closed within 30 days. Cases that take longer than 30 days are being reviewed in order to streamline the process.

Since FY 2002-03, the number of calls for service has increased by 10%. This number is expected to continue to climb to approximately

3,050 deaths reported to the Coroner's Office in FY 2004-05. The increase is attributable to an aging population and greater awareness by doctors, hospital staff and funeral homes of the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Coroner.

The Coroner's Case Management System (CCMS) is in the process of being replaced. The old CCMS no longer met current reporting requirements and was prone to creating errors that could only be corrected by reloading the last saved copy of the data, requiring the re-input of all data entered since that back up. The new system meets both performance and reporting needs and allows for the creation of new types of reports as needed.

Steps are being taken to ensure the Coroner's Office is prepared to respond to a disaster. An inventory of what is needed has been created and grants and other funding sources are actively being pursued. Through grant funding the office has been able to acquire over 600 body bags, three disaster trailers, a mobile morgue, self-contained breathing apparatus, gloves and protective suits.

The identification of John and Jane Does is an important down time project. There are unidentified persons dating back to the 1960's and before. The Deputy Coroners review case files and property and evidence, then compare the unidentified person to missing persons. Through DNA analysis two John Does have been identified since April 2003. This process takes several months once DNA has been obtained and is costly. Identifications help bring closure to families who have been missing a loved one for many years.

Major challenges over the next two years will be:

- To continue to provide a high level of service while keeping costs from rising significantly
- To maintain qualified relief/extra help staff for vacation and sick leave coverage to minimize the use of overtime funds
- To implement a new Case Management System

Program Priorities

The Coroner's Investigations Program will meet performance targets by doing the following:

Achieve an Overall Customer Satisfaction Rating of at Least 90%

- Consistently send out surveys for feedback on how to better meet customer needs
- Improve process of notifying mortuaries when individuals are ready for release
- Establish a means for interested families to view the decedent at the morgue prior to being released to the mortuary

Close 82% of All Cases Reported to the Coroner's Office within 30 Days

- Continue to evaluate and streamline case processing
- Train Investigators on the new Coroner's Case Management System

Complete Preparedness for Major Disaster within Two Years

- Work with the Office of Emergency Services to identify grant funding for equipment to use in case of a large scale emergency

- Maintain organized equipment and supplies for easy access in a disaster

Performance Measures Summary Table

Performance Measures	FY 2002-03 Actual	FY 2003-04 Actual	FY 2004-05 Estimate	FY 2005-06 Target	FY 2006-07 Target
What/How Much We Do					
Number of deaths reported to the Coroner's Office	2,762	2,850	3,050	2,870	2,900
Number of calls requiring an investigator on-site	494	518	515	518	520
How Well We Do It (Quality)					
Percent of calls responded to within 15 minutes ⁽¹⁾	75%	78%	80%	80%	83%
Percent of calls the removal service arrives on scene within 30 minutes of requested	--	80%	80%	85%	90%
Average number of cases per investigator (annually)	395	407	436	410	414
Is Anyone Better Off? (Outcome)					
Percent of customers survey respondents rating services good or better ⁽²⁾	92%	96%	98%	90%	90%
Percent of cases closed within 30 days	--	75%	80%	82%	84%

⁽¹⁾ Includes telephone call-backs.

⁽²⁾ Beginning in FY 2005-06 a Countywide standard of 90% has been established for customer satisfaction.

Coroner Investigations (3316P) Resource Allocation Summary

	Actual 2002-03	Actual 2003-04	Revised 2004-05	Recommended 2005-06	Change 2005-06	Recommended 2006-07
Salary Resolution	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0		12.0
Funded FTE	12.0	12.0	12.0	11.9		11.9
Total Requirements	1,597,804	1,856,291	1,727,893	1,796,011	68,118	1,836,180
Total Sources	668,781	751,800	759,776	743,193	(16,583)	743,193
Net County Cost	929,022	1,104,491	968,117	1,052,818	84,701	1,092,987
NCC Breakdown						
Mandated Services			968,117	1,052,818	84,701	1,092,987

Program Net County Cost

The portion of this program's FY 2005-06 Recommended Budget which is funded by the General Fund or Net County Cost (NCC) is \$1,052,818 or 59%, of which \$1,052,818 or 100% is Mandated Services with no specified maintenance-of-effort (MOE) requirements. The County's budget for Public Safety services currently exceeds the Public Safety Sales Tax MOE by \$73 million. The Mandated Services amount reflected in this program includes a portion of this Public Safety overmatch.

FY 2005-06 Program Funding Adjustments

The following are significant changes from the FY 2004-05 Revised to the FY 2005-06 Recommended Budget:

1. Adjustments to Provide Current Level of Services

Budget adjustments have been made to meet performance targets: inclusion of merit increases; reductions to retirement contributions; annualization of negotiated labor increases; minor adjustments in operating costs and increases for services charges have been included. Intergovernmental revenue has been decreased due to a projected decrease in Public Safety Sales Tax revenue (Prop 172) and charges for service have increased slightly due to higher fees. Fund Balance has been increased based on updated year-end estimates and a corresponding adjustment to Reserves has been included.

Revenue/Sources	Appropriations	Intrafund Transfers	Reserves	Net County Cost	Positions
(16,583)	34,331	0	3,787	84,701	0

2. Contract for a New Coroner's Case Management System

A new Coroner's Case Management System is needed to improve the efficiency of investigators and meet the program priorities of responding to 80% of calls within 15 minutes and closing 82% of cases within 30 days. Reserves have been appropriated to pay for the new system. The old system was unreliable and inhibited the ability of Investigators and administrators to quickly and reliably access electronic case files to effectively manage caseloads. In addition, the old system did not provide adequate information for meaningful performance analysis and reporting.

Revenue/Sources	Appropriations	Intrafund Transfers	Reserves	Net County Cost	Positions
0	38,000	0	(38,000)	0	0

TOTAL FY 2005-06 PROGRAM FUNDING ADJUSTMENTS

Revenue/Sources	Appropriations	Intrafund Transfers	Reserves	Net County Cost	Positions
(16,583)	102,331	0	(34,213)	84,701	0

FY 2005-06 Program Funding Adjustments

The following are significant changes from the FY 2005-06 to the FY 2006-07 Recommended Budget:

3. Adjustments to Provide Current Level of Services

Budget adjustments have been made to meet performance targets: inclusion of merit increases; negotiated labor increases and increased benefit costs.

Revenue/Sources	Appropriations	Intrafund Transfers	Reserves	Net County Cost	Positions
0	40,169	0	0	40,169	0