

# Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

**FY 2026 Budget Hearing Presentation**

**Submitted by: Dr. Eric A. Pfeifer, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner**

# Dr. Eric A. Pfeifer, M.D. Chief Medical Examiner



The **Office of the Chief Medical Examiner** is statutorily charged with investigating sudden, violent, unexpected and suspicious deaths. These medicolegal investigations collect evidence, determine cause and manner of death, and provide expert testimony in both criminal and civil legal proceedings. When a death occurs on the job or appears to be work-related, the results of the medicolegal investigation are of direct benefit to the family in order that insurance claims may be appropriately settled. These examinations also help identify potentially unsafe consumer products. The public health function of the medical examiner's office is further apparent in the investigation of cases in which poisons, hazardous work environments or infectious agents are implicated. The identification of such dangerous elements allows the prompt implementation of treatment and preventative measures through coordination with Oklahoma's public health agencies and OSHA.

Founded in **1965**, this agency now encompasses the following divisions: Administration, Forensic Anthropology, Investigations, Forensic Pathology Services and Toxicology.

# Agency Vision, Mission and Core Values

**Vision:** Dignified and thorough medicolegal investigations of applicable deaths occurring in the State of Oklahoma.

**Mission:** The mission of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is to protect the public health and safety of Oklahomans through the scientific investigation of deaths as defined by state statutes. This process involves scene investigation and medicolegal autopsy (including radiology, toxicology, histology, and microbiology) complementing the activities of law enforcement agencies, district attorneys and public health officials. We accept the responsibility with integrity, diligence and compassion in order to best assist and provide answers to families, law enforcement and taxpayers of this state.

**Core Values:** Integrity, dignified independent investigation and handling of human remains, professionalism.



# Accomplishments

## Top accomplishments for FY 2023 – FY 2024

- 1) Toxicology Laboratory received their ISO17025 accreditation.
- 2) Fellowship program received their continued accreditation for ACGME.
- 3) NCHIP (electronic fingerprint program) is in full use at both offices, along with a secure OLETS terminal.





# Analysis of Agency Challenges

	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Current Actions</b> (Briefly describe how the agency is currently addressing the challenge.)	<b>Planned Actions</b> (Briefly describe how the agency plans to address the challenge going forward.)
<b>1</b>	<b>Inflation/Increase in Operating costs</b>	<b>Utilizing revolving fund</b>	<b>Request appropriations as needed to compensate for inflationary costs</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Market forces driving professional salaries</b>	<b>Retain professional staff by offering regionally competitive salaries</b>	<b>Request appropriations as needed to retain professional staff.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Regain National Association of Medical Examiners accreditation</b>	<b>Retention of professional staff to handle caseload</b>	<b>Request appropriations as needed to retain professional staff</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Maintain Toxicology Laboratory Accreditation</b>	<b>Retention of professional staff to handle caseload. Maintain and upgrade laboratory equipment as needed to handle increasing caseload.</b>	<b>Utilize revolving funds when able for one-time purchases. Request appropriations as needed to retain professional staff.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Maintain Fellowship Program Accreditation</b>	<b>Provide an accredited learning environment for Forensic Pathology professionals.</b>	<b>Utilize revolving funds when able for one-time purchases. Request appropriations as needed.</b>



# Savings & Efficiencies (Current or Planned)

Savings or Efficiency Name	Brief description of how savings were achieved	Savings in Unit of Measurement*	FY 2023 (Actual \$ Savings)	FY 2024 (Projected \$ Savings)	FY 2025 (Projected \$ Savings)
<i>CT Scanner</i>	<i>Continued development of using postmortem CT scans to supplement traditional surgical autopsies.</i>	<i>Lessen surgical autopsies.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>My Health Membership</b>	Assist in acquiring medical records faster to reduce permit turn around time.	Improve permit turnaround.	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* Hours, FTE, square feet, etc.



# Agency Goals and Key Performance Metrics

Goal		Metric	FY 24 Target*	FY 24 Actuals	FY 25 Target	FY 29 Target
1	The agency continues to work towards obtaining NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) reaccreditation.	Meet the most recently published standards set forth by NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners)	Recruitment & retention of forensic Professionals to meeting NAME standards	Recruitment of forensic professional staff to meet NAME standards	Achieve full staff of forensic professionals for NAME standards	Continued retention of forensic professionals to continue NAME accreditation
2	Cases per pathologists (< 250/per year)	< 250 autopsy equivalents per pathologist per year.	<250	320	<250	<250
3	Permit turn-around time. (< 2 business days)	< 2 business days	< 2 business days	12 hours	< 2 business days	< 2 business days
4	> 90% cases finalized in 90 days	> 90% cases finalized in 90 days	> 90%	56%	> 90%	> 90%
5						
6						
7						



*Note: Include the FY 2024 target metrics from the Strategic Plan submitted in 2022.*

# Projects for FY 2024 - 2025

## Projects

- 1) Acquire NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) re-accreditation.
- 2) Upstairs expansion for Oklahoma City office – to allow space for new staff and expand the Toxicology Laboratory.
- 3) Add 2 new Forensic Pathologists, 1 new Forensic Anthropologist for the Tulsa office and 3 new Forensic Pathologists for the Oklahoma City office.
- 4) 2 new Forensic Pathologist Fellows (1 for Oklahoma City and 1 for Tulsa locations)
- 5) Implementation of new Case Management System (CMS)





# Projects for FY 2026

- 1) Expand office and laboratory areas for the Toxicology Laboratory to handle increasing caseload and maintain ISO17025 accreditation.
- 2) Continue to retain and recruit Forensic Pathologists, Forensic Toxicologists, Forensic Chemists and Forensic Anthropologists to handle increased caseload and maintain NAME accreditation standards.
- 3) Continue to maintain ACGME accreditation for the Fellowship program.



# Total Historic Actual Expenditures (FY 2020-24) and Current Year Budget (FY 2025)

## Explanation of Changes and Trends

FY 2020 began constructing Tulsa practice site on OSU-Tulsa campus.

FY 2021 continued to purchase equipment and supplies for Tulsa office. IT begins planning moving project for Tulsa office.

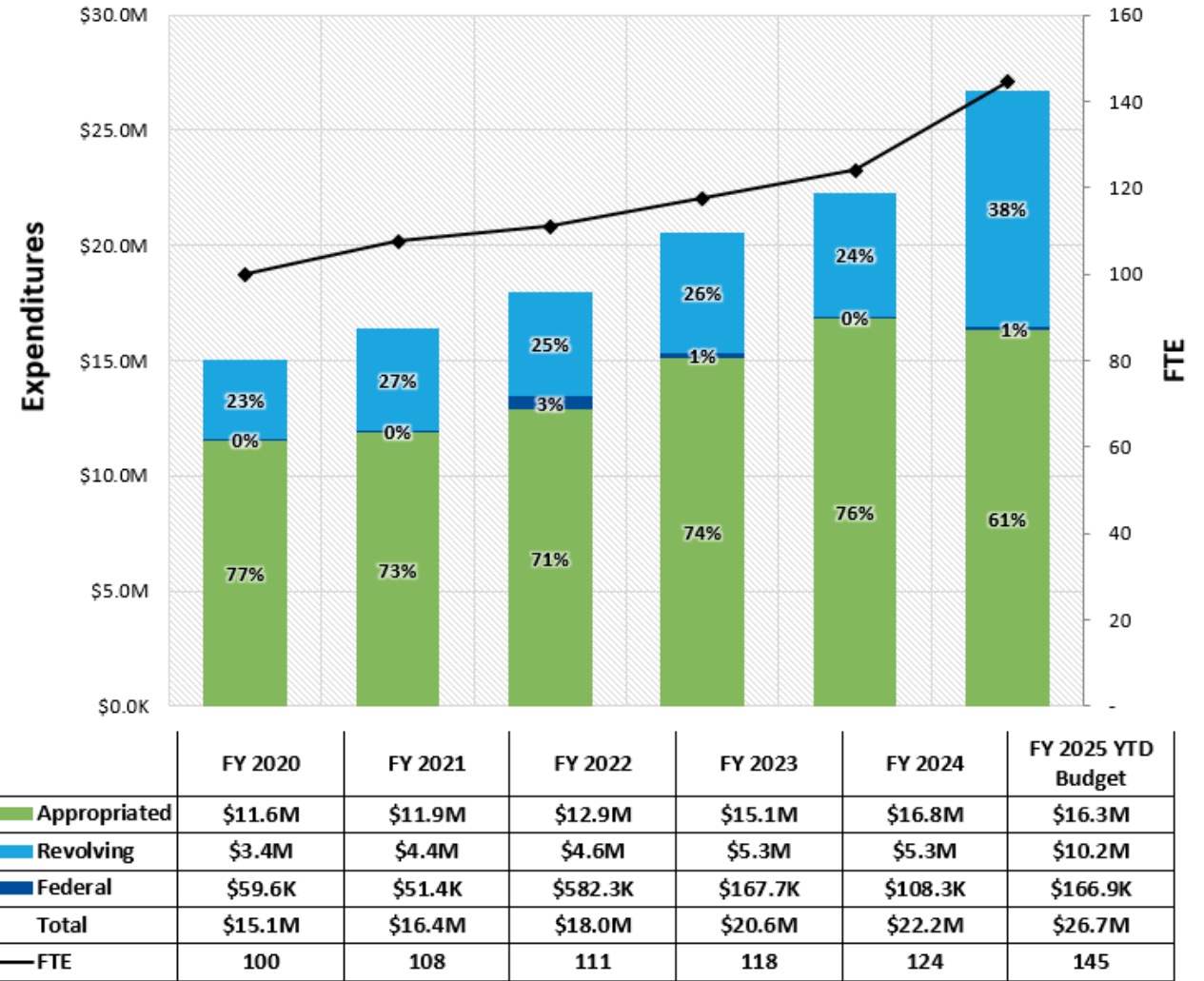
FY 2022 completed construction of Tulsa site on OSU-Tulsa campus and began vacating old building/moving into new building. Continued IT projects to complete Tulsa office.

FY 2023 complete move into Tulsa building. Purchase additional equipment and supplies as needed for daily operation.

FY 2024 completion of ABFT & ISO accreditation for Toxicology Laboratory, retention of ACGME accreditation for Fellowship program. Continued recruitment and retention of professional staff as appropriate for caseload.

FY 2025 National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) re-accreditation. Retention of professional staff to meet/exceed national standards.

### Historic Total Actual Expenditures and Current Year Budget



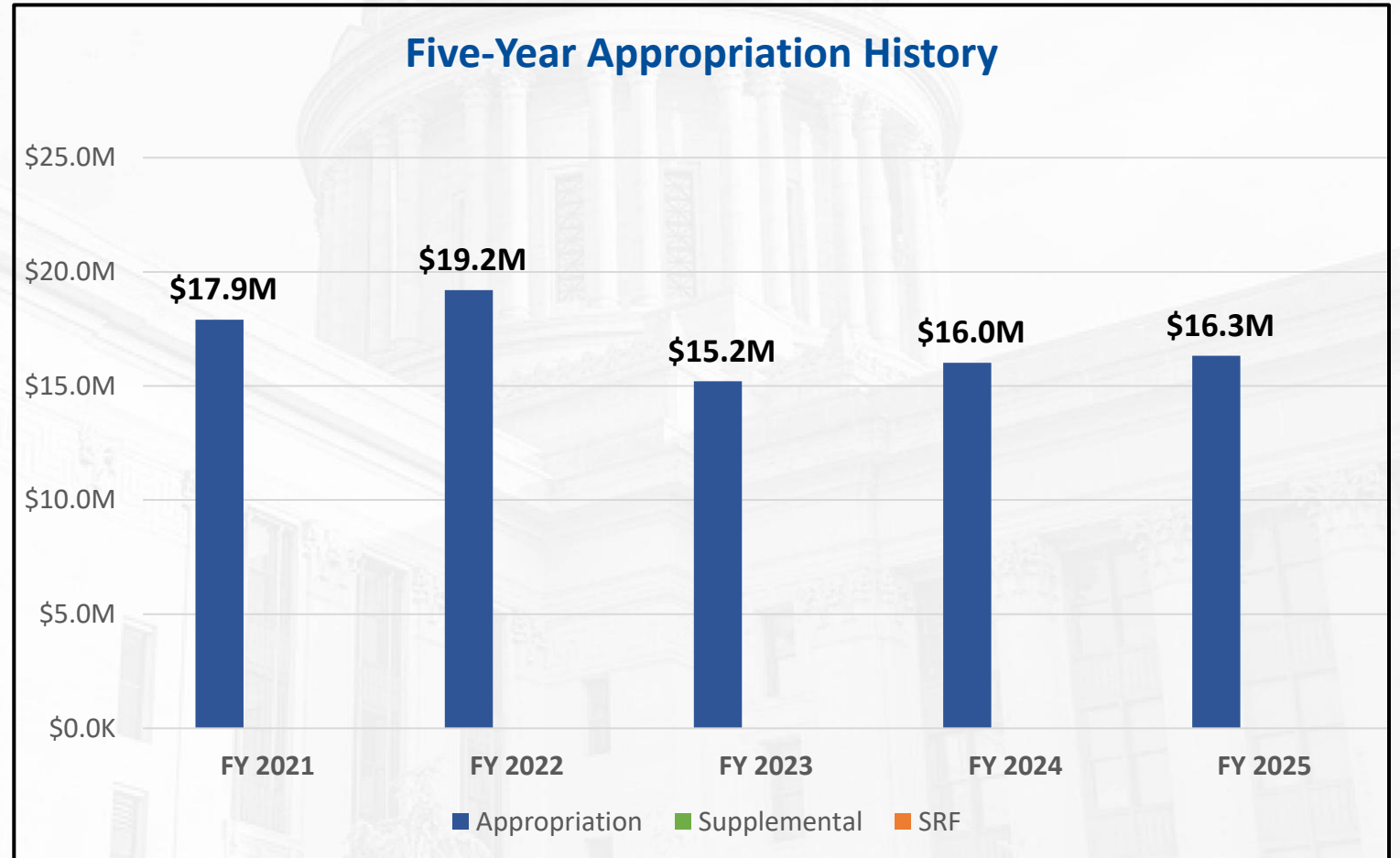


# FY 2025 Budgeted Full Time Equivalents (FTE)

	FY 2025 Budgeted FTE
<b>Total FTE</b>	130
<b>Supervisor FTE</b>	11
<b>Supervisors to Total FTE Ratio (%)</b>	8.5%
<b>Current Budgeted but Unfilled FTE</b>	4

# Appropriation History

Fiscal Year	Legislated Appropriation (\$) (Includes supplementals and SRF/ARPA.)
FY 2021	\$17,900,000
FY 2022	\$19,200,000
FY 2023	\$15,206,144
FY 2024	\$16,019,144
FY 2025	\$16,319,144



*\*Includes Supplemental and Statewide Recovery Fund (ARPA) appropriations.*





# Financial Resource Analysis

Carryover	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Total appropriated carryover amount expended (\$)	\$1,691,297	\$2,073,637	\$2,462,304	\$2,455,995

Historical Cash Balances	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Year End Revolving Fund Cash Balances <i>(All Revolving Funds)</i>	\$6,044,920	\$7,396,790	\$7,094,980	\$7,034,267

Revolving Class Fund # <i>(Unrestricted only)</i>	Revolving Class Fund Name <i>(Unrestricted only)</i>	Current cash balance (\$)	Projected FY 2025 year-end cash balance (\$)
20000		\$4,358,812	\$2,580,614
#		\$	\$
#		\$	\$
#		\$	\$
#		\$	\$
#		\$	\$
	<b>Total Unrestricted Revolving Fund Cash balance:</b>	\$	\$



*Unrestricted funds are those that are not limited by state or federal law, rule, regulation, other legally binding method, or donor restriction.*

# FY 2023 – 2024 Appropriation Change Review

<i>Purpose of appropriation increase or decrease</i>	<i>Amount FY 2023</i>	<i>Amount FY 2024</i>	<i>Total amount received FY 2023 - 24</i>	<i>Total amount expended by 11/1/2024</i>	<i>Included in FY 2025 approp? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>If not expended fully, please explain.</i>
Tulsa office construction completion	-\$4,000,000	\$0	\$	\$	No	Decrease in FY23 due to Tulsa office build completion
Recruitment and retention of Forensic professionals	\$	\$813,000	\$31,225,288	\$29,546,427	Yes	Recruitment and retention of Forensic professionals.
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
	\$	\$	\$	\$		
<b>Totals</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$		



*\*Do not include SRF / ARPA appropriation increases.*

# FY 2025 Appropriation Change Review

<i>Purpose of appropriation increase or decrease</i>	<i>Amount of increase or decrease (\$)</i>	<i>Does this need to be included in your FY 2026 appropriation? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>If yes, included in appropriation for same purpose? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>If not included for same purpose, please explain.</i>
Recruitment & retention of Forensic Professionals	\$300,000	Yes	Yes	
	\$			
	\$			
	\$			
	\$			
	\$			
	\$			
	\$			
<b>Total adjustment</b>	\$			



*\*Do not include SRF / ARPA appropriation increases.*

# Budget & Supplemental Incremental Request Summary

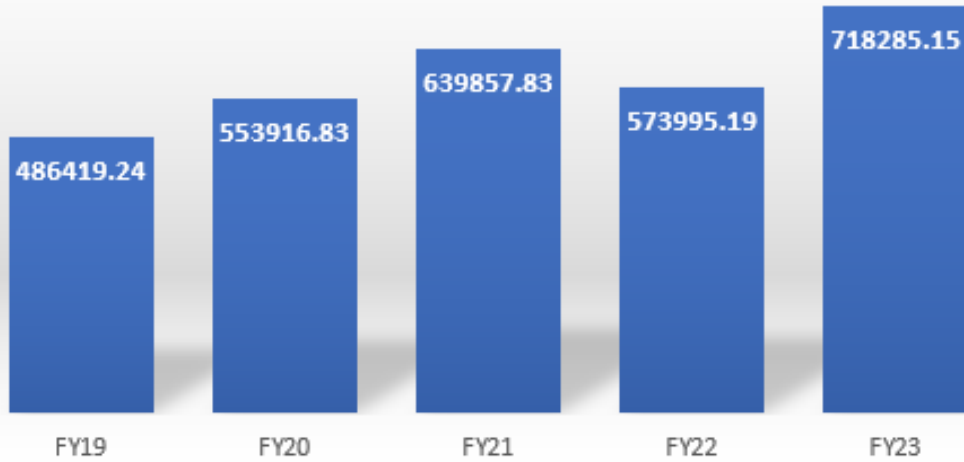
	Request Name	FY 2026 Incremental Appropriation Request Amount (\$) {or FY 2025 for Supplementals}	Type of Request: Recurring, One-time, or Supplemental
1	Recruitment & Retention of Forensic professional staff, market increases for other professional staff.	\$3,500,000	Recurring
2			
3			
4			
5			



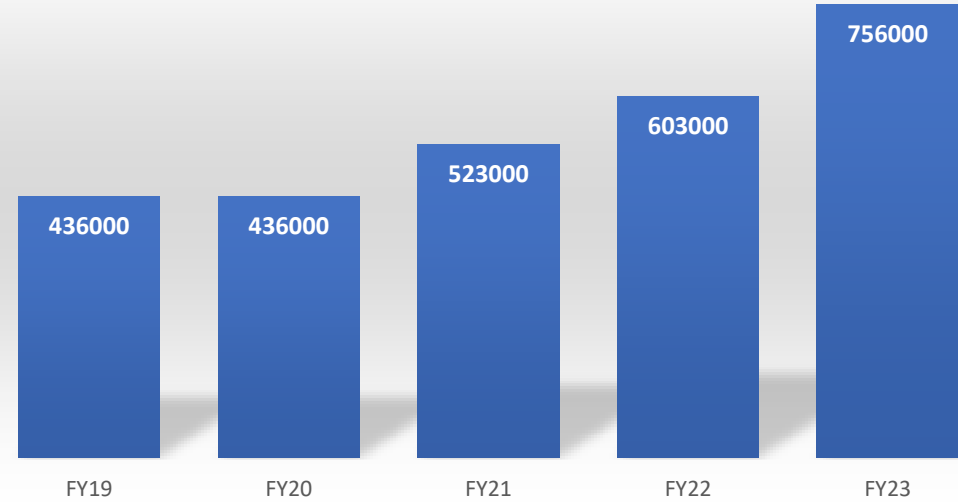


# Agency Operational Expense Trends

## Transport Expenses FY19 - FY23



## Medical Supplies FY19 - FY23



## IT Expenses FY20-FY23



# (1) Supplemental Budget Request

<b>Forensic Recruitment/Retention</b>	
Type: Recurring	\$ 3,500,000
<p>In order for our office to handle the increasing caseload at national standards, it is essential to recruit and retain highly skilled Forensic staff including Forensic Pathologists, Forensic Chemists, Forensic Toxicologists, and Forensic Anthropologists.</p> <p>The field of forensic sciences is exceptionally competitive and chronically understaffed. Recruiting and retaining these professionals is an ongoing challenge that our agency faces and will continue to encounter in the future.</p>	

