

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**



Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

1) Transparency

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to be more transparent. Please include a description of:

- *How and to what extent your agency shares information with the public, e.g. publication of information in the District register and on the agency website, press releases, and documents in the agency's FOIAXpress reading room.*

The OCME is committed to a transparent and open form of Government. District agencies are required to make certain records available, including: 1) employee salary information; 2) statements of policy; 3) published opinions; 4) agency performance plans; 5) budget information; 6) District wide FOIA reports; and 7) OCME's organizational chart. OCME is in compliance with this open government mandate and the above enumerated information can be found on OCME's website at <http://ocme.dc.gov/page/open-government-and-foia-ocme>.

- *How the agency meets its obligations pursuant to the District's Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.*

The OCME meets its obligation to FOIA by issuing timely responses to requestors. Moreover, when appropriate, OCME posts frequently requested documents, or documents of public interest, to the OCME's FOIAXpress reading room. The OCME meets its obligations to the Open Meetings Act by ensuring compliance for the three (3) Fatality Review Committees administered by the OCME.

- *Steps your agency will take to increase public access to information.*

OCME will continue to timely respond to FOIA requests and post relevant information, when appropriate, to the FOIAXpress reading room. Additionally, OCME is committed to assisting FOIA requestors in identifying the proper agency to direct FOIA requests to for timely response.

- *Steps your agency will take, including an implementation timeline, to webcast live and archive on the internet board or commission meetings.*

The OCME administers three (3) Fatality Review Boards on behalf of the District. Due to the nature of the materials reviewed by committee members Case Reviews are Closed to the Public pursuant to D.C. Official Code §§2-575(b)(1) as the law or court order requires that a particular matter or proceeding not be public; and 2-575(b)(14) to plan, discuss, or hear reports concerning ongoing or planned investigations of alleged criminal or civil misconduct or violations of law or regulations, if disclosure to the public would harm the investigation. However, OCME is committed to working with BEGA to assess how best to comply with live webcasts and archives of the meetings when appropriate and legally allowable.

- *How your agency has taken or plans to take steps to make more of its data available to the public.*

OCME is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no dataset from OCME is selected to be included in this 2014 release, we will continue to work with OCA and OCTO to identify datasets appropriate to publish in 2015. In the future, requirements for open data reporting will be provided by the Chief Data Officer.

2) **Public Engagement and Participation**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency provides online access to proposed rules and regulations and secures public input on them. Please list links to specific websites.*

The OCME, in conjunction with the Department of Forensic Sciences, published notice of a proposed rulemaking in support of the D.C. Breath Alcohol Testing Program on April 27, 2014 for public comment. OCME is committed to seeking public comment when there are amendments to OCME specific regulations or statutes. Moreover, OCME publicly notices statutory authority granted to OCME for death investigations on the OCME website. Questions or comments from the public can be direct to the linked titled “Ask the Chief Medical Examiner” for a response within 24 hours of receipt or the next business day.

- *How your agency shares information and resources to keep the public properly informed, e.g. community meetings, public hearings, FAQs, and*

ways the public can provide input such as Twitter, grade.dc.gov, email contacts.

OCME publishes notice of all three (3) Fatality Review Committee meetings in accordance when the Open Meetings Act. Moreover, OCME is committed to providing timely response to media inquiries, bloggers, private citizens when requested and the information sought is subject to public release.

- *How your agency identifies stakeholders and invites their participation.*

OCME has a variety of stakeholders including first responders, Funeral Directors, educational institutions, health care entities, and public health agencies. To invite participation with these stakeholders, OCME has attended various board and commission meetings, lectured at educational institutions, established formal and informal relationships with health care entities to better serve the District, and has actively worked with public health agencies to help inform protocols for the safe handling and dignified disposition of decedent remains.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve public engagement and participation including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering.*

OCME will continue to timely respond to public inquires when the requested information is subject to public release. OCME is working on a new initiative utilizing GSI mapping to compile death data to improve public health surveillance that will better inform policy decisions District wide and will encourage pubic engagement.

3) **Collaboration**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand cooperation among departments, other governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling its obligations. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency currently collaborates with the above parties. Please list links to specific websites if appropriate.*

OCME has been working to improve relationships with educational institutions, public health organizations and District agencies to better serve the District. This initiative has included OCME's use of the state of the art Consolidated Forensic Laboratory (CFL) to expose stakeholders to the facility and capabilities of District agencies housed at the CFL. OCME is committed to strengthening relationships with our District government agency partners to improve response and provide expertise in public emergency events involving mass fatalities.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve collaboration with the above parties including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering, e.g. prizes, competitions, and other innovative methods.*

OCME will continue to timely respond to public inquires when the requested information is subject to public release. As formal partnerships with these entities develops, points of contact will be identified to coordinate response to internal inquiries and to initiate public participation via educational opportunities and representation at professional societies through services as keynote speaks and, when ethically permissible, as formal members in the societal organization.