

TITLE: TISSUE/ORGAN RETENTION AND DISPOSITION

Policy: Tissue/organs removed at autopsy are retained and stored at the District of Columbia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (DC OCME). These tissues shall be saved in a fashion consistent with the sound practice of Forensic Pathology.

Purpose: To ensure for proper tissue/organ retention and disposition in accordance with the Forensic Autopsy Performance Standards and mission of the OCME.

Scope: This policy shall apply to all OCME employees.

The DC OCME's mandate is to perform death investigations. As such, it has no authority to remove and/or preserve tissues outside of what is allowed for determination of cause and manner of deaths.

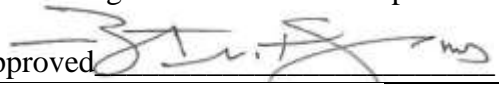
1. Organ/Tissue retention and disposition

1.1. At the time of autopsy, the pathologist will take and retain samples of major organs and any other tissues deemed appropriate to the case. What is retained and how much is at the discretion of the pathologist.

Representative sections of organs and tissues are generally retained in formalin, so that histological preparations or other tests may be performed, when necessary, for determination of cause and manner of death. They can also be used as quality control for the Histology Laboratory. Tissues are biological waste and are disposed of according to DC OCME Policy and Procedure.

1.2. Organs may be retained for the purpose of determining cause and manner of death. The examined organs are considered "medical waste" and are disposed of as such according to OCME policy.

1.2.1. Notification of next-of-kin regarding whole organ retention is at the discretion of the pathologist and is not required per DC code (**DC Code § 5-1409** *If, in the opinion of the CME, or the United States Attorney, further investigation as to the cause or manner of death is required or the public interest so requires, a medical examiner shall either perform, or the CME shall arrange for a qualified pathologist*

Approved 

to perform, an autopsy on the body of the decedent and to retain tissues and biological specimens deemed necessary to an investigation. No consent of the next of kin shall be required for an autopsy to be performed under this section.)

- 1.3. It is the policy of the DC OCME not to provide tissues or organs for research without the expressed consent of the next of kin. Written permission of next of kin is required and should be documented before any tissue, body fluid and organ or portion thereof, are donated to any educational or research institution. It will be the responsibility of the research entity to approach and obtain properly signed consent from the next of kin prior to this office releasing such tissues to them.