

Policy: Every effort should be made to comply with the collection of specific items requested by law enforcement personnel investigating the case

Purpose: To document chain of custody of all evidence collected by the Medical Examiner

Scope: The medical examiner or members of the homicide unit determine evidence collection

1. General evidence guidelines

1.1. Evidence includes but is not limited to:

- 1.1.1. Tissue and Fluid Specimens
- 1.1.2. Ligature
- 1.1.3. Clothing
- 1.1.4. Fibers
- 1.1.5. Swabs
- 1.1.6. Fingernail clippings
- 1.1.7. Hair Samples

2. Collection of Evidence

2.1. Prior to the examination, the Department of Forensic Science (DFS) crime scene representatives will provide OCME mortuary and pathology staff with a list of requested evidence to be collected during the examination.

- 2.1.1. DFS crime scene representatives may provide the mortuary staff with a “Morgue Sheet.
- 2.1.2. External crime scene representatives may contact MLDI and ME to provide a list of requested evidence.
- 2.1.3. Every effort should be made to comply with the collection of specific items requested by law enforcement personnel investigating the case.

2.2. Every effort should be made to comply with the collection of specific items requested by law enforcement personnel investigating the case.

2.3. All collection methods should be practiced with minimal cross contamination and by using pre-packaged sterile instruments and equipment or sterilizing instruments using a bleach and water solution, or alcohol and water solution, or alcohol burner.

2.4. Documentation of Evidence

- 2.4.1. A photograph should be taken of the deceased as is before collection of specimens.
- 2.4.2. Evidence will be photographically documented by the forensic photographer and updated into the ‘Chain of Custody/Intake’ module in FACTS by the mortuary

staff as 'Evidence'.

- 2.5. The medical examiner collects the evidence, after photographic documentation.
- 2.6. All evidence will be collected by the medical examiner or mortuary staff under the direct observation of the attending medical examiner and placed in "properly labeled" paper envelopes or paper bags prepared by the crime scene scientists or mortuary unit staff when crime scene representatives are not present at the time of the examination.
- 2.7. To document chain of custody, all evidence collected by the Medical Examiner is packaged and labeled with a case number, is released, and a form bearing signatures of the Medical Examiner and receiving police officer is generated specifying the date and time of release. This form is called an evidence receipt and is generated in FACTS.

3. Packaging of Evidence

- 3.1. All evidence, DNA blood cards, and fingerprints will be labeled with FACTS generated label, packaged, and/or sealed with evidence tape in the presence of the law enforcement official and/or crime scene representative, medical examiner, and mortuary staff.
- 3.2. Each item of evidence to be provided to crime scene representatives or law enforcement officials will be placed in individual paper bags or envelopes, labeled with FACTS generated label, and sealed with evidence tape.
 - 3.2.1. Clothing, ligature, etc., will be placed in a paper bag.
 - 3.2.2. Fingernail clippings/scrapings, combed/pulled hair samples, and foreign material should be wrapped in clean sterile paper, and placed in paper envelope.
 - 3.2.3. Swabs (i.e. hands, mouth, genitalia, etc.) should be dried in a sterile environment then packaged in a vented paper box, or envelope.
 - 3.2.4. Slide smears should be dried in a sterile environment and placed in the slide case.
 - 3.2.5. Projectiles (ballistics) should be wrapped in a clean sterile paper and placed in paper envelope.
 - 3.2.6. Contents from the sexual assault kit should be dried in a sterile environment, labeled with the kit provided labels, and placed in the original kit box.
 - 3.2.6.1. One fingerprint card will be provided to crime scene representatives or law enforcement officials, placed in a single paper envelope, and sealed with evidence tape.
 - 3.2.6.2. Fingerprints strips will be affixed on a 10-digit fingerprint card (if obtained via ink) or digitally printed onto a 10-digit fingerprint card.
 - 3.2.6.3. The fingerprint card will include the decedent's name, birthdate (if known), sex, race, height, weight; OCME case number; the mortuary staff whom obtained the fingerprints; and 'Deceased' listed as the disposition.
 - 3.2.6.4. Palm prints obtained by Law enforcement officials and crime scene

- representatives will be packaged in paper envelopes.
- 3.2.7. The individually packaged evidence, DNA blood card, and fingerprints will be placed in exterior packaging such as one large container or one paper bag, labeled with FACTS generated label, and sealed with evidence tape.
- 3.2.8. The medical examiner will sign and date the label and evidence tape on the exterior packaging.
- 3.2.9. All external packaging must list all contents within the package
- 3.2.10. At the end of the examination, the evidence/items to be released to the law enforcement officials or crime scene representatives will be updated in the 'Chain of Custody/Release' module in FACTS by the mortuary staff.
- 3.2.11. The medical examiner will be documented in FACTS as the OCME official releasing the evidence. The law enforcement or crime scene representative will be documented in FACTS as the official receiving the evidence.
- 3.2.12. The 'Evidence Release' form will be printed by the mortuary staff, reviewed and signed by the medical examiner releasing the evidence, and signed by law enforcement officials or crime scene representatives receiving the evidence.
- A copy of the signed 'Evidence Release' form will be submitted to the law enforcement official or crime scene representative.
 - The original form will remain with the OCME staff and placed in the case file.
 - A copy of the form stamped as 'COPY' will be provided to the medical examiner staff.
 - The law enforcement officials or crime scene representatives will complete the 'Autopsy Visitor's' log book to document the evidence received for corresponding cases.
 - Each case will also have a visitor's log that will be maintained with the case file and must be filled out by those attending that particular examination.