

**M00F05**  
**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
**Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

***Operating Budget Data***

(\$ in Thousands)

	<b><u>FY 04</u></b> <b><u>Actual</u></b>	<b><u>FY 05</u></b> <b><u>Working</u></b>	<b><u>FY 06</u></b> <b><u>Allowance</u></b>	<b><u>FY 05-06</u></b> <b><u>Change</u></b>	<b><u>% Change</u></b> <b><u>Prior Year</u></b>
General Fund	\$6,620	\$7,109	\$7,493	\$384	5.4%
Federal Fund	120	131	156	25	19.1%
Reimbursable Fund	<u>202</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13.2%</u>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$6,941</b>	<b>\$7,353</b>	<b>\$7,777</b>	<b>\$424</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Contingent & Back of Bill Reductions			-25	-25	
<b>Adjusted Total</b>	<b>\$6,941</b>	<b>\$7,353</b>	<b>\$7,752</b>	<b>\$399</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

- Increases in the allowance are attributable to changes in personnel expenses, namely the inclusion of increments and the addition of contractual staff.

***Personnel Data***

	<b><u>FY 04</u></b> <b><u>Actual</u></b>	<b><u>FY 05</u></b> <b><u>Working</u></b>	<b><u>FY 06</u></b> <b><u>Allowance</u></b>	<b><u>FY 05-06</u></b> <b><u>Change</u></b>
Regular Positions	76.00	76.00	76.00	0.00
Contractual FTEs	<u>1.45</u>	<u>1.33</u>	<u>7.50</u>	<u>6.17</u>
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>77.45</b>	<b>77.33</b>	<b>83.50</b>	<b>6.17</b>

***Vacancy Data: Regular Positions***

Turnover, Excluding New Positions	1.51	1.99%
Positions Vacant as of 12/31/04	3.30	4.34%

- The addition of six contractual personnel is expected to reduce overtime compensation in fiscal 2006. New positions include three forensic investigators, two autopsy assistants, and an office clerk.

Note: Numbers may not sum to total due to rounding.

For further information contact: Suzanne M. Owen

Phone: (410) 946-5530

## ***Analysis in Brief***

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### **Major Trends**

***Number of Autopsies Remains Static:*** The number of autopsies has remained fairly level despite an increasing number of death investigations.

### **Issues**

***Office Reduces Caseload but Other Needs Remain:*** The addition of medical examiner personnel has reduced the average caseload to required levels; however, the office still requires additional personnel enhancements as well as facility improvements.

### **Recommended Actions**

	<b><u>Funds</u></b>
1. Delete funding for three new contractual positions.	\$ 69,386
<b>Total Reductions</b>	<b>\$ 69,386</b>

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**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
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***Operating Budget Analysis***

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**Program Description**

The mission of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is to:

- assist State's Attorneys, courts, law enforcement agencies, and families by providing competent, professional, thorough, and objective death investigations in cases mandated by Maryland statute;
- strengthen partnerships between federal, State, and local governments through training and education of health, legal, and law enforcement professionals;
- support research programs directed at increasing knowledge of the pathology of disease; and
- protect and promote the health of the public by assisting in the development of programs to prevent injury and death.

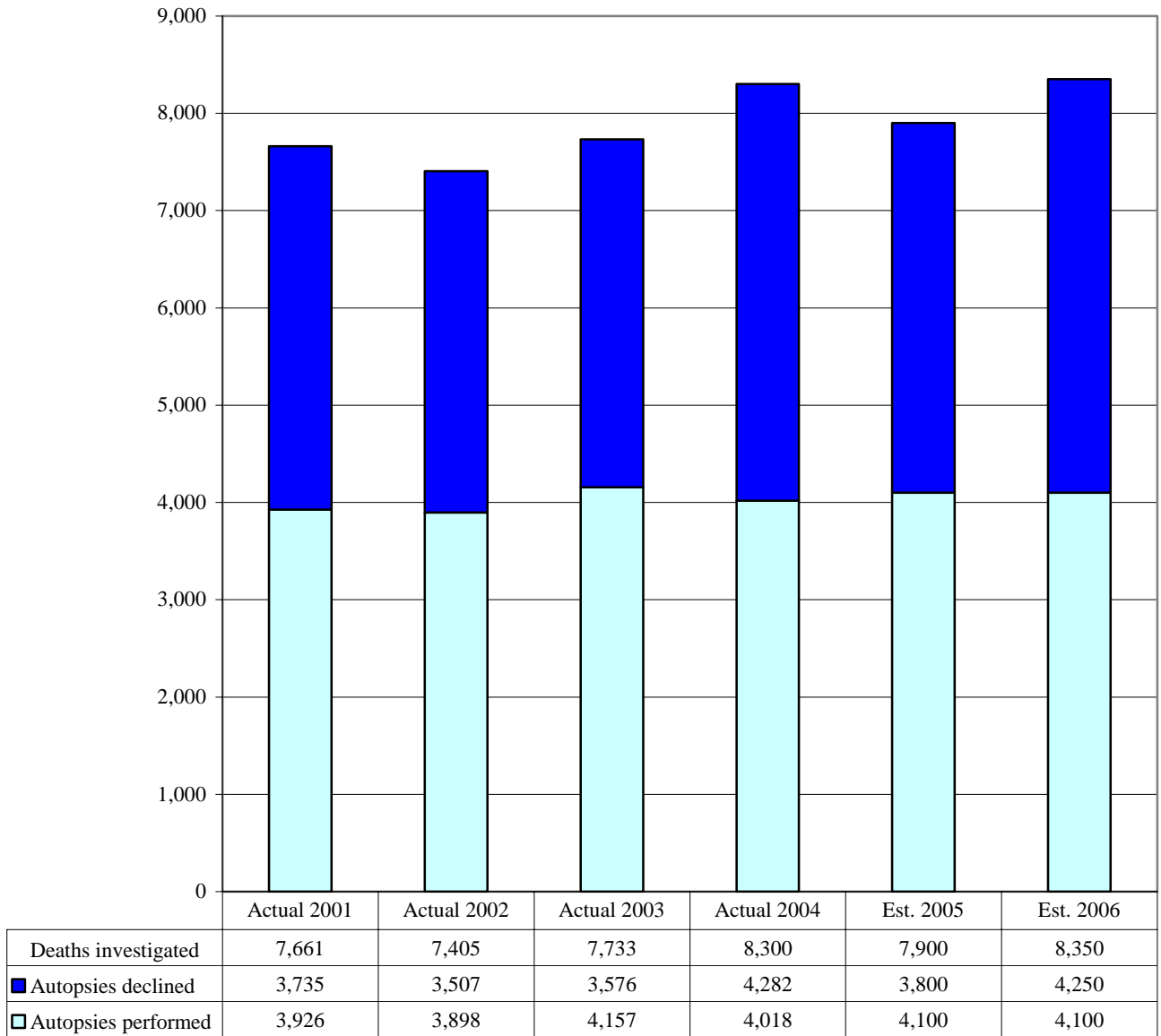
**Performance Analysis: Managing for Results**

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is required to investigate all violent or suspicious deaths, including all deaths unattended by a physician. If the cause of death can not be established during the initial investigation to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, the pathologist is required to perform an autopsy on the deceased. **Exhibit 1** shows the number of deaths investigated and the number of autopsies performed since fiscal 2001. The data indicate a trend toward increasing numbers of death investigations, reflecting continuing population growth. Despite the growth in the number of death investigations, the number of autopsies remains fairly static. The State's autopsy rate continues to be consistent with national averages: the State performed an average of one autopsy per 1,400 residents in fiscal 2004 compared to a national average of one autopsy per 1,333 residents, as measured by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).

**Governor's Proposed Budget**

The fiscal 2006 allowance increases funding \$0.4 million over the fiscal 2005 working appropriation, detailed in **Exhibit 2**. The majority of the change is the result of personnel adjustments, including the addition of increments in the Governor's proposed budget and the addition of six contractual staff positions.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Deaths Investigated by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
**Fiscal 2001 – 2006**



Source: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

**Exhibit 2**  
**Governor's Proposed Budget**  
**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
**(\$ in Thousands)**

<b>How Much It Grows:</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Federal Fund</b>	<b>Reimbursable Fund</b>	<b>Total</b>
2005 Working Appropriation	\$7,109	\$131	\$114	\$7,353
2006 Governor's Allowance	7,493	156	129	7,777
Contingent & Back of Bill Reductions	<u>-25</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-25</u>
<b>Adjusted Allowance</b>	<b>\$7,468</b>	<b>\$155</b>	<b>\$129</b>	<b>\$7,752</b>
Amount Change	\$359	\$25	\$15	\$399
Percent Change	5.1%	18.9%	13.2%	5.4%

**Where It Goes:**

**Personnel Expenses**

Increments and other compensation.....	\$125
Contributions to employees' retirement system.....	47
Reduction in expected rate of turnover.....	36
Other adjustments to salary.....	34
Social security contributions.....	33
Position reclassification.....	12
Workers' compensation premium assessment.....	11
Employee and retiree health insurance.....	-15
Reduction in overtime due to addition of contractual positions.....	-60

**Other Changes**

Addition of six contractual pathology and clerical personnel.....	156
Increase in medical supply costs, based on fiscal 2004 actual expenditures.....	22
Increase in project costs for improving availability of traffic fatality data.....	15
Reduction in replacement of medical and laboratory equipment.....	-8
Reduction in utility costs.....	-13
Other adjustments.....	4

**Total** **\$399**

Note: Numbers may not sum to total due to rounding.

## **Personnel Expenses**

The fiscal 2006 allowance includes an increase of \$223,099 for salaries. Approximately \$125,000 of the increase reflects the inclusion of increments in the Governor's proposed budget; another \$33,854 will allow for other adjustments to salary, including hiring above base. A reduction in the expected rate of turnover adds an additional \$33,202 to the allowance.

Funding for reclassification of medical examiner positions increases \$11,501 to a total of \$291,501. This funding will provide a 16% salary increase for all medical examiners, commensurate with rates approved by the Post Mortem Examiners Commission.

Certain assessments are expected to increase in fiscal 2006, including a \$46,909 increase in contributions to the employee retirement system and a \$33,279 increase in Social Security contributions. Workers' compensation insurance costs, which are increasing across agencies, rise \$11,419. Offsetting these increases is a \$15,440 reduction in health insurance costs, as these expenses have been overbudgeted in previous fiscal years.

The use of overtime is expected to decline \$60,000 in fiscal 2006. This reduction will leave \$80,000 for overtime, a 73% reduction from fiscal 2004 actual expenditures. Expected reductions in use of overtime result from the addition of six contractual pathology and clerical personnel in the Governor's proposed budget.

## **Operating Expenses**

The fiscal 2006 allowance includes \$156,416 for the addition of six contractual personnel. Citing inadequate staff levels and unusually high overtime costs, the Office of Legislative Audits recommended additional staff for support functions in a recent review of the agency. Three forensic investigators will be added to respond to death scenes, conduct investigations, and respond to inquiries from law enforcement units. Two autopsy assistants will release bodies and answer inquiries from families and funeral homes. An office services clerk will provide administrative support, reducing the amount of time required to complete autopsy reports.

Other changes in operating expenses include a \$22,160 increase in medical supply costs, based on fiscal 2004 actual expenditures and a \$15,000 increase in reimbursable funds from the State Highway Administration for ongoing development of a traffic fatality data management system. Offsetting these increases are anticipated reductions in utility costs, primarily based on anticipated reductions in the cost of steam, and a \$8,157 reduction in replacement medical and laboratory equipment.

## **Impact of Cost Containment**

The fiscal 2006 allowance reflects the elimination of \$25,004, the appropriation for matching employee deferred compensation contributions up to \$600, contingent upon enactment of a provision in budget reconciliation legislation.

## Issues

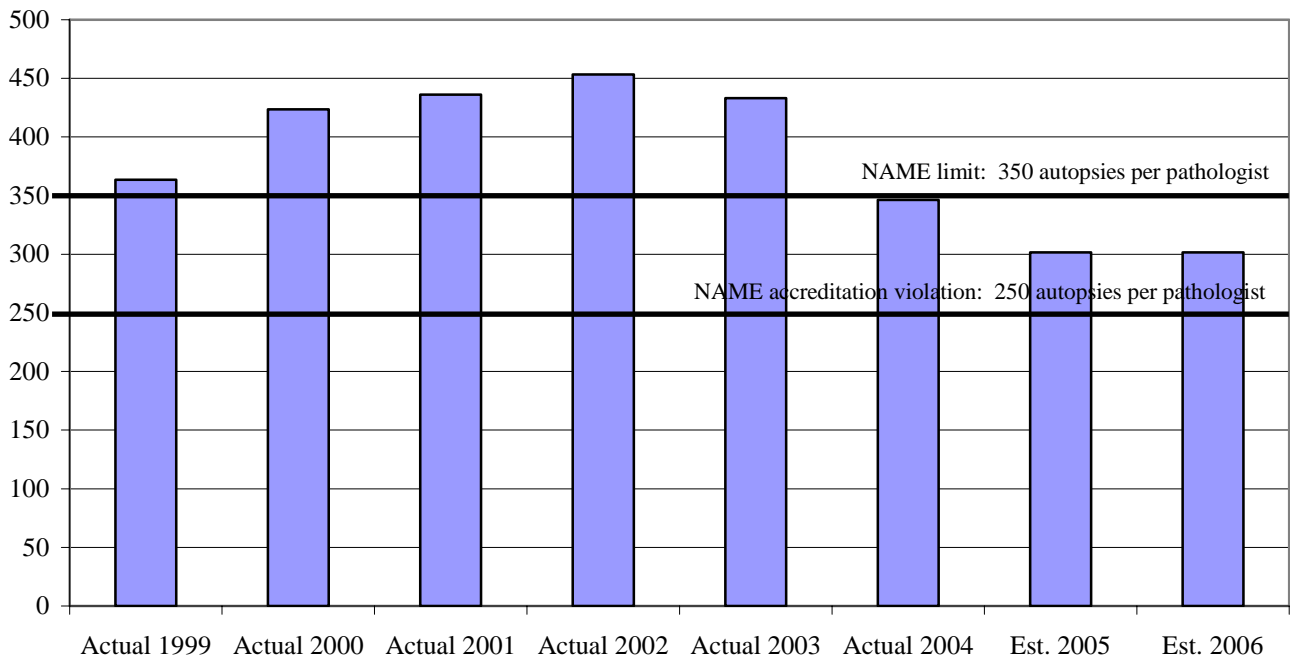
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### 1. Office Reduces Caseload Levels but Other Needs Remain

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has sought the resources required to respond to an increasing workload. To respond to the increasing demands on staff, the office has increased by 50% the number of medical examiners since fiscal 1999; the effect on caseload is detailed in **Exhibit 3**. The increase was necessary to maintain accreditation with NAME, whose policies disqualify from accreditation an office with an average caseload exceeding 350 annual autopsies per medical examiner. With the increase in medical examiner personnel, the office extended its accreditation through December 2008; however, the average caseload of 346 autopsies in fiscal 2004 nearly exceeded the threshold established by NAME. With the addition of two medical examiner positions in fiscal 2005, the office expects additional reductions in caseload levels.

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**Exhibit 3**  
**Average Number of Autopsies per Pathologist**  
**Fiscal 1999 – 2006**



Source: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; National Association of Medical Examiners

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*M00F05 – DHMH – Office of the Chief Medical Examiner*

The increase in pathology staff has helped the office meet an increasing demand for services; however, other operations still require additional resources, including:

- **Facilities:** The site inspection performed as part of the accreditation process noted that the size of the autopsy room, the number of autopsy stations, and the amount of general storage would soon be insufficient if the number of autopsies rises. Operating in facilities constructed in 1968, the current facility can not accommodate any significant amount of growth.
- **Support Personnel:** The Office of Legislative Audits has noted the need for additional contractual personnel, citing excessive use of overtime. The allowance includes six new contractual positions, including three forensic investigators, two autopsy assistants, and one office clerk to respond to these concerns.
- **Salaries:** The market for qualified medical examiners is highly competitive, with a limited number entering the field each year. The office is in the process of reclassifying medical examiner positions according to competitive levels; however, the starting salary of \$145,000 to \$150,000 is still below the nationwide average of \$170,000.

These areas, while not posing immediate concerns, could compromise the office's ability to effectively operate in future years. **The office should comment on its most significant outstanding personnel and facility needs.**

***Recommended Actions***

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	<b><u>Amount Reduction</u></b>	
1. Delete funding for three new contractual positions. The Governor’s proposed budget adds six new contractual pathology and clerical positions in order to reduce overtime costs. This action reduces the number of contractual personnel to more accurately reflect the expected reduction in overtime expenses.	\$ 69,386	GF
<b>Total General Fund Reductions</b>	<b>\$ 69,386</b>	

## *Current and Prior Year Budgets*

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### Current and Prior Year Budgets Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (\$ in Thousands)

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Special Fund</u>	<u>Federal Fund</u>	<u>Reimb. Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Fiscal 2004</b>					
Legislative Appropriation	\$6,338	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,338
Deficiency Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0
Budget Amendments	281	0	129	202	612
Cost Containment	0	0	0	0	0
Reversions and Cancellations	0	0	-9	0	-9
<b>Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>\$6,620</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$120</b>	<b>\$202</b>	<b>\$6,941</b>
<b>Fiscal 2005</b>					
Legislative Appropriation	\$6,756	\$0	\$131	\$114	\$7,001
Budget Amendments	353	0	0	0	353
<b>Working Appropriation</b>	<b>\$7,109</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$131</b>	<b>\$114</b>	<b>\$7,353</b>

Note: Numbers may not sum to total due to rounding.

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## **Fiscal 2004**

The general fund appropriation increased \$0.3 million to cover the increased cost of overtime, utilities, and contractual ambulance services, offset by a reduction of \$10,179 to realign health insurance and telecommunications expenditures among departmental units.

Reimbursable funds were increased by \$0.2 million as a result of a transfer from the State Highway Administration. Funds were used to develop and implement a database for sharing highway death information among State agencies. A small amount of additional funds was available for expenses related to Hurricane Isabel.

The federal fund appropriation increased \$0.1 million due to the availability of funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for bioterrorism. Funds were used for salaries and wages for an assistant medical examiner.

## **Fiscal 2005**

The general fund appropriation was increased to recognize the fiscal 2005 cost-of-living adjustment and cover the cost of salary increases for two resident forensic pathologist positions. Additional funds were used to realign general funds among departmental units in order to accurately reflect position cap reductions.

**Object/Fund Difference Report  
DHMH – Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

<u>Object/Fund</u>	<u>FY04 Actual</u>	<u>FY05 Working Appropriation</u>	<u>FY06 Allowance</u>	<u>FY05 - FY06 Amount Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
<b>Positions</b>					
01 Regular	76.00	76.00	76.00	0	0%
02 Contractual	1.45	1.33	7.50	6.17	463.9%
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>77.45</b>	<b>77.33</b>	<b>83.50</b>	<b>6.17</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
<b>Objects</b>					
01 Salaries and Wages	\$ 5,134,246	\$ 5,508,599	\$ 5,756,702	\$ 248,103	4.5%
02 Technical & Spec Fees	336,761	354,546	510,962	156,416	44.1%
03 Communication	57,983	48,180	55,933	7,753	16.1%
04 Travel	3,165	3,262	3,201	-61	-1.9%
06 Fuel & Utilities	202,589	248,423	235,323	-13,100	-5.3%
07 Motor Vehicles	11,031	7,164	10,652	3,488	48.7%
08 Contractual Services	670,123	596,797	606,827	10,030	1.7%
09 Supplies & Materials	483,353	460,753	479,186	18,433	4.0%
10 Equip - Replacement	24,556	108,157	100,000	-8,157	-7.5%
11 Equip - Additional	0	4,000	4,000	0	0%
13 Fixed Charges	17,538	13,201	14,150	949	7.2%
<b>Total Objects</b>	<b>\$ 6,941,345</b>	<b>\$ 7,353,082</b>	<b>\$ 7,776,936</b>	<b>\$ 423,854</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
<b>Funds</b>					
01 General Fund	\$ 6,619,671	\$ 7,108,799	\$ 7,492,652	\$ 383,853	5.4%
05 Federal Fund	119,650	130,783	155,784	25,001	19.1%
09 Reimbursable Fund	202,024	113,500	128,500	15,000	13.2%
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$ 6,941,345</b>	<b>\$ 7,353,082</b>	<b>\$ 7,776,936</b>	<b>\$ 423,854</b>	<b>5.8%</b>

Note: The fiscal 2005 appropriation does not include deficiencies, and the fiscal 2006 allowance does not reflect contingent reductions.