



King County Medical Examiner's Office

Public Health
Seattle & King County 

TRAINING PROGRAM SUPERVISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY
May 19, 2022

Forensic Pathology

King County Medical Examiner's Office

Responsibilities and Accountability

Each decedent must have an identifiable and appropriately-credentialed and privileged attending pathologist who is responsible and accountable for the decedent's examination. This information will be available through the electronic information system to residents/fellows, faculty members, other members of the health care team, and other clients of the Medical Examiner's Office.

The program will provide the appropriate level of supervision for each fellow based on each fellow's level of training and ability. Supervision may be exercised through a variety of methods, as appropriate to the situation.

As part of their education program, fellows are given graded progressive responsibility according to the individual's clinical experience, judgment, knowledge and technical skill. The fellow must know the limits of their scope of authority, and the circumstances under which the fellow is permitted to act with conditional independence.

Supervision Definitions

To promote oversight of fellow supervision while providing for graded authority and responsibility, the following levels of supervision are recognized:

1. Direct Supervision
 - a. the supervising pathologist is expected to be present in the autopsy room during the time the fellow is performing autopsy examinations, or at least be readily available for the fellow to ask questions.
 - b. the supervising pathologist is not physically present with the resident and the supervising physician is concurrently monitoring the patient care through appropriate telecommunication technology.



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2. Indirect Supervision:
 - a) *with direct supervision immediately available* – the supervising pathologist is physically within the facility and is immediately available to provide Direct Supervision. The fellow may ask any of the other pathologists for opinions and assistance, but the supervising pathologist has ultimate authority for deciding how the examination is performed and how the findings are interpreted.
 - b) *with direct supervision available* – the supervising pathologist is not physically present, but is immediately available to answer questions by telephone and is available to come to the site of examination in order to provide Direct Supervision.

3. Oversight – the supervising pathologist is available to the fellow for consultation following the daily autopsies and continues to consult with the fellow until the case is finalized, at which point the fellow and supervising pathologist are both responsible for signing the final report.

Fellow Competence & Delegated Authority

The privilege of progressive authority and responsibility, conditional independence, and a supervisory role in forensic examination delegated to each fellow must be assigned by the program director and faculty members.

The program director must evaluate the fellow’s abilities based on specific criteria, guided by the Milestones.

Supervising pathologists will assign autopsy cases based on what the assembled faculty pathologists agree offer the greatest educational content of all the morning cases and the skills of the fellow.

Clinical Responsibilities by PGY-Level

All other learners in KCMEO (Pathology Residents and Medical Students) who perform or assist with autopsy examinations function only under Direct Supervision as defined above.

Levels of Supervision for Common Specialty Clinical Activities and Invasive Procedures

Please list each clinical activity/procedure by PGY-level, with specific CPR Level of Supervision language:

Clinical Activity/Procedure	Resident level (PGY)	Location	Supervision Level
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Forensic Autopsy	PGY-1,2	N/A	N/A*
Forensic Autopsy	PGY-3,4	KCMEO	Direct Supervision
Forensic Autopsy	Fellow	KCMEO	Direct or Indirect

*only PGY 3 or 4 level pathology residents rotate through KCMEO

Circumstances and Events in which Supervising Faculty Member (s) MUST be Contacted

Unexpected anatomic findings relevant to cause of death

Unexpected evidence that decedent died as a result of homicide

Supervision of Consults

Fellows at KCMEO do not perform consultations.

Emergency Procedures

Fellows at KCMEO do not perform emergency procedures.

Faculty Supervision Assignment

Faculty supervision assignments are made weekly, as designated "duty pathologist", on a rotating basis and therefore are of sufficient length to assess the knowledge and skills of each fellow and to delegate to the fellow the appropriate level of forensic examination.

Supervision of Hand-Offs

There is no hand-off policy for KCMEO as the case assignments remain the responsibility of the original supervising pathologist.