

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center
1109 North Minneapolis Street, Wichita, Kansas 67214

May 19, 2022

Board Members Present

- Dr. Shelly Steadman, Director, Regional Forensic Science Center
- Dr. Ron Varner, Coroner, 13th District
- Darrell Atterberry, Chief of Police, Bel Aire
- Dr. Kevin Brinker, Medical Director, Sedgwick County EMSS
- Brad Crisp, Deputy Chief, Sedgwick County Fire District #1
- Jeffrey Easter, Sedgwick County Sheriff
- Russell Leeds, Assistant County Manager
- Jennifer Magana, City Attorney, City of Wichita
- Melissa Walker, Director, WSU Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs

Board Members Absent

- C.D. Dugan, Interim Fire Marshal, Wichita Fire Department
- Dr. Timothy Gorrill, Sedgwick County Coroner
- Dr. Garold Minns, Dean, KU School of Medicine-Wichita
- Jose Salcido, Deputy Chief, Wichita Police Department
- Aaron Breitenbach, District Attorney's Office

Attendees Present

- Katie Asbury, Forensic Administrator, Regional Forensic Science Center
- Cyndie Ponder, Administrative Assistant, Regional Forensic Science Center

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM.

II. Introductions and Roll Call

III. Review of Minutes from the November 18, 2021 Meeting

IV. Resolution Update (Quarterly Updates with Semi-Annual Meetings)

Dr. Shelly Steadman

Quarterly Updates

- Since 2019:
 - 23% increase in reported deaths
 - 36% increase in scene investigations
 - 34% increase in autopsy cases
- Out-of-county autopsy cases
 - 24% of cases in 2021
 - 17% of cases in 2022
- Suicide data has remained stable:
 - 14% of cases in 2019
 - 14% of cases in 2020
 - 11% of cases in 2021
- Overdose deaths have been increasing
 - 16% of cases in 2019
 - 18% of cases in 2020
 - 24% of cases in 2021
 - Fentanyl was identified in 55% of overdose cases in 2021
- Toxicology Backlog
 - Toxicology Lab Manager is on leave, so seeing an increase in the backlog
- Struggling in DID Backlog
 - Down 1 chemist, new hire expected to start in early June
- Replaced and validated a new instrument for Drug ID
- Doing test fires for firearms; training 2 new analysts; seeing new modified weapons
- DNA backlog is back under 200; 2 new analysts have been clearing out rape kit cases
 - DA's Office has been prioritizing cases

Quarterly Summary

- Demand for autopsy and tox services are still high
- Special projects (such as LIMS) and validations have required staff resources
- Staffing has been stable
 - DID chemist and Tox Lab Technician departures
 - Tox Lab Manager currently on leave
 - Filled Pathologist (July 2023) position
 - Dr. Christine James is performing locum tenens pathology services in the interim
 - Filled Chief Toxicologist (January 2023) position
 - Added Pathology Assistant Supervisor
- Out-of-county services are ongoing, but have reduced the Reno Co. volume
- Expect to have a certified FAE (firearms examiner) by next update
- Fentanyl crisis is apparent in DID and toxicology caseloads

2023 Budget Requests

- Adjust Coroner/Deputy Coroner pay (\$99,739)
- Add two (2) Medical Investigators (\$150,553)
- Upgrade x-ray system (\$25,000) – have identified funding through the JAG Grant for this purchase
- Resources for unclaimed bodies (\$44,109)
 - 30% increase in indigent cases from 2020 to 2021

ARPA Requests

- Replace two (2) LC/MS-MS instruments in Tox (\$500,000)
- LODOX x-ray imaging system for Path (\$287,500)

CIP Requests

- 7,500 square foot DNA Addition

2023 Grants Underway

- Coverdell Formula (\$86,800)
 - Tox instrument replacement and LIMS annual maintenance
- Coverdell Competitive (\$276,250)
- CEBR (approx. \$250,000)
 - Maintenance fees for robotics and instrumentation and operational dollars for kits, consumables and PPE

2020 Crime Index – Sedgwick County Metrics

Comparison of Space:

- Johnson County Crime Laboratory = 62,500 SF
- Johnson County Medical Examiner's Office = 33,000 SF
- Johnson County Total = 95,000 SF
- KBI Topeka = 100,000 SF
- Sedgwick County = 31,825 SF

Comparison of Employees

- Johnson County Crime Laboratory = 47
- Johnson County Medical Examiner's Office = 15
- KBI Topeka = 75
- Sedgwick County = 41

Questions and Discussion

- A brief discussion was held regarding the correlation between the crime indexes and local parolees. It was noted that either the Sheriff's Office or Wichita Police Department crime analysts would be better suited to extract that data.

- A brief discussion was held on how to best express the need for additional funding and resources to elected officials, as they need to understand that the work done by the RFSC is a need and not a want. Dr. Walker noted that graphs and tables can quickly summarize statistics and express the capacity for what is needed, and offered the use of current GRE students at WSU to assist with reviewing data and creating materials.
- Chief Atterberry noted that a recent DEA periodical indicated that isotonitazene, a synthetic opioid that is 20x more powerful than fentanyl, is making a surge on the east coast, and asked if it had been seen locally? Dr. Steadman responded that no, it has not been submitted to the lab, but noted that post-mortem analyses are not completed in real-time.

V. Agency Reports

There were no agency reports presented.

VI. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM.

Next Meeting: November 17, 2022 at 9:00 AM
1109 N. Minneapolis Street, Wichita Kansas, 67214 or via Zoom (TBD)