

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

May 18, 2023

Board Members Present

- Dr. Shelly Steadman, Director, Regional Forensic Science Center
- Dr. Ron Varner, Coroner, 13th Judicial District
- Chris Dugan, Fire Marshal, Wichita Fire Department
- Jennifer Magana, City Attorney, City of Wichita
- Jose Salcido, Deputy Chief, Wichita Police Department
- Kevin Lanterman, Chief, Sedgwick County EMS
- Russell Leeds, Assistant County Manager
- Dr. Kevin Brinker, Medical Director, Sedgwick County EMSS
- Dr. David Guo, Regents Distinguished Professor of Public Finance, WSU Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs
- Melissa Walker, Director, WSU Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs
- Jeffrey Easter, Sedgwick County Sheriff
- Aaron Breitenbach, District Attorney's Office
- Darrell Atterberry, Chief of Police, Bel Aire
- Dr. Garold Minns, Dean, KU School of Medicine-Wichita

Board Members Absent

- Dr. Timothy Gorrill, Sedgwick County Coroner
- Brad Crisp, Deputy Chief, Sedgwick County Fire District #1

Attendees Present

- Katie Asbury, Forensic Administrator, Regional Forensic Science Center

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM.

II. Introductions and Roll Call

III. Review of Minutes from the November 17, 2022 Meeting

IV. RFSC Performance Metrics

Dr. Shelly Steadman

Performance Metrics and Trends

- Medical Investigations
 - 4,026 reported deaths for 2022 (average of 4,000/year for the previous 3 years)
 - 598 scenes attended in 2022 (up 35% from 2019)
- Pathology
 - 1,143 pathology cases for 2022 performed by 2 physicians (up 28% from 2019)
 - Intentionally diverting out-of-county services to focus on Sedgwick County cases
 - Suicides are trending downward
 - Significant issue of overdoses – steadily increasing since 2019 (25% increase with 30-50 2022 cases pending) largely due to the fentanyl crisis
 - 60% of overdose deaths involve fentanyl
- Toxicology
 - Backlog has improved due to grant funding used to send-out cases and training new staff
 - 151 backlog cases at the end of April
 - 966 toxicology cases submitted in 2022
 - Human Performance Testing (HPT) backlog has decreased
- Drug Identification
 - Still have 1 vacancy to fill, with one senior chemist relocating to another state (planning to double-fill that position)
 - Backlog is currently at approximately 840 cases
 - Decreased the backlog by 100 cases in April
 - Average of 124 cases submitted per month
 - Overwhelming amount of fentanyl
 - Huge seizures
 - Up 267% from 2021
- Fire Debris
 - 1 chemist working cases
 - Working to cross-train a toxicology chemist for this position
- Firearms
 - Hannah Withrow is now a fully trained and certified analyst but is currently on maternity leave
 - Second analyst (Sara Rogers) is finalizing her training
- Biology/DNA
 - Continuing to prioritize cases for the District Attorney's Office
 - Number of cases has remained stable over the last 5 years, but the number of exhibits per case have increased

Quarterly Summary

- DNA, Tox and DID backlogs are decreasing
- Competitive Grant received for Tox instrumentation – purchased LC-MS/MS; second LC-MS/MS to be purchased with Opioid Settlement Funds
- Tax lab continues to outsource with JAG and Coverdell grant funds; approximately 40% of cases done off-site
- Staffing in Investigations, Tox and DID are short
- Fentanyl submissions continue to rise
- Permanent Forensic Pathologist's start date is July 11, 2023
- Locum Tenens Deputy Coroner contract extended through June 2023
- Received resignation of senior DID scientist, also serves as Fire Debris Technical Leader and LIMS Admin

2024 Budget Scenarios

- Add one (1) full-time Medical Investigator

CIP Requests

- DNA Addition – construction project should begin in 2023

2023 Grants Submitted

- Coverdell Formula (\$99,900) – LIMS system maintenance and smaller Tox instruments
- CEBR (\$298,213) – Instrument maintenance costs and DNA consumables
- CDC OD2A: Local (approx. \$1.5 million)

Questions and Discussion

- Dr. Walker asked if the CDC OD2A grant is awarded, what will it allow the RFSC to do?
- Dr. Steadman explained that the grant requires that the recipients test 500 drug items of paraphernalia not brought to us by law enforcement, and noted that those items could be collected at death scenes, but it has to be tested and the reports made available. They're looking to see what drugs are out there. To help accommodate the grant requirements, the RFSC has asked for an additional MI to assist with collecting the additional items at the scene, an additional drug chemist for the testing, and 3 GC-MS instruments, which is the main type of instrumentation that the DID lab uses.
- Mr. Breitenbach cautioned that the District Attorney could potentially charge dealers based on the drug evidence/paraphernalia collected at death scenes.
- Chief Atterbery asked whether the new Crime Gun Intelligence Center at WSU could assist with the backlog for DNA evidence.

- Dr. Steadman responded that the ATF lab would be testing DNA on weapons and explosives, and noted that the vast majority of cases at the RFSC are homicides and rapes. There shouldn't be a large decrease in RFSC case submissions due to the opening of the ATF lab.

V. Backlog Discussion

VI. Agency Reports

There were no agency reports presented.

VII. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 AM.

Next Meeting: November 16, 2023 at 9:00 AM

1109 N. Minneapolis Street, Wichita Kansas, 67214 or via Zoom (TBD)

Next Quarterly Update: August 2023