**EFFECTIVE: Immediately Updated: April, 2023**

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| **PURPOSE:** | To instruct PCCO staff on ensuring chain of custody on all items collected. |
| **SCOPE:** | This guideline applies to sworn PCCO personnel. |
| **GUIDELINE:**  **FORMS:** | ESTABLISH CHAIN OF CUSTODY:   1. Ensuring the integrity of the evidence by establishing and maintaining a chain of custody is vital to an investigation. This will safeguard against subsequent allegations of tampering, theft, planting and contamination of evidence. Prior to the removal of any evidence, the custodian(s) of evidence shall be designated and shall generate and maintain a chain of custody for all evidence collected. Throughout the investigation, those responsible for preserving the chain of custody should. 2. Determine custodian(s) of evidence, determine which agency is responsible for collection of specific types of evidence and determine evidence collection priority for fragile/fleeting evidence 3. Identify, secure and preserve evidence with proper containers, labels and preservatives. And be sealed and signed on scene. 4. Document the collection of evidence by recording its location (GPS or scene sketch, 3D scan) at the scene, time of collection including compass reading and time and location of disposition 5. Follow laws (related to the collection of evidence): PCCO must follow local, State, and Federal laws for the collection of evidence to ensure its admissibility. PCCO must work with law enforcement and other legal authorities to determine laws regarding collection of evidence. 6. PCCO working with other agencies must identify and work under appropriate legal authority. Modification of informal procedures may be necessary but laws must always be followed. Prior to or upon arrival at the death scene, PCCO should work with other agencies to:   a. Determine the need for a search warrant (discuss with appropriate agencies)  b. Identify local, State, Federal, and International laws that might apply  c. Identify statutes and/or standard operating guidelines  7. If evidence has been moved prior to written documentation, it should be noted in the report.  8. All evidence must be tracked and secured in the individual locked evidence storage using the appropriate log sheet.  a. The evidence cabinets and refrigerator shall be in the morgue which has an electronic log of access and the entrance is monitored by camera.  9. At all times the integrity of the evidence must be safe guarded.  10. At all times when evidence is out of the locker written documentation must include why, where, what if any tests or changes to evidence and in/out times.  11. Ensure that each form is signed and date/time correctly. Ensure chain of Custody form is signed by receiving agency.  Chain of Custody, Body Intake & Release, Evidence-Refrigerator Running log, Evidence-Cabinet Running Log |
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Approved by: David E Kintz Jr

Park County Coroner