|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QUALITY ASSURANCE: PEER REVIEW** | **Union County Coroner Office** |

**Principle, spirit and intent:** *A core component of the investigative procedure is a scientific peer review that ensures that all findings and test products meet acceptable and recognized professional standard.*

**PURPOSE AND SCOPE:** This policy outlines procedures used for peer review of reports issued by the Union County Coroner’s Office, including notes and other documents obtained during an investigation.

**PEER REVIEW PROCESS:** The first intent of this process is to verify that the conclusions of the investigator are reasonable and within the constraints of validated scientific knowledge, supported by the examination documentation of the autopsy, along with the investigation of the scene and all information is reported in a professional manner. As such, the notes and other documentation, as appropriate, are subject to peer review. The second intent of the peer review process is to serve as an administrative check of the report and the notes to judge compliance with office policies.

Peer reviews are for practice improvement and are conducted in a professional and objective manner. The peer review process is not:

* A forum for scientific debate of controversial issues.
* An opportunity to impose heavy idiosyncrasies.
* An opportunity to further personal agendas.
* A venue for retaliation or payback or, conversely, court favor or practice sycophancy.

**Peer Reviews:** The peer reviews are done in the Union County Coroner’s Office using the peer review checklist and form. The Union County Coroner randomly selects 10% of all completed cases for peer review. The information and materials presented to the reviewer include the complete case file, and the review form.

To protect the integrity of the peer review process and to maximize its value, peer review assignments should be diverse and varied. One reviewer should review the work of multiple individuals.

**Peer reviewer responsibilities:** The peer reviewer will review all casework documentation in a timely manner. The reviewer should check and, verify that the conclusions are reasonable, determine compliance with appropriate procedures and standards, and document all findings on the appropriate form.

**Reviewee responsibilities:** The reviewee will write reports on a level of professionalism such that the review will result in no significant revision. The reviewee should provide complete notes and include all special documentation used to draw the final conclusions. The case file should contain pertinent notes of all conversations regarding the case which may be important at a later date.

**Results of Peer Review:** The peer review must result in either a verification of the casework or its referral to be discussed at the weekly Tuesday meeting. Substantive professional disagreements over casework that cannot be resolved between the reviewer and the reviewee will be discussed by all employees of the office.

**DOCUMENTATION**

* As peer reviews are for the record, documentation should be of a permanent nature. Consequently, annotations should be made with permanent markings (i.e., no pencil) on the appropriate forms. Post-it notes, scratch paper, etc. are not to be used.
* The results of all peer reviews are maintained in the Quality Assurance File.