

May 28, 2025

Strengthening the Medical Examiner - Coroner System Program Discussion Forum

IACME and NAME Accreditation Audit Process

Facilitated by:

Kelly Keyes

TTA Coach
Research Forensic Scientist
RTI International



Disclaimer

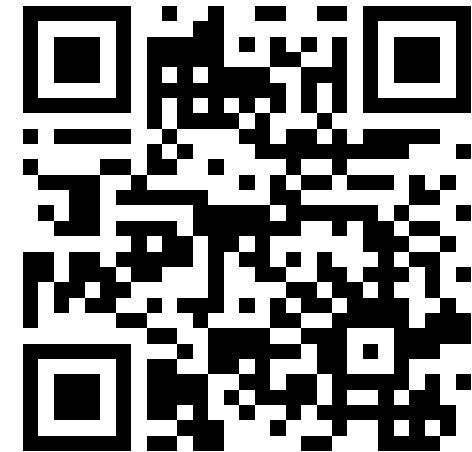
This project was supported by Grant No. 15PBJA-22-GK-01556-JAGT awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today's Agenda: Discussion Forum

- Introductions and Updates
- IACME Accreditation and Audit Overview, John Fudenberg
- NAME Accreditation and Audit Overview, Dr. Ponni Arunkumar
- ME/C Office Perspective of Accreditation, Brett Harding
- Open Discussion with Guest Speakers

Forensics Training and Technical Assistance (Forensics TTA) Program

- Led by RTI International in partnership with subject matter experts, practitioners, and researchers
- Provides TTA in support of grantees' strategic goals and objectives across forensic disciplines
- Proactively engages grantees to develop materials based upon agency needs
- Supports sustainability through TTA surrounding the implementation of new policies/practices and enhancement of existing policies/practices

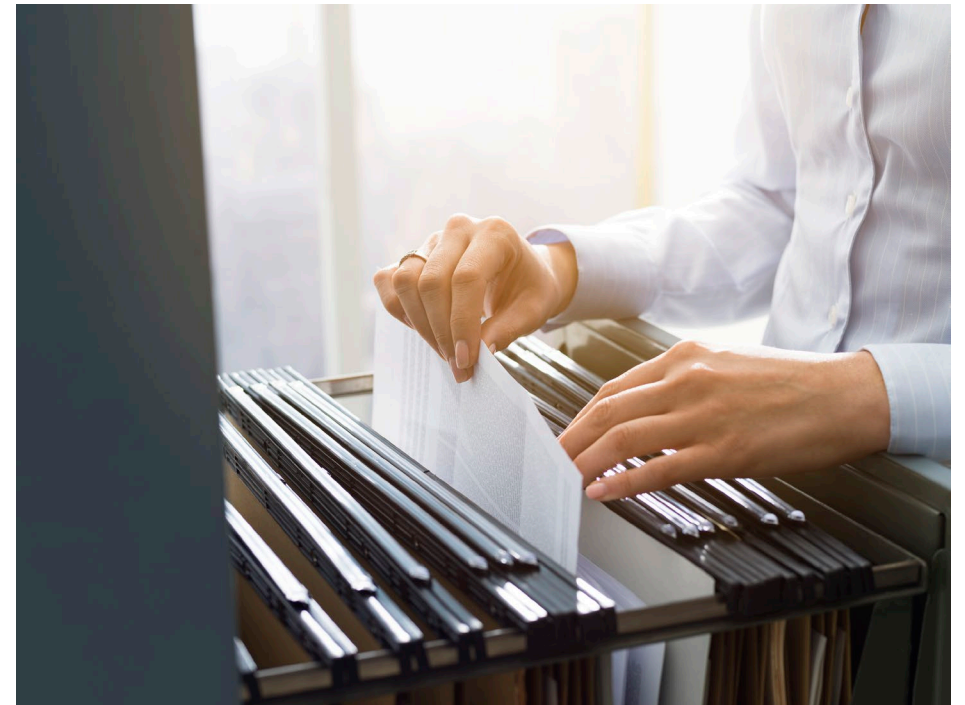


ForensicsTTA.org

Forthcoming Resource!

ME/C Accreditation Repository

- The online repository will feature policies, procedures, and other documents necessary for accreditation
- IACME and NAME accredited offices can share their documents to support offices seeking accreditation
- Featuring Annual Reports, Mass Fatality Plans, Family Resource documents and more
- Coming Summer 2025



Microsoft 365 Stock Photo

BJA – ME/C Team



Alan Spanbauer
Senior Policy Advisor



Monte Evans
State Policy Advisor



Lindsay DePalma
Associate Contractor

Updates from the BJA ME/C Team

- We need your help – we ask grantees to please continue to contact us with your success stories! Also, continue to make us aware of any webinar or annual virtual grantee training topics of interest.
- Remember that your views are important to enhancing other grantees' efforts, and the overall ME/C Program as well.



IACME Accreditation and Audit Overview

Presenter: John Fudenberg

John Fudenberg

John Fudenberg is the Executive Director for the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME). John retired in 2020 after over thirty years of public service in law enforcement and the medicolegal profession. John served as the Coroner for the Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner (CCOCME) in Las Vegas, Nevada. John is a past commissioner of the National Commission on Forensic Science and currently serves as the chair of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Standards Board (ASB) Medicolegal Death Investigation Consensus Body. John is also a past president of the IACME.



IACME Accreditation

- Voluntary peer-reviewed program
- 282 Standards
- Free Self Assessment Tool

Components of Accreditation

- Policies and procedures
- Facility and equipment standards
- Chain of custody and evidence handling
- Staff training and continuing education
- Case documentation and report quality
- Interagency communication and scene response

Getting Started

- Create Account –
 - iacme24.ora-inc.com
- Conduct Self-Assessment
- Apply
- Introduction Conference
- Auditors Assigned
- Complete Checklist
 - On Site Audit
- Become Accredited!!!

Accreditation Fees

Office Size

Population <100,000

Population 100,000-500,000

Population >500,001

Fees

Class I - \$2000

Class II- \$3000

Class III - \$4000

Annual Maintenance Fees

Office Size

Population <100,000

Population 100,000-500,000

Population >500,001

Fees

Class I - \$300

Class II -\$600

Class III - \$1200

Why Accreditation Matters

- **Public Trust:** Demonstrates accountability, transparency, and quality assurance
- **Professionalism:** Confirms adherence to standards of practice
- **Credibility:** Validates that an office meets minimum operational and investigative benchmarks
- **Risk Reduction:** Helps prevent liability through standardized procedures and documentation

Contact Information

John Fudenberg

Executive Director

IACME

(702) 645-4050

John.Fudenberg@theiacme.com



NAME Accreditation and Audit Overview

Presenter: Dr. Ponni Arunkumar

Dr. Ponni Arunkumar

Dr. Ponni Arunkumar is the Chief Medical Examiner at the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office. Dr. Arunkumar has 21 years of forensic pathology experience. She has conducted over 8,000 postmortem examinations and testified in court and depositions more than 200 times. She was appointed to her current post in June 2016. From 2012 to 2016, she served as the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for Cook County. Prior to that, she was an Assistant Medical Examiner in Cook County. Dr. Arunkumar is a board certified anatomic and clinical pathologist with specialization in forensic pathology. She is on staff at RUSH university, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Northwestern University. She has presented at various national conferences and published articles in the field of forensic pathology. Dr. Arunkumar is a member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the National Association of Medical Examiners, the American Medical Association, the College of American Pathologists and the American Society for Clinical Pathology.



NAME Accreditation Program

- Voluntary inspection and accreditation program for medico legal death investigative offices
- Designed to offer expert evaluation and offer recommendations for improvement
- Accreditation is an honor and a significant achievement
- Signifies to the public that the office is performing at a high level of competence and public service

NAME Inspection and Accreditation (I & A) Program

Mission

To promote high quality death investigation within a work environment nationally and internationally by providing an independent program of quality improvement driven by consensus in the field of medicolegal death investigation.

Policies and Procedures

- Explicit purpose of improving the quality of the forensic/medicolegal investigation of death
- Accreditation standards represent minimum standards for an adequate medicolegal death investigation system, not guidelines
- Peer review system

The forensic science community has become:

- More important
- More visible
- More subject to challenges of forensic evidence

The Early Days

- 1975: First NAME Accreditation certificate awarded
- 1977: Inspection and Accreditation became a recognized NAME program
- 2009: Annual inspector training instituted

First NAME Inspection



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE FORENSIC & ENVIRONMENTAL PATHOLOGY

GEORGE E. GANTNER, M.D.
Professor & Chairman

December 1, 1975

Ali Z. Hameli, M.D.
Secretary
National Association of
Medical Examiners
200 So. Adams St.
Wilmington, Del. 19801

Dear Dr. Hameli,

As previously arranged I performed a complete Medicolegal System inspection on November 19, 1975 on the "Office of the Chief Medical Investigator" of the State of New Mexico. The official address is:

James Weston, M.D.
Chief Medical Investigator
School of Medicine
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, N.M. 87131

The host group provided me with a complete statistical tabulation of their office activities and a completed check list as described in the official inspection guidelines as published by the N.A.M.E. I have provided you with one set of these documents for archival purposes. I found the office to be operating well within the standards as established by N.A.M.E in all particulars. Based upon my inspection and their compliance with all requirements I recommend approval of this system for the full specified period.

Sincerely,

George E. Gantner, M.D.
George E. Gantner, M.D.
Professor Forensic & Environmental
Pathology
St. Louis University Medical School
Chief Medical Examiner
St. Louis County, Missouri

cc: Joseph Davis M.D., President, NAME
Frank Cleveland M.D., Vice-President, NAME
Leslie Lukash M.D., Chairman, Standards Committee
James Weston, M.D.

SUITE 203-4, 1402 SOUTH GRAND BOULEVARD, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63104 (314) 664-9800, EXT. 462-3



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

200 South Adams Street Wilmington, Delaware 19801 Telephone (302) 571-3420

September 20, 1976

OFFICERS

President
JOSEPH H. DAVIS, M.D.
170 N.W. 10th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33136
Vice-President
FRANK P. CLEVELAND, M.D.
3159 Eden Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Secretary-Treasurer
ALI Z. HAMELI, M.D.
200 South Adams Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ALI Z. HAMELI, M.D.
Chairman, Past President
WILLIAM J. BRADY, M.D.
Portland, Oregon
JOHN F. BURTON, M.D.
Pontiac, Michigan
JOHN I. COE, M.D.
Minneapolis, Minnesota
WILLIAM G. ECKERT, M.D.
Wichita, Kansas
RUSSELL S. FISHER, M.D.
Baltimore, Maryland
JERRY T. FRANCISCO, M.D.
Memphis, Tennessee
GEORGE E. GANTNER, JR., M.D.
Clayton, Missouri
ELLIOT CROSS, M.D.
Hartford, Connecticut
FELIX GWOSDZ, M.D.
Forth Worth, Texas
MILTON HELPERN, M.D.
New York, N.Y.
RONALD L. KORNBLUM, M.D.
Ventura, California
LESLIE LUKASH, M.D.
East Meadow, N.Y.
THOMAS T. NOGUCHI, M.D.
Los Angeles, California
JOHN PFAFF, JR., M.D.
Great Falls, Montana
JOSEPH C. RUPP, M.D., Ph.D.
Corpus Christi, Texas
WERNER U. SPITZ, M.D.
Detroit, Michigan
CHARLES I. STAHL, III, M.D.
Washington, D. C.

James T. Weston, M.D.
Chief Medical Investigator
Office of the Chief Medical
Investigator
University of New Mexico
School of Medicine
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

Dear Jim:

It is with great pleasure that I forward to your Office a certificate of accreditation of your Medicolegal Institute.

It is my hope that this program of Inspection and Accreditation will serve to upgrade the quality of Official Investigation of Death throughout the country.

Warm personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

AZ
Ali Z. Hameli, M.D.
Secretary-Treasurer

AZH:sjf
Enclosure

cc: Leslie Lukash, M.D.
Joseph H. Davis, M.D.
Frank P. Cleveland, M.D.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131
Area Code 505 Phone 277-2036

PURCHASE ORDER

PURCHASE
ORDER
NUMBER .5 05039

TO: National Association of Medical Examiners
200 South Adams Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

SHIP TO ADDRESS BELOW

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
School of Medicine
Shipping & Receiving
915 Stanford N.E.

Mark for: Medical Investigator

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

DATE	ACCOUNT NUMBER	DEPARTMENT	CHARGE FISCAL YEAR ENDING	ACQUISITION NUMBER
4/22/75	087-530-020	Medical Investigator/Larrichio		M19033

PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

Payment to the National Association of Medical Examiners
for inspection accreditation of the medicolegal investi-
gative system.

100.00

1/26/76

Gentlemen:

The inspection of the New Mexico system has been
completed and we request now the remittance of
\$100.00 be submitted to this Office as soon as
possible.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Ali Z. Hameli, M.D.
Ali Z. Hameli, M.D.
Secretary-Treasurer

11

INSTRUCTIONS

1. ACKNOWLEDGE ORDER, ADVISE OF SHIPPING DATE, AND MAIL ALL INVOICES TO U.N.M. COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE.
2. PURCHASE ORDER NUMBER MUST BE ON ALL INVOICES.
3. SUBMIT ORIGINAL INVOICE.
4. SUBMIT SEPARATE INVOICE FOR EACH PURCHASE ORDER NUMBER.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Frank M. ...
PURCHASING AGENT

Deficiencies Allowed

- Full accreditation- 15 Phase I and 0 Phase II allowed
- Provisional accreditation-25 Phase I and 5 Phase II allowed

Inspectors

- Fellows of NAME and from accredited offices(full/provisional) or a current member of I&A parent committee/a subcommittee
- Complete Inspectors Training Workshop and a ride along with a certified inspector

Fees

- Under 2 million population
 - \$5000 first year and \$2500/year for next three
- Over 2 million population
 - \$8500 first year and \$3500/year for next three

Pre-Inspection

- I & A Policies and Procedures Manual
- NAME Inspection Checklist distributed to staff and critically self-inspect
- May request a Pre-Inspection Consultation to identify obstacles and guide in preparation

Application

- Online application: <http://inaorainc.com>

Checklist Item Categories

- Office Profile
- General
- Investigations
- Morgue Operations
- Histology
- Toxicology
- Records and Record Keeping
- Personnel and Staffing
- Support Services and Consultants

Office Statistics

- Office Profile, Annual Statistics, Turnaround Times
- Statistics must reflect the prior calendar year unless not practical to generate (i.e., if an inspection or annual review is timed shortly after the end of a calendar year).

On-Site Inspection

- Within 6 weeks of receipt of application and payment, Inspector/s appointed.
- If there is a concern about potential conflict or any reservation about the appointment, this can be communicated to the Chair of the I&A committee, and another shall be appointed.
- An Applicant will not be permitted more than 2 recusals of the appointed inspector.
- Inspection date set after coordination by the Inspector and the Applicant.

On-Site Inspection

- One/two days
- Introduction, walk through, and examination of questions on the Inspection Checklist
- Summation conference at the conclusion of the inspection where objectives of the NAME Accreditation Program are reviewed and ALL deficiencies in the inspection report presented.
- Discuss suggestions for improvement of the facility or the operations
- Accreditation is not granted or denied at the summation conference.

External Ancillary Services and Governing Entities

- When ancillary services are performed by outside laboratories or individuals, the office must still upload documentation that the laboratory is appropriately accredited and/or the practitioner is appropriately certified.
- If an office is under the umbrella of a larger entity, such as a county government or a hospital, it is not sufficient for an office to mark items such as human relations or maintenance as not applicable. The office being inspected is still responsible for having uploaded the relevant policies and/or documentation.

Inspection Review

- Inspection checklist and report by the inspector is made available to all members of the NAME I&A committee.
- A member of the I&A committee is selected by rotation to officially review the Inspection Report and Checklist.
- The official review is completed within 15 days.
- Accreditation status then conferred.

Accreditation

- Full accreditation conferred for a period of 4 years
- Provisional accreditation conferred for 12 months and can be extended for 3 subsequent 12-month periods upon separate written application. The Office may request conversion to full accreditation status at any time with written or photographic documentation.

Our Office

- March 2013 - 22 Phase II deficiencies, 18 Phase I deficiencies
- January 2014 - 4 Phase II deficiencies, 11 Phase I deficiencies
- January 2014 - PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION!
- May 2014 - 3 Phase II deficiencies, 4 Phase I deficiencies
- February 2015 - 1 Phase II deficiency, 5 Phase I deficiencies
- January 2016 - 0 Phase II and 7 Phase 1 deficiencies
- January 2016 - FULL ACCREDITATION!!!!

On-Site vs. Virtual Inspections

- All first-time inspections, including the first-time inspection of a new facility or the substantially renovated facility of an office previously accredited, will include an in person, on-site visit.
- Once every eight years (every other inspection), the inspection of an office will be performed in person. In the fourth year following an on-site inspection a virtual inspection will most likely be performed.
- Facilities can request an in-person inspection rather than a virtual inspection if they feel that on-site visit is warranted. Inspectors can also request to perform an in-person inspection if they feel that an on-site visit is warranted.
- All documentation required by the inspection checklists must be uploaded to the website prior to an office submitting for either an in-site or a virtual inspection.

Accreditation Benefits

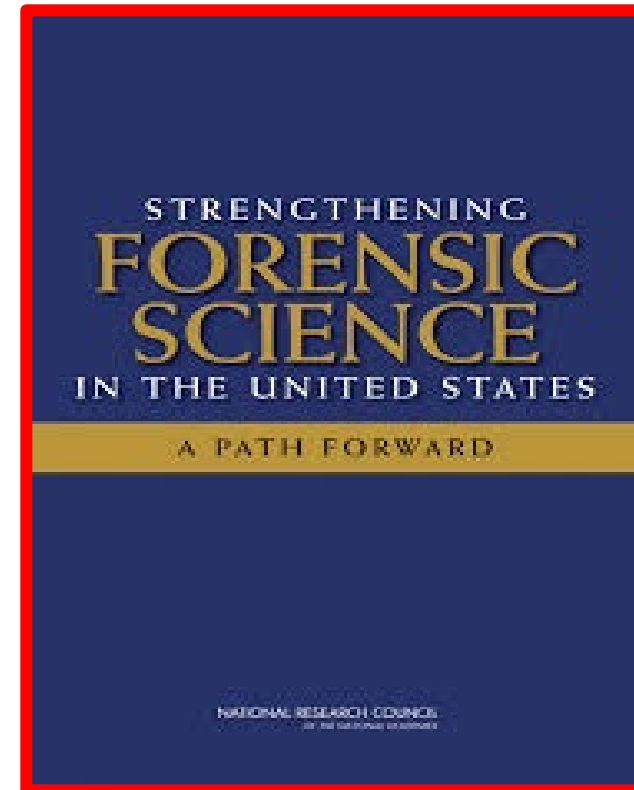
- Assurance to the public that the office does quality work
- Can come up in court
- Help with staffing and funding needs
- Required to receive federal grants
- May be mandated by the feds
- Provides the opportunity to network and exchange information among forensic pathologists, scientists and investigators around the world.

Growth of I & A Program

Year	Accredited Offices	Population Served
1976 (First Accreditation)	1	--
2008 (Computerized Database)	31	61,373,048
2015	73	102,447,225
2022	102	159,830,281
2024	111	188,788,710

National Academy of Sciences

- Lack of mandatory Standardization, Certification, and Accreditation
- Accreditation following international standards



NAS Report Recommendations

- Independence of forensic laboratories/practitioners
- **Accreditation of laboratories, including ME offices**
- Certification of forensic practitioners/analysts
- Uniform standards

Contact Information

Ponni Arunkumar, MD

Chief Medical Examiner – Cook County (IL)

National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)

ponni.arunkumar@cookcountyil.gov



ME/C Office Perspective of Accreditation

Presenter: Brett Harding

Brett E. Harding

Brett Harding began his career in Medicolegal Death Investigation in 1988 and now serves as the Chief Deputy Coroner with the Ada County Coroner's Office in Meridian Idaho. Mr. Harding is a Fellow with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. He is a member of the International Association of Coroner's & Medical Examiners and is an Affiliate member of the National Association of Medical Examiners and is a certified Inspector with the Inspection & Accreditation Committee. Brett also serves on the board of directors for the National Association of Homicide Investigators and the Board of Trustees for the Forensic Science Foundation. Mr. Harding also consults on psychological autopsy investigations and is a certified Retrospective Fatality Analyst.



What NAME/IACME Accreditation Does for Your Institution

- Accreditation assures the office meets national forensic standards.
- May make your institution eligible for grants and other funds.
- Accreditation makes recruitment of competent, trained professionals easier.
- Assures continued improvement as professional standard evolve and change.



Microsoft 365 Stock Photo

NAME and IACME Accreditation

- Both are valuable national institutional certifications.
- NAME allows for:
 - Full Institutional Accreditation
 - Autopsy Facility Accreditation
- IACME allows for:
 - Full Institutional Accreditation
 - Investigation Accreditation with Access to Forensic Pathology Services

The NAME and IACME Accreditation Inspection Process

- NAME and IACME are very similar.
- The beginning of the process is the hardest. You will need to:
 - Complete sections online before the onsite inspection
 - Upload documentation and photographs.
- The onsite inspection is in person presentation of requirements. You will need to:
 - Provide the need documentation.
 - Give an inspection tour of the facility demonstrating infrastructure required for certification.
- This process is really not hard if you give yourself ample time.

NAME and IACME Dual Accreditation

Only six offices in the United States that are dual accredited:

- **Ada County Coroner's Office** (Boise, ID)
 - Since 2006
- **Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner** (Las Vegas, NV)
 - Since 2005
- **Denver Office of the Medical Examiner** (Denver, CO)
 - Since 2024
- **Greenville County Coroner's Office** (Greenville, SC)
 - Since 2021
- **Lehigh County Coroner's Office** (Allentown, PA)
 - Since 2006
- **Ramsey County Office of the Medical Examiner** (St. Paul, MN)
 - Since 2012

Why Be Accredited by Both?

- Assures staying apprised of changes in forensic standards.
- Highlights your institution as a national leader in the field.
- Gives added credibility in legal proceedings.
- Access to available funding and educational opportunities.



Contact Information

Brett Harding

Chief Deputy Coroner

Ada County Coroner's Office (ID)

bharding@adacounty.id.gov

Open Discussion



Contact Information

Kelly Keyes, ME/C TTA Lead Coach (Forensics TTA)

kkeyes@rti.org

Alan Spanbauer, Senior Policy Advisor (BJA)

Alan.Spanbauer@usdoj.gov

Monte Evans, State Policy Advisor (BJA)

Monte.Evans@usdoj.gov

Lindsay DePalma, Associate Contractor (BJA)

Lindsay.DePalma@usdoj.gov



forensicstta@rti.org



[@ForensicsTTA](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ForensicsTTA)



[Forensics TTA](https://www.facebook.com/ForensicsTTA)



www.forensicstta.org