

SECTION 3 - ETHICS

I. INTRODUCTION

Coroners and Deputy Coroners, are charged by Alabama Code 1975, Section 36-18-2 to investigate deaths deemed to be in the public interest, serving both the criminal justice system and the public health system. Personnel within the Coroner's Office must investigate cooperatively with but independent from law enforcement and prosecutors. The parallel investigations promote neutral and objective medical assessment of the cause and manner of death.

II. OATH:

The Deputy Coroner is placed in a position of trust that cannot be violated. The following is an oath of sorts to which the Deputy Coroner shall abide.

I (name) do solemnly swear (or affirm as the case may be) that i will support the Constitution of the United States and Constitution of Alabama, so long as I continue a citizen thereof, and that I will faithfully and honestly discharge the duties of the office of Deputy Coroner upon which I am about to enter, to the best of my ability. So help me God.

III. ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT AND/OR ALLEGATIONS OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS:

The mere mention of misconduct or an ethical violation has the potential to destroy the career of the Coroner/Deputy Coroner, not to mention tarnish the reputation of the entire office. Therefore, all investigations into allegations of misconduct or ethical violations must be handled with extreme care. The Shelby County Coroner may want to consult Shelby County Human Resources personnel or the Shelby County District Attorney to receive guidance on procedural methods for such an investigation. In the event the Shelby County Coroner's Office receives an official complaint, deemed official when written, signed and dated, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. Written complaints or allegations against an employee shall be immediately turned over to the Coroner.
 - a. Verbal complaints will not be accepted.
 - b. All complaints shall be presented to the Shelby County Coroner immediately upon receipt.
 - c. The Shelby County Coroner may assign a designee to assist with the investigation the allegation.
 - d. The employee receiving the complaint shall not conduct any investigation without expressed written approval of the Shelby County Coroner.
2. The Coroner or designee will conduct an investigation to determine if the complaint or allegation falls within its jurisdiction and whether there is a probable cause to believe that the complaint or allegation may be well founded.
3. If the Coroner or designee, in the preliminary determination, finds that it does not have jurisdiction or that there is a lack of probable cause to believe that the complaint or allegation may be well founded, the complaint or allegation shall be dismissed.
4. If the Coroner or designee finds that it has jurisdiction and that there is probable cause to believe that the complaint or allegation may be well founded, notice of the filing of a complaint or allegation shall be given to the involved employee. The employee shall have the right to respond to the complaint/allegation in writing within three days.
5. After receiving the written response, the Coroner or designee shall give both the accused and the accuser a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to confront each other. The Coroner or designee shall then make a decision and notify both parties of its decision. The Coroner or designee shall then make a written report on its decision including reasons and any recommendations for further action.
 - a. Should the accuser refuse to meet with the accused, then the allegation shall be dismissed with no action taken by the Coroner.
6. The accused has the right to appeal the action of the Coroner or designee. In effecting an appeal, the appellant must file a brief written notice of the appeal to the Coroner within five days.
7. The accused may have other rights and is urged to seek private legal counsel.

More information for employee can be found in the SCCO Employee Handbook and the Shelby County Commission Employee Handbook.