

AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL
DEATH INVESTIGATORS

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

January 2021



**American Board
of Medicolegal
Death Investigators, Inc.SM**

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	4
II. Purpose of the Manual.....	4
III. Objectives of the ABMDI	4
IV. Terms and Definitions	4
V. General Provisions.....	5
VI. Governing Body	6
VII. Executive Committee	7
VIII. Staff	7
IX. Use of ABMDI Letterhead and Logo.....	8
X. Indemnification of Officers.....	8
XI. Committees and Councils	8
1) General comments	8
2) Advisory Council	8
3) Nominating Committee	9
4) Ethics Committee	10
5) Newsletter Committee.....	10
6) Bylaws Committee	10
7) Policies and Procedures Committee.....	10
8) Continuing Education Committee	11
9) Presidential Advisory Committee	11
10) Finance Committee	11
11) Strategic Planning Committee	11
12) Outreach and Retention Committee	11
XII. Subcontracting.....	12
XIII. Professional Testing Agency.....	12
XIV. Meetings.....	12
XV. Financial Management	14
XVI. Registry Certification.....	14
XVII. Board Certification	17
XVIII. Examinations.....	18
1) General	17
2) Grading.....	17
3) Failing the Exam	18
XIX. Certification	18

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

XX. Maintenance Fees 19

XXI. Provisions for Examination 19

XXII. Provisions for Re-Examination..... 20

XXIII. Revisions to Examination 21

XXIV. Recertification Requirements 23

 1)General..... 22

 2) Continuing Education Requirements..... 23

 3) Accreditation Policy..... 25

XXV. Examination Security..... 25

XXVI. Code of Ethics and Conduct..... 27

 4) Process..... 27

XXVII. Confidentiality..... 30

XXVIII. Applicant and Certificant Rights..... 31

XXIX. Grievance Procedures..... 31

XXX. Disclosure of Information..... 32

XXXI. Quality System 33

XXXII. Accreditation 31

XXXIII. Records Management 34

XXXIV. Document Retention Policy 33

 1) Purpose 33

 2) Policy..... 33

XXXV. Fee Schedule 36

XXXVI. Test Development..... 36

Appendices:

A. Code of Professional Responsibility 41

B. ORA Web Testing Guide..... 43

C. ABMDI Proctor Responsibilities 44

D. Advisory Council Confidentiality Statement..... 45

E. Suggested Reading List for Registry Exam 48

F. Skills Task List for Registry Examination..... 50

G. Suggested Reading List for Board Certification Exam 56

H. Advanced Skills Task for Board Certification Examination 58

I. Introduction

The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators was incorporated in 1998 as a national, not-for-profit, 501(c) (6), independent professional certification board to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators. The organization's headquarters are located in Lanham, MD.

II. Purpose of the Manual

- 1) To set forth the policies and procedures by which the Directors and staff of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (hereinafter referred to as "ABMDI") conduct business and discharge their responsibilities, as set forth in the ABMDI Bylaws. These policies and procedures have evolved since the inception of the organization in 1998 and through the Board's decisions and interpretations of the Bylaws. The manual shall be subject to constant revision. Suggested changes to the manual should be forwarded to the Executive Director to disseminate to Board members for discussion and approval.

III. Objectives of the ABMDI

- 1) To enhance and maintain professional standards by evaluating knowledge, competency, and skills of medicolegal death investigators based on examination.
- 2) Administer objective and reliable examinations (basic and advanced) in the field of medicolegal death investigation.
- 3) Recognize qualified individuals who demonstrate mastery of basic and advanced skills and knowledge of medicolegal death investigation by granting certificates to those individuals who have met all application requirements and successfully completed rigorous examination.
 - a) Certification renewal occurs every five (5) years to ensure the certificant is current in the field of medicolegal death investigation, maintains continuing education requirements and restates a commitment to abide by the Code of Ethics and Conduct and Professional Responsibility.
 - b) Disclaimer: Certification attests to the fact that the certificant has knowledge required to pass the ABMDI examination. The ABMDI makes no representation as to the certificant's work product or his/her skills on the job.
- 4) Encourage medicolegal death investigators to adhere to high standards of professional practice and ethical conduct when performing medicolegal death investigations.
- 5) Raise the level of professional competency in medicolegal death investigation by identifying appropriate accredited training courses for professional development that are accepted for continuing education purposes toward recertification.
- 6) Maintain a publicly accessible listing of individuals holding current ABMDI certification.

IV. Terms and Definitions

The following definitions are specific to this document:

- 1) *ABMDI*: American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators
- 2) *Applicant*: an individual who has voluntarily applied for certification with the ABMDI.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- 3) *Board*: Board of Directors
- 4) *Certificant*: an individual who holds a certification by the ABMDI.
- 5) *Certificate*: document published and revocable by the ABMDI and in accordance with these policies and issued to an individual upon his/her fulfillment of the certification requirements.
- 6) *Competent practitioner*: a professional currently working in the field or has recently worked in the field, who is skilled in the specific area to be trained/evaluated.
- 7) *Diplomate*: an individual who holds a Registry Certification by the ABMDI.
- 8) *Educational Consultant*: subcontracted position in charge of statistical analysis, review and validation of ABMDI test questions.
- 9) *Examination*: Mechanism that measures a candidate's competence through written, oral, practical or observational means, which are graded and maintained by a professional educational consultant.
- 10) *Fellow*: an individual who holds Board Certification by the ABMDI.
- 11) *Inactive*: A certificant, or the file of such certificant, who is no longer considered in good standing and no longer entitled to certification benefits.
- 12) *Medicolegal death investigator*: a professional having the legal authority to investigate deaths for a medicolegal (medical examiner/coroner) jurisdiction, who perform scene investigations, collect evidence and develop decedents' medical and social histories to assist the medical examiner/coroner in determining the cause and manner of death.
- 13) *Recertification*: To renew the certification.
- 14) *Revision/ Test Revision*: Revision involves making improvements to all aspects of an examination question, including the thesis, the organization, and the support and development of the ideas.

V. **General Provisions**

- 1) Prerequisites are published in brochure form and on the ABMDI website. Informational letters are mailed upon request by interested parties.
- 2) An application process is used to determine applicant's eligibility. Only those individuals qualified should apply for ABMDI certification.
- 3) Participation in the certification program is voluntary.
- 4) Certificates shall be awarded only to applicants who meet or exceed the criteria as described for Registry or Board Certification. Grandfathering into the ABMDI is not permitted for any reason.
- 5) Ownership of the certificate remains with the ABMDI. The certificate must be surrendered if certification status is revoked.
- 6) The ABMDI certification process is fair, objective, and shall apply on an equal basis to all persons applying for certification or recertification. The ABMDI understands the importance of impartiality in its certification activities.
- 7) The ABMDI complies with all applicable federal, state and local laws.
- 8) The ABMDI does not discriminate based on race, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- 9) The ABMDI does not discriminate based on the applicant's membership with any professional association, affiliation with any type of medicolegal death investigation system, or require the applicant hold membership in any specific organization.
- 10) Every applicant and certificant shall refrain from exercising professional, personal or public conduct adverse to the ABMDI.
- 11) Such adverse conduct may result in denial of an application, censure of the certificant, or revocation of an existing certification upon due process as defined in these policies.
- 12) The certification program may be amended periodically to maintain or update criteria and procedures. The changes will be dated and recorded at the ABMDI office and posted on the website at the Board's discretion. All changes to the certification requirements, including the exact nature of the changes and the effective date, will be posted on the website at least thirty (30) days in advance of taking effect, giving reasonable notice to all certificants and as practical, other interested parties.
- 13) Fees and other costs associated with the certification are established by the Board and are subject to change.
- 14) "Days" as referred to in this document will refer to calendar days.
- 15) A transmission by electronic mail is deemed equivalent to written communication and signature wherever called for within the Policy and Procedures manual.

VI. **Governing Body**

- 1) A Board of Directors consisting of a minimum of eleven (11) members governs the ABMDI. There shall be representation from both levels of certification (Registry and Board Certification), medical examiner, coroner and equivalent federal authorities with a balanced geographical representation.
- 2) The Board cannot elect a majority of its successor's during any given year. All Board members shall have served for a minimum of one (1) year on the Advisory Council. All Board members must be employed in a medicolegal system as a medicolegal death investigator, a supervisor of such investigations or a forensic pathologist at the time of appointment.
- 3) Board members shall be elected, as defined in the Bylaws.
- 4) The Board has complete authority to make all decisions relating to the management and operation of the organization as well as awarding certification. These decisions include, but are not limited to: approving applications for examination, verifying application information, administering the testing program, granting certification, renewing certification and investigating grievances. The Board may employ an Executive Director and other employees as deemed necessary to assist in the fulfillment of these duties.
- 5) A Board member has the duty to recuse him or herself from participation in any event when there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.
- 6) The Board has the authority to pay legal obligations incurred by the organization, collect fees for services and to invest assets wisely.
- 7) No Board member shall receive financial compensation for duties performed on behalf of the ABMDI. However, a Board member may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of duties, provided the amount of such

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

reimbursement is specified and approved in advance by the Board. Meetings of the Board do not qualify for reimbursement by the ABMDI.

- 8) Only the President of the organization or his/her designee may make statements representing the official opinions of the ABMDI. Any unethical, unprofessional or otherwise inappropriate statements may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 9) A Board member may be removed for failure to attend the annual meeting for two (2) consecutive years (unless there are extenuating circumstances), failing to actively participate, loss of certification or having engaged in matters of misconduct.
- 10) Duties of the Board
 - a) The Board shall exercise its legal and Bylaws authority and responsibility in the direction and conduct of the affairs of the ABMDI in order to promote and attain the objectives of the organization.
 - b) The Board shall supervise staff to ensure efficiency and quality of work.
 - c) The Board shall establish fees and assure appropriate procedures for payment of same.
 - d) The Board shall determine the date and place of the annual meeting.
 - e) Actions of the Board shall be adopted by a majority vote of the Board.
- 11) Officer Qualifications
 - a) Any Diplomate or Fellow in good standing shall be eligible to hold office after at least one (1) year's participation on the Board and one (1) year of certification.
 - b) Functional duties of the officers are described in the Bylaws.
 - c) Any officer may be removed during his/her term by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the existing Board.
 - d) The Executive Committee shall fill vacant officer positions. The successor(s) shall hold office for the un-expired term or until the next election as established in the Bylaws.

VII. **Executive Committee**

- 1) The Board shall have an Executive Committee empowered to act on behalf of the Board on matters which require urgent action between meetings of the Board and to accomplish other specific designated tasks as established in the Bylaws.

VIII. **Staff**

- 1) The Executive Director will manage the daily affairs of the ABMDI at its headquarters located in Lanham, MD.
- 2) The Executive Director shall be considered a full-time employee.
- 3) The Executive Director reports directly to the Board and supervises staff.
- 4) The Executive Committee shall determine any bonus or additional compensation beyond salary for the staff positions.
 - a) Reimbursement will be submitted to the University of Baltimore for expense of salary and fringe benefits for the Executive Director
 - b) Additional staff will be reimbursed directly from the ABMDI twice a month.

- c) Staff procedures can be found in the employee handbook.

IX. **Use of ABMDI Letterhead and Logo**

- 1) The use of letterhead shall be used for conducting official ABMDI business and shall not be used for any other purposes. Certificants of the ABMDI cannot use the registered logo for self-publication purposes.
 - a) The misuse of ABMDI letterhead and/or logo will be subject to corrective action with possible legal consequences.

X. **Indemnification of Officers**

- 1) The ABMDI shall obtain Errors and Omissions insurance indemnifying Board members and staff. Aggregate coverage will be for \$1 million annually.
- 2) Each former and present Board member and staff shall be indemnified by the ABMDI against expenses actually and necessarily incurred by or imposed upon him/her (including but not without being limited to, judgments, costs, and counsel fees) in connection with defense of the action, suit or proceeding in which s/he is made a party by reason of being or having been in such a position except in relation to matters as to which s/he shall be adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his/her duties for the ABMDI. Such indemnification shall not be deemed exclusive of other rights to which such officer may be entitled, under any bylaws, agreements or as a matter of law, or otherwise.

XI. **Committees and Councils**

1) **General comments**

- a) The President appoints committee members and committee chairs annually for permanent and ad hoc committees with the exception of the Nominating Committee.
- b) Committee members shall be Diplomates or Fellows in good standing, or individuals with the necessary qualifications to fulfill specific committee requirements as deemed by the President.
- c) Committee chair(s) arrange and preside over all committee activities to include correspondence, conference calls, email communications and meetings.
 - i) Committee members act under the direction of the chair.
 - ii) At all meetings of the committee, a majority of the members of the committee shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and the act of a majority of the members of the committee present at any meeting at which there is a quorum shall be the act of the committee, unless the action is one upon which, by express provision of the statutes, the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws or resolution of the Board, a different vote is required, in which case such express provision shall govern and control.
- d) Committee Chairs will submit an annual report to the Executive Director at least thirty days prior to the annual meeting.

2) **Advisory Council**

- a) Duties are described in the Bylaws.
- b) The President appoints Advisory Council members annually for a one (1)

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- year term. Members shall be current ABMDI certificants in good standing. Members may be reappointed to serve successive terms. Membership should not exceed 25 certificants. All members of the Advisory Council shall be employees of their respective death investigation system at the time of their appointment to the Council or who have been previous members of the ABMDI Board, not to exceed two (2) such previous Board members.
- c) Members of the Advisory Council shall have significant field investigation experience and represent the overall demographics of the applicant population served.
 - d) Any certificant considered in good standing shall submit their curriculum vitae or resume and a letter of reference along with a letter of support from their direct supervisor to be considered for an Advisory Council position.
 - e) A confirmation letter to the certificant will be mailed upon appointment. A letter may be sent to their supervisor if requested by the Advisory Council member.
 - f) Members of the Advisory Council shall attend a minimum of one (1) meeting a year. Failure to attend two (2) consecutive meetings may result in removal from the Advisory Council by the President.
 - g) Violations of the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct are cause for termination from the Advisory Council. The member shall be notified in writing of such termination.
 - h) Notification will be given to those members whose term of service is complete.
 - i) Advisory Council members who are no longer eligible for certification or who cannot fulfill their duties, including completing committee work, meeting deadlines, or attending the annual meeting, must notify the Executive Director and President immediately in writing.
 - j) Advisory Council members shall not receive financial compensation for duties performed on behalf of the ABMDI.
- 3) **Nominating Committee**
- a) The Committee shall be constituted according to the Bylaws.
 - b) Rotating Board terms of three (3) years will be maintained to keep continuity to the Board and prevent nominating a majority of successors at any one election.
 - c) The committee shall identify potential candidates and review their qualifications after securing their willingness to serve.
 - d) The committee shall then make written recommendations for Board and officer positions at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.
 - e) The chair shall forward the committee report to the Executive Director who will present the slate at the annual meeting for vote if the committee chair is not present at the meeting.
 - f) Nominations from the floor may be made during the annual meeting, at which time elections are held. Current Board members or officers are not allowed to nominate from the floor for more than 50% of the candidates.
 - g) The election of officers and Directors shall be conducted at the annual meeting.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- h) Votes are cast by secret ballot following the guidelines in the latest edition of the *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by the American Institute of Parliamentarians.
 - i) Board members shall have an equal vote.
 - j) The Executive Director shall tally ballots and officially announce elected positions during the Board meeting. Those elected shall be determined by a majority vote. Ties will be broken by a second vote using a simple majority.
 - k) Officers and Board members shall take office immediately following the close of the meeting at which they are elected and shall hold office for such term not to exceed three (3) years as described by the Bylaws. Individuals may be reelected to successive terms, not to exceed nine (9) consecutive years for Directors and six (6) consecutive years for officers.
 - i) These term limits will not apply to the immediate Past President if the term of the President causes the time limit to be exceeded. The Past President will then continue in their role until which time that the President becomes Past President.
- 4) **Ethics Committee**
- a) There shall be a standing Ethics Committee, whose primary function will be:
 - i) To order or conduct investigations into alleged violations of the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct as defined in the Bylaws of the organization and, as necessary, to serve as a hearing body concerning conduct of individual certificants which may constitute a violation.
 - ii) To act as an advisory body, rendering opinions on the ramifications of contemplated actions by individual certificants. Decisions of the Committee and/or the Board shall be based on a preponderance of evidence.
- 5) **Newsletter Committee**
- a) The ABMDI News is the official newsletter of the ABMDI. It is published quarterly in electronic format via the list serve to Diplomates and Fellows considered to be in good standing.
 - b) The President shall appoint the Editor and a minimum of three (3) additional committee members to ensure a quality, timely publication. The Executive Director is an ex-officio member.
 - i) Previous newsletters are archived at the ABMDI office, on the ABMDI website and available upon request.
- 6) **Bylaws Committee**
- a) This committee shall review and make recommendations concerning changes to the Bylaws and draft proposed language for such changes for presentation to the Board of Directors.
- 7) **Policies and Procedures Committee**
- a) A minimum of one (1) member of the Board shall be appointed to the committee, with appointment lengths staggered to provide continuity.
 - b) The purpose of the committee is to update this Policy and Procedure Manual following the annual ABMDI Board meeting. Revisions to the manual shall be

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

made as needed to maintain a quality certification program. Revisions will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

- c) Each Board member shall be provided a current version of the Policy and Procedure Manual.

The Executive Director is appointed as a standing member of the committee and archives all copies of the manual for historical purposes.

8) Continuing Education Committee

- a) The Continuing Education Committee shall consist of at least the chairperson who is a Board member and one (1) Advisory Council member. The President may appoint additional members as needed.
- b) All requests for course accreditation will be reviewed by the Executive Director in accordance with the stated accreditation policy. The Executive Director will forward any questionable requests to the Continuing Education Committee for further review for approval or denial.
- c) ABMDI staff shall review all Diplomate and Fellow recertification requests and approve or deny in accordance with recertification policy. They will contact the Continuing Education Committee should there be questionable documentation or further clarification needed.

9) Presidential Advisory Committee

- a) The founding members and past presidents of the ABMDI shall remain advisors to the Board of Directors for historical perspective and to provide assistance at the discretion of the President.

10) Finance Committee

- a) This committee shall review the budget and make recommendations regarding fiscal policy of the ABMDI.
 - a) The committee shall be composed of a minimum of the Treasurer and at least one (1) other Director.
 - b) The Executive Director shall be an ex-officio member of the committee.

11) Strategic Planning Committee

- a) The committee shall be responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding short term, intermediate and long-term plans and changes to the organization required to better fulfill its purpose.
- b) The committee shall be responsible for identifying threats to the organization and recommending plans of action to the Board to eliminate the threats. In its recommendations to the Board, the committee shall develop objectives with strategies and tasks which may be forwarded to appropriate committees for completion.
- c) The committee shall be composed at a minimum of the Vice President, at least one (1) Board of Director and one (1) Advisory Council member. The Executive Director is a standing ex-officio member.

12) Outreach and Retention Committee

- a) The committee shall be responsible for provide guidance and support to applicants and certificants; and identify recertification and retention matters pertaining to certificants.

XII. Subcontracting

- 1) The Board may subcontract with individuals or companies to assist in the operation(s) of the organization when deemed necessary.
- 2) Any agency or individual shall be reputable in the field of medicolegal death investigation and have no vested interest concerning the assignment.
- 3) A documented agreement or contract shall cover all services rendered. Fees paid for service must be appropriate for the service(s) rendered.
- 4) Any work performed by a subcontractor will be part of the annual internal audit to ensure that that work is performed in a manner consistent with ABMDI standards.

XIII. Professional Testing Agency

- 1) An independent, professional Educational Consultant who specializes in professional testing shall be subcontracted to provide testing expertise, develop cut scores, maintain the database of test questions and statistics, maintain records necessary for validation and reliability, conduct test revision and cut score workshops, grade examinations and report results to the ABMDI office.
- 2) The Educational Consultant shall record all information required to maintain statistical data necessary to support the reliability and validity of examinations.
- 3) Exams and examination scores shall be maintained by the professional testing agency for sufficient time to allow for an appeal process.
- 4) The Educational Consultant shall report to the Board.
- 5) The Educational Consultant shall have no vested interest in the operation of the Board and does not have voting rights.
- 6) The Educational Consultant presides over the Advisory Council meeting and shall guide the Advisory Council in developing and reviewing examinations by:
 - a) Occupational Analysis (defining the scope of assessment)
 - b) Task Analysis
 - c) Curriculum validation
 - d) Test item writing and assignment to content areas
 - e) Item validation (rating)
 - f) Pilot testing to medicolegal death investigators and non-investigators
 - g) Cut score setting
- 7) The Educational Consultant shall upgrade the test bank as required by standards within the testing industry.
- 8) The Educational Consultant shall maintain statistics on measures of validity and estimates of test reliability.

XIV. Meetings

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- 1) *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by the American Institute of Parliamentarians, current edition, serves as the basis upon which the meetings are conducted and ultimately govern the procedures of all Board meetings.
- 2) The annual meeting of the Board shall be held at such time and place as determined by the Board.
- 3) Additional meetings of the Board may be called in accordance with the Bylaws of the organization.
- 4) Conference calls or email communication may be used in place of face-to-face meetings in order to facilitate business in a timely manner.
- 5) When ballots are necessitated by urgent business needs, the receipt of mailed or emailed votes by 100 percent of the total number of Board members, unless a Board member is not available for an extended period, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business by mail.
- 6) All meetings of the Board shall be fully recorded. Minutes shall be archived at the office.
- 7) Quorum and Voting
 - a) Officer and Board elections shall be held in conjunction with the annual meeting.
 - b) A quorum shall consist of two thirds (2/3) of the total Board. Each officer and Board member shall be entitled to one (1) vote.
 - c) To approve amendments to the Bylaws, a three-fourths (3/4) vote shall be obtained.
 - d) For other motions at the Board meetings, a majority in favor of the motion shall be obtained.
 - e) Proxy voting is not permitted.
- 8) Open Meetings
 - a) The annual meeting shall be open except on those matters ruled “in executive session” by the President.
 - i) All matters discussed in executive session should remain confidential and may only be discussed outside of the executive session with legal counsel, persons present during the executive session, or with absent board members if such a need is required, unless otherwise determined by the President.
 - ii) Matters of a sensitive nature (i.e. personnel issues, pending or threatened litigation, etc.) should be considered confidential and discussed only with legal counsel and other individuals whose need for information is required to further the best interests of the ABMDI.
- 9) Minutes
 - a) The Executive Director shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of Board Minutes with approval by the Secretary.
 - b) After approval, the minutes from Board meetings shall be distributed to the Board within forty-five days (45) after the meeting. Notes from teleconference calls shall be distributed as soon as possible to the Board.

- c) Minutes of the Executive Committee shall be distributed only to Executive Committee members. A summary will be prepared by the Executive Director for distribution to the Board of Directors.
- d) Non-substantive editorial changes (i.e. grammar, spelling, typographical errors, punctuation, etc.) in the minutes can be performed by the Executive Director without approval from the Board.

10) Meeting Expenses

- a) Board members are responsible for funding their own travel and meeting expenses.

XV. Financial Management

1) Budget Preparation

- a) The fiscal year will be recognized from July 1 – June 30. The annual budget shall be calculated on the basis of the fiscal year. The Executive Director and the Treasurer shall prepare the budget.
- b) The proposed budget shall be distributed for review and comment to the Board at the annual meeting.
- c) The Board shall approve the budget at its annual meeting.

2) Internal Audit Controls

- a) The Executive Director will balance the finances monthly and forward a quarterly report to the Treasurer and President, who shall continuously evaluate the financial health of the organization.

3) Bank Accounts

- a) The Executive Director is authorized to sign checks on behalf of the ABMDI following approval by the Treasurer.

4) External Audits

- a) The Board shall require a certified audit by a licensed public accountant when deemed necessary, but not greater than every seven (7) years. A compilation may suffice. Federal law does not require an annual audit for non-profit organizations.
- b) A professional accounting firm will complete and file the annual federal tax report in accordance with state statutes.

XVI. Registry Certification

- 1) The Registry certification is the initial certification that provides official recognition that an individual has acquired specialized knowledge and demonstrated proficiency in the standards of practice necessary to properly conduct a competent, thorough medicolegal death investigation.
- 2) Application Criteria:
 - a) Individuals who are interested in becoming professional medicolegal death investigators certified by the ABMDI are expected to be knowledgeable of the National Institutes of Justice 2010 publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* (and any subsequent revisions), other applicable medicolegal

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

death investigation practice standards and techniques, and the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct.

- b) Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- c) Applicants shall currently be employed by a medical examiner/coroner jurisdiction or equivalent federal authority and have the responsibility to conduct death scene investigations or supervise such investigations.
 - i) Applicants in reserve positions would not qualify as being currently employed as defined above unless they are currently activated.
- d) Applicants shall have experience as a Medicolegal Death Investigator.
 - i) 640 points are required and the activity must have been completed within five years of the date of application submission.
 - (1) Employment Experience
 - (a) Minimum 384 points required, may be used for all 640 points.
 - (i) Full or part time employment
 - 1. One (1) hour is equivalent to one (1) point.
 - (ii) On call employment
 - 1. The following on call conversions may be used to determine eligibility.
 - a. Each on-call hour = 0.25 points
 - i. Maximum points= 100
 - b. Investigation of a natural death, no scene investigation = 1 point
 - c. Investigation of non-natural death, no scene investigation = 2.5 points
 - d. Investigation of a death with scene investigation = 5 points
 - e. Secondary investigator or intern at the scene = 2.5 points
 - i. Maximum points= 100
 - 2. Case log with dates required and Employment Verification Form required for approval.
 - (2) Advanced Degree
 - (a) Points are granted for highest degree, cannot claim more than one degree.
 - (i) Associates= 50 points
 - (ii) Bachelors= 100 points
 - (iii) Masters= 150 points
 - (iv) PhD= 200 points
 - (v) MD= 200 points
 - (b) Copy of degree, transcript or letter from registrar and Education Submission form required for approval.
 - (3) Education/Training
 - (a) Maximum of 40 points accepted.
 - (b) Course cannot be part of degree if degree was claimed for points.
 - (c) Teaching/Instructional hours are not accepted.
 - (d) Conversion for course points:
 - (i) One Educational Quarter= 10 points
 - (ii) One Educational Semester= 15 points

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

(e) Transcript with passing grade required for approval.

(4) Conferences/Courses

(a) Points are granted for each hour of the course.

(b) Maximum of 40 points accepted.

(c) Approved courses include, but are not limited to, courses accredited by: American Medical Association, American Nursing Association, American Academy of Physician Assistants, American Society for Clinical Pathology, American Bar Association, College of American Pathologists, Emergency Medical Services, Federal Emergency Management Agency, International Association for Continuing Education and Training, Peace Officer Standards and Training (or equivalent), Pennsylvania Coroner's Education Board, US Department of Homeland Security or a post-secondary institution recognized by a national educational accrediting agency.

(d) All courses must be relevant to the field of medicolegal death investigation.

(e) Certificates of completion, including applicants name, date, name of course, number of hours awarded and awarding agency and Education/Training Submission form must be submitted for approval.

(5) Viewing Forensic Autopsies

(a) Points are granted for each hour attending autopsy.

(b) Maximum of 64 points accepted.

(c) Applicant must physically be in the autopsy room and able to communicate with Forensic Pathologist in order to claim hours.

(d) Forensic Autopsy Viewing form is required for approval.

(i) Pathologists will be randomly contacted to verify information.

3) Application Requirements:

a) Applications may be mailed or electronically sent from the office upon receipt of an application request. Application requests can be found on the ABMDI website or at organization headquarters.

b) The application fee must accompany the request.

c) Application materials must be completed in their entirety and returned to the ABMDI office at least 30 days prior to an examination date for processing.

d) A Suggested Reading and Task List shall be included in the application packet as study references.

e) Staff shall process the following items for accuracy and completion:

i) Application Form

ii) Notarized Employment Verification Form

(1) ABMDI staff may request further documentation to verify the completed 640 hours of death investigation experience.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- iii) Documentation submitted for points system, when applicable.
- iv) Professional Reference Form or letter of professional reference
- v) Signed Code of Ethics and Conduct
- vi) Notarized Performance Training Guidebook Sign-off Form
- vii) Notarized official Performance Training Checklist
 - (1) The applicant shall have knowledge of each of the 306 skills which must be correctly performed or otherwise validated in the presence of a competent practitioner.
 - (2) Each of the fifty-two (52) tasks on the Verification Sign-off Sheet must contain initials from the competent practitioner indicating the applicant has knowledge of the tasks and is able to properly and independently perform them.
 - (3) Staff shall contact the competent practitioner and verify that the applicant has properly and independently performed each task.
- 4) Scope of Knowledge
 - a) The scope of knowledge for the Registry exam is defined in the National Institutes of Justice 2010 publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* (and subsequent revisions) and is further defined in the current Performance Training Checklist.
 - b) The Board acknowledges that applicants may not be required to perform certain tasks covered on the examination in their daily operations but that the exam is national in scope; therefore, all applicants shall possess the defined scope of knowledge in order to pass the exam.
 - c) Applicants can view example questions on the professional testing agency's web site, which is linked from the ABMDI web site.
- 5) Upon successful completion of the Registry examination, the applicant will become a Diplomate of the ABMDI and be eligible to use designation (D-ABMDI) in describing their certifications. Registry numbers are assigned to certificants at that time.

XVII. **Board Certification**

- 1) The advanced Board Certification examination is available to experienced Registered medicolegal death investigators who prove their mastery of all aspects of medicolegal death investigation.
- 2) Application Criteria:
 - a) The applicant shall provide documentation of a minimum of an Associate Degree from an accredited post-secondary institution.
 - b) The applicant shall be a Diplomate in good standing for at least six (6) months.
 - c) Applicant shall currently be employed as defined in XVI.2.c.
 - d) The applicant shall have 4,000 hours of death investigation experience during the past six (6) years. The following on call conversions may be used to determine eligibility.
 - i) Each on-call hour = 0.25 hours

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- ii) Investigation of a natural death, no scene investigation = 1 hour
 - iii) Investigation of non-natural death, no scene investigation = 2.5 hours
 - iv) Investigation of a death with scene investigation = 5 hours
- 3) Application Requirements:
- a) Applications may be mailed or electronically sent upon written request from the office when a completed application request is submitted. Application requests can be found on the ABMDI web site or at organizational headquarters.
 - b) An application fee must accompany the request.
 - c) Application materials must be completed in their entirety and returned to the ABMDI office at least 30 days prior to an examination date for processing.
 - d) A Suggested Reading List and Advanced Skills Task List is included in the application packet as study references.
 - e) The ABMDI staff shall process the following items for accuracy and completion:
 - i) Application Form with signed Code of Ethics and Conduct
 - ii) Documentation of at least an Associate Degree
 - iii) Notarized Employment Verification Form
 - (1) ABMDI staff may request further documentation to verify the completed 4,000 hours of death investigation experience.
 - iv) Forensic Science Specialist Reference Form
 - v) Administrator/Supervisor Reference Form
 - vi) Law Enforcement Reference Form
- 4) Scope of Knowledge
- a) The scope of knowledge for the Board Certified exam is defined minimally in the National Institutes of Justice 2010 publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* (and subsequent revisions) and will rely heavily on the applicant's cumulative experience and further training in medicolegal death investigation, which might include independent study and attendance at workshops, seminars, and other training venues. As a minimum, and given that the examination is broad based and encompasses the forensic sciences generally, the applicant is required to have at least an Associate Degree.
 - b) The Board acknowledges that applicants may not be required to perform certain tasks covered on the examination in their daily operations but that the exam is national in scope; therefore, all applicants shall possess the defined scope of knowledge, time in service, a degree, and specific forensic references in order to pass the exam.
- 5) Upon successful completion of Board Certification examination, the certificant will achieve Fellow status with the ABMDI and be eligible to use designation (F-ABMDI) in describing their certifications.

XVIII. Examinations

1) General

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- a) ABMDI examinations are constructed to parallel field-based national standards. The Registry and Board Certification exams are crafted and kept up-to-date by the Advisory Council, made up of a panel of experts from both public and private sector agencies (coroner and medical examiner). Advisory Council members are selected based on their expertise and experience in the occupational field and knowledge of national standards.
- b) The test development process used is a modified version of the DACUM (Developing A CURriculUM) process, which defines the critical core competencies necessary to achieve professional competency. Each examination question is carefully constructed to assess these critical core competencies.
- c) Examinations must be scheduled within eighteen (18) months of receipt of application packet. If the certification exam is not scheduled, with the exception of extenuating circumstances, all fees are forfeited and the application is considered defaulted. The applicant shall reapply and pay current fees in order to start the process again.
- d) Examinations are proctored at approved testing centers or local colleges and universities through their testing and assessment departments.
- e) The ABMDI does not discriminate against persons with disabilities and will make reasonable accommodations for testing in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as long as the ABMDI receives notice at the time the exam is scheduled.
- f) Examinations are computer based unless the candidate specifically requests a paper/pencil version, for which there is an additional fee.
- g) Written (multiple choice) portions of the examination are composed of validated questions within specific discipline areas. There are a specific number of questions per curriculum area. Test questions are drawn from a databank of validated questions and rotated to ensure test integrity.
 - i) Database shall contain enough questions to be able to administer an alternate examination if a version of the examination is compromised.
- h) Based on standard testing calculations, applicants are allowed four (4) hours to complete the written (multiple-choice) section.
- i) For the Board Certification examination, knowledge of scene investigation shall be demonstrated through a written performance evaluation.
 - i) Applicants will be asked to provide information regarding identification and collection of evidence, interviewing techniques and written skills using medicolegal language.
 - ii) The applicants will be given 30 minutes to evaluate each of three (3) different death investigation scenarios.

2) Grading

- a) Examinations/retests shall be graded by a professional testing agency retained by the Board.
- b) A passing score for each section of the examination is predetermined using standard cutting score methods. The applicant shall successfully pass each section of the exam.

- c) The testing agency will provide pass/fail scores for initial testing to the applicant directly as well as to the ABMDI office.
- d) A pass/fail score will be released and recorded by the ABMDI. The testing agency will not report numerical scores.
- e) The ABMDI shall officially notify the applicant of the examination results.
- f) If the examination is successfully passed, a certificate and wallet card will be mailed to the Diplomate or Fellow.

3) **Failing the Examination**

- a) The applicant shall contact the ABMDI office in order to schedule a retest. All paperwork must be completed and fees paid in full prior to the retest being scheduled.
- b) At least thirty (30) days should exist between testing dates.
- c) Retests may be administered in a variety of formats (i.e. multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) The applicant will be required only to retest for the section(s) of the examination which were failed.
- d) Retesting is administered online unless paper/pencil format is requested in which an additional fee will be imposed.

XIX. Certification

- 1) The ABMDI shall have the authority to issue certificates to persons who have complied with all application requirements and passed certification examination(s).
- 2) Certificates shall be valid for a period of five (5) years from the date the examination is deemed as a passing grade.
- 3) Certificates shall be numbered, bear the certificant's name, status of certification as a medicolegal death investigator, date of issue, expiration date, and the signatures of the ABMDI officers.
- 4) Certificates remain the property of the ABMDI, but persons to whom a certificate is issued shall be entitled to its continued possession unless and until such certificate is revoked.
- 5) Certificates may be denied or revoked for the following reasons:
 - g) Violation of the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct.
 - i) Policies regarding ethical violations are found elsewhere in this document.
 - h) Conviction of a certificant in a court of a felony.
 - i) Determination that the certificant was not in fact eligible to receive such certificate at the time of its issuance.

XX. Maintenance Fees

- 1) The Board shall determine the annual maintenance fee.
- 2) Notice to certificants shall be sent by electronic mail no later than November 1 of the calendar year. The annual maintenance fee is due by March 31 of the following calendar year.

- 3) If payment is not received by March 31 of the following calendar year, the certificant will no longer be considered in good standing and their status will be listed as inactive on the web site, the certificant file becomes inactive and the certificant loses certification benefits to include email listserv access and receipt of newsletter.
- 4) Should the certificant choose to reactivate his/her file before certification expires, they will be assessed all unpaid maintenance fees along with a late fee for each year. All debts must be paid in full before reactivation.

XXI. Provisions for Examination

- 1) Expenses associated with proctoring of examinations/retests shall be the responsibility of the applicant and should be paid in full prior to taking the examination/retest.
- 2) If examination fees are not paid, official notification of examination results and a certificate will not be issued, and the name of the applicant will not appear on the ABMDI website.
- 3) Upon completion of the application packet, written notification shall be mailed to the applicant informing them that they are eligible to sit for the certification examination.
- 4) The applicant shall return the Exam Request Form indicating the location and date they would like to sit for the exam to the ABMDI office at least 21 days prior to the examination date.
- 5) If the Exam Request Form is received after the 21-day deadline, an additional fee shall be assessed.
- 6) Examinations shall be offered at approved testing centers or local colleges/universities as verified by the professional testing agency.
 - a) Employment of proctors at colleges or university testing centers must be verified before the username/password can be delivered.
 - b) The testing location should be quiet and devoid of distracting movement. The room should have ample lighting, comfortable seating, and adequate workspace for each participant.
 - c) The proctor must confirm the identity of the applicant using a valid government issued photo identification.
 - d) The ABMDI does not discriminate against persons with disabilities and will make reasonable accommodations for testing in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as long as the ABMDI receives notice at the time the exam is scheduled.
 - e) If more than one (1) applicant is testing at the same time, participants shall be seated with at least one (1) empty chair between them. Applicants may not utilize unauthorized aids during the examination.
 - f) If needed, testing materials shall be returned by verifiable means to the professional testing agency by the proctor.
- 7) An applicant who is scheduled to test, but is prevented by circumstances from doing so, must notify the ABMDI office of such cancellation immediately.
- 8) In the case of a cancellation, the testing fee may be applied to a future test date. The candidate is responsible for fees established at the time of application.

- 9) If the applicant fails to notify the ABMDI office of cancellation, 20% of the testing fee shall be assessed to cover the cost of rescheduling. If there are no extenuating circumstances, a 100% fee may be charged.

XXII. Provisions for Re-Examination

- 1) The applicant may retest the section(s) failed on the original examination.
- 2) At least thirty days shall exist between testing and retesting. A separate fee will be required for each section retested.
- 3) Retesting is accomplished by offering equivalent forms of the examination questions which measure the same knowledge and skill area and are weighted the same difficulty rating as predetermined by the professional testing agency.
- 4) Retests shall be proctored at an ABMDI pre-approved testing facility, local community college or university. Retests are offered via computer unless paper/pencil form is specifically requested.
- 5) Staff shall contact the college/university to confirm proctor eligibility, exam date and time, and to explain testing procedures.
- 6) If paper/pencil version is requested, staff shall email or fax the professional test agency the retest request, to include applicant name, date, time, type and number of retest and proctor information (name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and email address).
- 7) Confirmation of the retest shall be emailed to the applicant, unless the applicant specifies notice by US Postal mail.
- 8) The proctor shall return any testing materials by verifiable means to the professional testing agency.
- 9) The testing agency shall notify the candidate and the ABMDI office of the results.
- 10) If the applicant fails the retest, a second retest may be administered thirty days after the original retest date. The procedures above are again applicable.
- 11) The applicant has three (3) attempts to successfully pass the entire certification examination within an application cycle. Following the third failure, a remediation process must be completed. This process shall consist of the following:
 - a) The applicant shall restart the application process in its entirety and accumulate an additional 640 hours of experience as a medicolegal death investigator before submitting a new application for certification.
 - b) The applicant shall utilize a different competent practitioner(s) to sign off on the task list and pay all associated fees as with an original application.
- 12) If a remediation applicant fails to pass the examination after an additional three (3) attempts, they shall be prohibited from applying for certification in the future.

XXIII. Revisions to Examination

- 1) The Advisory Council and Board members shall meet at least once a year to review the test bank and evaluate it for current knowledge and technologies to ensure that the examination remains reliable and valid to the profession.

- 2) Questions are reviewed after one hundred (100) administrations or one (1) year of offering.
- 3) The Educational Consultant shall consider test revision every three (3) years after statistical review. Revision is mandatory every five (5) years.
- 4) The Educational Consultant, as an indicator of individual test item performance, shall also review item analysis. Poorly performing test items are marked for review by the Advisory Council.
- 5) Test revision shall consist of revising, rewriting, eliminating or adding new questions as deemed necessary under the supervision of the Educational Consultant. Such revision shall meet the requirements set forth in the initial test development.
- 6) The performance sections shall be revised and updated as deemed necessary, using the guidelines previously established.
- 7) The ABMDI Board shall approve all revisions to the testing program.

XXIV. **Recertification Requirements**

- 1) **General**
 - a) Recertification is mandatory every five (5) year certification period.
 - b) ABMDI staff will prepare an ongoing list each year indicating the Diplomates and Fellows who will be required to submit recertification documents during the upcoming year.
 - c) The ABMDI office shall mail a letter six (6) months prior to certification expiration advising the certificant to send in proof of 45-hours of ABMDI approved continuing education along with other requirements.
 - d) All requirements shall be completed and received in the ABMDI office along with the required fees prior to the date of certification expiration.
 - e) Packets received in the ABMDI office shall be opened to verify timely receipt and completion. The date of receipt shall be documented in the database.
 - f) A review by ABMDI staff of the prior five (5) year certification period to assess any prior violations or pending claims of noncompliance of the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct that may impact recertification.
 - g) A signed Code of Ethics and Conduct, Notarized Employment Verification Form and the administrative fee must accompany the continuing education packet received by ABMDI before recertification is granted.
 - i) In lieu of the Employment Verification Form, proof of continued competency may suffice. Continued competency includes maintenance of continuing education requirements, maintenance of good standing with the ABMDI and:
 - (1) Applicant shall currently be employed as defined in XVI.2.c, or
 - (2) If not currently employed as above, successful passing of a recertification exam with associated examination fee.
 - (a) The recertification exam must be completed no sooner than six (6) months prior to the end of the certification period and no later than the end of the certification period.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- (b) Only one (1) such extension of certification during a single period of unemployment as a medicolegal death investigator will be granted.
 - h) Continuing education information not entered in its entirety through the certificant's ABMDI profile or received in the ABMDI Continuing Education Folder will be considered incomplete. Folders are available on the website for download.
 - i) Incomplete packets will be returned to the certificant and will not be processed. The certificant shall be given thirty days from receipt of the original packet or until their certification expiration date to return a completed continuing education packet, whichever is later. A penalty fee must accompany the returned packet in order for it to be processed.
 - j) If the packet is still not complete or is received beyond the stated date, the certificant shall lose his/her certification status and all fees will be forfeited.
 - k) In order to regain certification status, the individual shall reapply to the ABMDI and pay all current fees. They must complete the application process in its entirety and sit for the certification examination again.
 - l) Questionable continuing education submissions shall be forwarded to the Continuing Education Committee for review.
 - m) All certificants meeting recertification requirements shall receive a letter from the ABMDI office indicating that they are recertified for another five (5) year period. A new certification card will be included in the mailing.
 - n) A current certificant may submit a written request to the ABMDI office requesting retired status. They shall be required to have maintained good standing with the ABMDI for at least 10 years. If this status is granted by the Executive Director or their designee, their listing with the ABMDI will be changed to "D-ABMDI-Retired" or "F-ABMDI-Retired". Retired certificants will no longer be required to submit maintenance fees or need to recertify. Retired certificants will maintain their access to the ABMDI list serve.
- 2) [Continuing Education Requirements](#)
- a) Forty-five (45) hours of approved ABMDI continuing education are required for the five (5) year certification period.
 - b) Continuing Education hours must be accumulated after the certificant's certification date and before their expiration date.
 - c) Certificants are responsible for documenting forty-five hours (45) of ABMDI approved continuing education on the ABMDI website in their profile or in the continuing education folder available on the ABMDI website. Documentation must show proof of attendance, number of hours per offering, dates of attendance and approving agency.
 - i) It is recommended that certificants keep a photocopy of all continuing education documentation submitted.
 - d) Approved ABMDI continuing education includes but is not limited to courses accredited by: American Medical Association, American Nursing Association, American Academy of Physician Assistants, American Society for Clinical Pathology, American Bar Association, College of American Pathologists, Emergency Medical Services, Federal Emergency Management Agency,

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

International Association for Continuing Education and Training, Peace Officer Standards and Training (or equivalent), Pennsylvania Coroner's Education Board, US Department of Homeland Security or a post-secondary institution recognized by a national educational accrediting agency. Current approved training shall be maintained by the ABMDI office and shall be published on the website.

- i) All courses must be relevant to the field of medicolegal death investigation.
 - ii) If a course is not approved for continuing education credits by one of the above-mentioned agencies it must be approved in accordance with the ABMDI accreditation policy.
- e) The following activities can be used for continuing education hours, when the appropriate documentation is submitted.
- i) Seminars, Workshops and Conferences
 - (1) Documentation must show proof of attendance, number of hours per offering, dates of attendance and approving agency.
 - ii) College and University Courses
 - (1) A passing grade is required.
 - (2) Copy of transcript is required.
 - (3) Conversion for credits is:
 - (a) One Instructional Hour: One (1) Continuing Education Hour
 - (b) One Educational Quarter: Ten (10) Continuing Education Hours
 - (c) One Educational Semester: Fifteen (15) Continuing Education Hours
 - iii) Leadership
 - (1) Leadership positions acceptable for continuing education credit include:
 - (a) officer of a state or national organization of which death investigators are members (ABMDI not included),
 - (b) editor of a professional journal or book on a death investigation related topic,
 - (c) active member of a national panel producing a substantial written product,
 - (d) chair of a national conference or meeting, or
 - (e) other similar leadership positions with justifiable professional learning experience.
 - (2) Proof of attendance with copy of minutes is required.
 - (3) One (1) hour of continuing education is granted per leadership activity.
 - (4) Maximum of five (5) hours of continuing education credit will be granted for leadership activities within a certification period.
 - iv) Published/ Refereed Article
 - (1) Materials acceptable for continuing education credit include:
 - (a) Publications in peer reviewed journals,

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- (b) A chapter in an edited book, or
- (c) A published book.

- (i) Must be relevant to the field of death investigation.

- (2) Ten (10) hours of continuing education credit is granted per article.
- (3) ABMDI newsletter articles are worth one (1) hour of credit.
- (4) Maximum of ten (10) hours of continuing education credit will be granted for a published/ referred article within a certification period.

- v) Presentation

- (1) Presentation must be presented by the certificant at a national or state meeting on a topic relevant to death investigators.
 - (2) The certificant must be listed as an author.

- vi) Teaching

- (1) Conversion for teaching credits is:
 - (a) One Instructional Hour: One (1) Continuing Education Hour
 - (b) One Educational Quarter: Ten (10) Continuing Education Hours
 - (c) One Educational Semester: Fifteen (15) Continuing Education Hours
 - (2) Maximum of fifteen (15) hours of continuing education credit will be granted for presentations and teaching within a certification period.

3) Accreditation Policy

- a) Seminars, workshops or conferences not approved by one of the designated approved agencies for continuing education credits can apply for approval through the ABMDI prior to the start of the course.
- b) All requests must be submitted at least sixty (60) days prior to the start date of the program.
- c) All requests must include:
 - i) The signed Course Accreditation Form, which can be found on the ABMDI website,
 - ii) A brochure or schedule of the conference, which must include actual hours of instruction,
 - iii) Curriculum vitae or resume of each instructor,
 - iv) Course outlines or objectives for each lecture, and
 - v) The required processing fee.
- d) Each course will be reviewed to determine the following:
 - i) Whether the course material is relevant to medicolegal death investigations, including but not limited to whether the course material is consistent with existing and/or developing standards of practice, scientific principles, and applicable law,
 - ii) The instructors are qualified to teach the material,

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- iii) If the instructor is a certificant, a review of any pending and/or existing claims against the instructor for noncompliance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct that may impact accreditation,
 - iv) The amount of actual instructional hours,
 - v) Any other deficiencies in the material that may prevent ABMDI from approving accreditation.
- e) Once a course is approved it will be issued a course accreditation number, which is good for one (1) year.
- f) Re-accreditation for a previously approved course is required after a one (1) year period. For re-accreditation a new Course Accreditation Form is required along with proof that the material and instructors have not changed. If material and instructors have changed, the new material must be provided. In either situation ABMDI shall review the request consistent with the Accreditation Policy standard set forth above in Section XXIV.3.b-e.
- g) Courses that are approved by one of the approved agencies but would like to advertise ABMDI credits must provide a Course Accreditation Form, a brochure or schedule of the conference, which must include actual hours of instruction, and proof of the approval of credits from the outside agency.

XXV. **Examination Security**

- 1) Any company or individual contracted to perform duties related to ABMDI certification testing shall have no vested interest in the certification program or a conflict with the task assigned.
- 2) Security of the test bank shall be vested with a professional testing agency.
- 3) All test items shall be secured at the professional testing agency via secured server. Hard copies shall be secured in locked file cabinets in their office.
- 4) Access to test items shall be restricted to employees of the professional testing agency and the Executive Director.
- 5) Test questions are selected from a validated database.
- 6) In the case that a test item was to become public, an equivalent form of the compromised exam shall be created from the validated test bank and made available. Testing shall be suspended until such equivalent form is available.
- 7) The proctor is responsible for returning all test materials to the professional testing agency. He/she shall collect all test materials before the applicant is allowed to leave the room. These materials must be delivered to the professional testing agency.

XXVI. **Code of Ethics and Conduct**

- 1) The Code of Ethics and Conduct is set forth in the Bylaws.
- 2) As a means to promote the highest quality of professional and personal conduct of its certificants and applicants, the following constitutes the Code of Ethics and Conduct, which shall be endorsed and adhered to by all certificants and applicants of the ABMDI.
 - a) Every certificant/applicant of the ABMDI shall refrain from exercising professional or personal conduct adverse to the best interests and purposes of the ABMDI.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- b) Every certificant/applicant of the ABMDI shall refrain from providing any material misrepresentation of education, training, experience or fact. Misrepresentation of one or more criteria shall constitute a violation of this section of the code.
 - c) Every certificant/applicant of the ABMDI shall refrain from making statements that appear to represent the position of the ABMDI without specific authority first obtained in writing from the Board.
 - d) Every certificant/applicant will not discuss the contents of the Registry and Board Certification examinations with anyone other than Directors or their designated representatives.
- 3) Any certificant/applicant of the ABMDI who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be liable to disqualification from obtaining a certificate, censure, or revocation of their Certificate by action of the Board upon recommendation of the Ethics Committee.
- a) "Censure" will consist of a written statement from the Ethics Committee of ABMDI defining the disapproved action of the certificant and the opinion of the Ethics Committee as to why the action did not adhere to the Code of Ethics and Conduct. The listing of the certificant on the ABMDI website will not be effected. Recommendation for Censure will require ratification by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Board of Directors. Censure will be used for infractions which are felt by the Committee to be of a lesser degree of seriousness than those warranting a higher degree of action. Any further incidents of similar nature may result in the certificant's credentials being revoked.
 - b) "Revocation" will consist of removal of a certificant's credentials and the name of the certificant removed from the ABMDI website. Revocation will be used for infractions which are felt by the Committee to be of a serious nature. Recommendation for Revocation will require ratification by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Board of Directors. The certificant will be notified in writing by certified mail of the Revocation.
- 4) Process
- a) All complaints must be received in written format at the ABMDI office and must be signed by the accuser to open an investigation.
 - b) Written complaints or allegations against an applicant or certificant to the ABMDI office shall promptly be transmitted to the Chair of the Ethics Committee by the Executive Director.
 - c) The Ethics Committee shall determine whether the alleged complaint(s) or allegation(s) fall within its jurisdiction and whether there is probable cause to believe that the complaint(s) or allegation(s) may be well founded.
 - d) If the Ethics Committee, in its preliminary determination, finds that it does not have jurisdiction or that there is a lack of probable cause to believe that the complaint(s) or allegation(s) may be well founded, it shall close the case. The accusation and the results of the investigation shall remain confidential.
 - e) If the Ethics Committee finds that it has jurisdiction, prompt notice of the filing of the complaint or allegation(s) (within 30 days of determination of jurisdiction), omitting the name of the complainant(s), shall be given to the accused. The

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Committee shall assemble written information from both the accused and the complainant(s) and any other pertinent sources, which shall permit the Committee to determine whether the allegation requires further action.

- f) The Committee may appoint an individual to investigate the allegation and present the evidence to the Committee.
- g) If, based on the results of an investigation, the Committee decides to dismiss the allegation(s) without formal hearing, it may do so. The Committee shall issue a report to the Board of Directors, setting forth the basic facts but omitting the names of the parties, and stating the reason(s) for its decision to dismiss. The Committee will then close the case and the name of the accuser, the accusation and the results of the investigation shall remain confidential.
- h) If the Committee decides to formally hear the case, it shall give the accused a reasonable opportunity to be heard. The complainant(s) shall also be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard.
- i) If the Committee's decision is that unethical conduct occurred on the part of the accused, the Committee shall issue a report to the Board of Directors including a recommendation for censure or revocation of the certificate.
- j) The Board will then review the report and any written submission provided by the certificant. They will then ratify, overturn or modify the decision or remand the case to the Ethics Committee for further action. The decision shall require a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the members of the Board. If a three-fourths (3/4) vote is not received, then the matter shall automatically be remanded back to the Committee for further action. The party accused of unethical conduct will then be notified of the action by registered return receipt mail. The nature and conditions of any sanction shall be provided to the certificant in writing. The names of the complainant(s) shall be kept confidential.
- k) The degree of sanction imposed upon the accused may take into consideration, but are not limited to, the following discretionary criteria:
 - (1) Seriousness of the offense.
 - (2) Whether the offense directly relates to the duties of the death investigator.
 - (3) The time since the offense occurred.
 - (4) Whether the offense involved interpersonal violence.
 - (5) Whether the offense involved a minor or person of diminished capacity.
 - (6) Whether the certificant's actions and conduct before and after the offense occurred are consistent with the ability to hold a position of public trust.
- l) The accused has the right to appeal the action of the Committee to the Board of Directors. The request for appeal shall be submitted to the Executive Director in writing within thirty (30) days of notification as evidenced by the return receipt. The Executive Director shall immediately advise all members of the Board of Directors of the appeal. The Executive Director will supply copies of the entire case file, including the names of all parties in the matter, to the accused upon request and the confidentiality of the matter is waived.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- m) If an appeal is requested, the complainant(s) will be immediately notified.
 - n) The accused shall file any written statements s/he may wish to submit on his/her behalf with the Executive Director within thirty (30) days of notice of appeal. Upon request to the Executive Director, an additional thirty (30) days shall be granted to either party.
 - o) The Board of Directors shall consider all information submitted by the appellant, including any additional information provided by either party. The Board of Directors shall then prepare a written statement of the reason for its actions and file the same with the Executive Director not more than sixty (60) days following receipt of the appeal.
 - p) If upon appeal, the revocation has been overturned, the certification shall be reinstated. If reinstated, the required maintenance fee payment shall be the annual maintenance fee for the year that revocation is lifted.
 - q) No member of the Board of Directors, officers or Executive Director who is the subject of an Ethics Committee investigation, or who has any other conflict of interest, shall participate in any manner before the Board concerning ethics.
- 5) Confidentiality
- i) After a complaint is resolved, the matter shall be treated as confidential and all correspondence between members of the committee and the parties of the complaint shall refer to the case by file number only.
 - ii) Other than the reports to the Board, the members of the Ethics Committee, staff or any appointed investigator(s) shall scrupulously avoid any disclosure of the investigation and accord the respondent the fullest opportunity for access to information, opportunity to respond to the charges, to present evidence, and to be represented by counsel.
 - iii) The Ethics Committee has the authority to communicate by written correspondence, telephone, fax and e-mail, providing that communications are confidential.
- 6) Case Files
- i) Files of the Ethics Committee on open cases shall be securely maintained by the Chair who shall transfer them to the new Chair upon leaving office. Case files on closed cases shall be sealed by the chair and transferred to the ABMDI office where they shall be stored in a secure space designated for this purpose. Access to these files shall be available only to the Executive Director or Chair of the Ethics Committee. Other members of the Ethics Committee and Board of Directors shall destroy their files when a case is closed. The Chair of the Ethics Committee may maintain a summary of past cases with identifying information redacted.

XXVII. **Confidentiality**

- 1) The applicant is required to sign an *Ethical Agreement* prior to sitting for the certification exam, agreeing that s/he shall not disclose exam content with other individuals. This agreement shall be retained in testing agency office.
- 2) Information that is not public knowledge and is learned through the Ethics Committee shall remain confidential.

- 3) Annually, Board members shall sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* regarding information learned about an applicant/certificant, which is not public knowledge, through his/her position on the board and to disclose any potential conflict of interest.
- 4) Individuals signing the *Confidentiality Agreement* may discuss information among themselves as necessary to complete their assignments, disclose information to a third party upon written consent of the applicant or certificant, or upon subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction.
- 5) Any breach of confidentiality shall result in charges brought forth to the Ethics Committee.

XXVIII. **Applicant and Certificant Rights**

- 1) An individual submitting an application who does not meet the prerequisites shall be notified in writing of the deficiency. The application fee shall be returned to the individual.
- 2) A certificant has the right to examine his/her file at the ABMDI office upon written request and by appointment.
- 3) An applicant failing the certification examination has the right to discuss the examination/retest with the professional testing agency or Board member/staff. The applicant does not have a right to obtain a copy of his examination/retest.

XXIX. **Grievance Procedures**

- 1) Complaints due to violations of Code of Ethics by a certificant or applicant are to follow policy XXVI.
- 2) All other appeals, complaints, inquiries or disputes should be sent to the Executive Committee at the time they are received.
 - a) Any committee members with a possible or perceived conflict of interest must recuse themselves from the investigation. There must be a minimum of three (3) committee members to continue the review.
 - b) Submission, investigation and decision of appeals or complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant or complainant.
 - c) If the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute can be answered within the prescribed guidelines, the committee shall respond to the appellant or complainant by letter via US postal mail within thirty days.
 - i) The Board of Directors will be notified of the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute for informational purposes only. All identifying information will be redacted.
 - d) If the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute cannot be handled within the prescribed guidelines, the committee will forward it to the Board for determination.
 - i) The Board must notify the appellant or complainant within thirty days that the matter is under review.
 - ii) The Board should complete the review within ninety (90) days of receipt of the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute. If the review cannot be completed within this time due to extenuating circumstances the appellant or complainant must be notified of the extension.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

- iii) After the review is completed the Board shall notify the appellant or complainant of the results of the review and if any corrections or corrective actions were taken.
- 3) Records of all appeals, complaints, inquiries or disputes will be kept on record at the ABMDI office. These records will include all correspondence, investigations and any corrective actions identified.
 - a) The Executive Committee and/or Board may request history of previous actions taken for review when making decisions. All personal information of previous appeals, complaints, inquiries or disputes will be redacted prior to review.

XXX. **Disclosure of Information**

- 1) Information contained within applicant and certificant files shall be considered confidential and is not released to third parties.
- 2) Information contained within working files shall be available to any member who demonstrates a need for such information to conduct official business for the ABMDI with the exception of certificant files, Ethics Committee records and records deemed necessary to be attorney-client privileged communications.
- 3) Upon receipt of a subpoena or other legal process requesting the disclosure of information concerning an applicant or certificant, the ABMDI shall consult with legal counsel concerning remedies and duties imposed upon by the law.
- 4) Where the law requires disclosure of information, the applicant or certificant shall be notified immediately of the inquiry and of the information provided.
- 5) The ABMDI President shall rule on any dispute between the requester and policy.
- 6) The Board shall approve in advance the release of Board meeting minutes, committee meetings, Treasurer or Executive Director reports, financial records or budgets to anyone other than an officer or Board member.
- 7) Certification status of all active and inactive individuals shall be made available on the ABMDI website. They shall be listed as a Diplomate or Fellow, including the date of certification. Inquiries pertaining to certification status of an individual shall be directed to the website. Possession of an ABMDI certificate alone is not to be considered as proof of a certificant's ABMDI status.
- 8) A Directory shall be continually updated containing address, telephone, fax, email information and certification level for Diplomates and Fellows unless they have specifically requested in writing not to have their information published. The Directory is the property of the ABMDI and shall be available on the website.
- 9) It is the responsibility of the certificant to notify the ABMDI office of any change in information.
- 10) Testing information shall be released to the applicant via US postal mail or email upon verification of the inquirer.
- 11) Copies of the Bylaws and Policy and Procedure Manual, as well as all records of revisions and proposed revisions to these documents, shall be made public record.
- 12) Certificant files shall be made available to the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB) upon request, to comply with guidelines published in FSAB quality assurance standards.

XXXI. **Quality System**

- 1) General
 - a) The Executive Director shall, in a continuous manner, conduct evaluations and recommend changes to the Board that would enhance the certification process or office operations.
 - b) An outline of all substantive changes to the standards used to credential (evaluate), test and certify applicants shall be maintained indefinitely.
 - c) Staff shall conduct annual audits of files for accuracy and completeness. Any deficiencies shall be documented and addressed immediately for resolution.
- 2) Management Review
 - a) An annual management review will be conducted by the Vice President, or their designee, and presented at the annual Board meeting.
 - b) The review will consist of information reviewed from multiple sources to include results of internal audits, feedback received, previous management reviews and appeals and complaints.
 - c) Information that will be analyzed will be in regard to impartiality, preventive and corrective actions addressed, fulfillment of objectives and any changes.
 - d) The annual management review report should discuss any ways to improve the effectiveness or organization of management and if any additional resources are needed.
- 3) Internal Audits
 - a) An internal audit of all ABMDI functions addressed within this manual will be completed annually and presented at the annual Board meeting.
 - i) All functions and performance expectation are defined on the audit review checklist.
 - ii) Due to the number of policies and procedures to be reviewed the audit will be segmented and conducted over a three (3) year period. A specified schedule of which policies and procedures to be reviewed each year will be provided to the committee. There will be an audit review matrix kept by the Executive Director to ensure that each policy and procedure is reviewed in a three (3) year period.
 - iii) The segment of policies and procedures reviewed will be what is included in the annual report.
 - b) The audit will be conducted by the Internal Audit Committee with the Executive Director as an ex-officio member.
 - i) If the subject matter of the audit requires a subject matter expert, committee members outside of the Advisory Council may be appointed.
 - c) Audit results should be compared to previous audit results to ensure there are not any ongoing issues.
 - d) Any deficiencies found during the audit should be reported to the Executive Committee at that time. The Executive Committee will work with the audit committee to prepare a remedial action plan.

- i) The remedial action plan must also include:
 - (1) The deficiency identified
 - (2) The cause of the deficiency
 - (3) The actions to be taken to correct the deficiency and prevent reoccurrences
- ii) Once the remedial action plan is made, actions should be taken within 60 days.
- iii) The remedial action plan and effectiveness must be included in the annual report.

XXXII. **Accreditation**

- 1) The ABMDI shall remain accredited by the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB) and shall adhere to all standards set forth and be subject to an on-site evaluation as a requirement for reaccreditation.
- 2) FSAB shall conduct the on-site evaluation at the ABMDI office.
- 3) The Executive Director shall prepare all required documents for review.
- 4) The President will decide who will participate as the ABMDI representatives in the on-site evaluation.
- 5) All representatives of the ABMDI shall cooperate fully with the FSAB assessors.
- 6) ABMDI shall be responsible for the travel expenses for two (2) FSAB assessors and the ABMDI representatives.

XXXIII. **Records Management**

- 1) The Executive Director shall be responsible for the quality system of all ABMDI files and documents.
 - a) The Executive Director will be responsible for document updates and will approve all documents for adequacy prior to issue. A review and approval of all updates will be done annually by the Board.
 - b) Documentation of all document changes shall be kept by the Executive Director and to ensure the most current versions are being used and that obsolete documents have been removed. The archiving of documents must include the date each became effective and date each was superseded or dropped.
- 2) In accordance with Article XV of the Bylaws, staff shall be responsible for keeping permanent records of all meetings of the Board, a record of all actions taken by the Board without a meeting, and a record of all actions taken by committees.
- 3) The Board shall retain all documents submitted in compliance with any part of its program, with the exception of testing documents held by the professional testing agency, in accordance with the Document Retention Policy.

XXXIV. **Document Retention Policy**

- 1) **Purpose**
 - a. This Document Retention Policy ("Policy") represents the policy of ABMDI regarding the retention and disposal of records and electronic documents. This Policy is made to comply with the requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which makes it a crime to alter, cover up, falsify, or destroy any document with the intent

of impeding or obstructing any official proceeding. In addition, and in general, the purposes of this document retention policy are for ABMDI to ensure that necessary records and documents are adequately protected and maintained and to ensure that records that are no longer needed by ABMDI or are of no value are discarded at the proper time.

2) Policy

a. General Guidelines

Records should not be kept if they are no longer needed for the operation of the organization or required by law. Unnecessary records should be eliminated from the files. The cost of maintaining records is an expense which can grow unreasonably if good housekeeping is not performed. A mass of records also makes it more difficult to find pertinent records. Records may be stored electronically to reduce these issues.

From time to time, ABMDI may establish retention or destruction policies or schedules for specific categories of records in order to ensure legal compliance, and also to accomplish other objectives, such as preserving intellectual property and cost management. Several categories of documents that warrant special consideration are identified below. While minimum retention periods are established, the retention of the documents identified below and of documents not included in the identified categories should be determined primarily by the application of the general guidelines affecting document retention, as well as the exception for litigation-relevant documents and any other pertinent factors. All officers, directors, and employees are expected to comply fully with any corporately-approved record retention and destruction policies and schedules.

b. Exception for Litigation-Relevant Documents

All officers, directors, and employees should note the following exception to any stated destruction schedule: If you believe, or ABMDI informs you, that ABMDI records are relevant to litigation or potential litigation (i.e., a dispute that could result in litigation), then all scheduled destruction of potentially relevant records must cease and you must preserve those records until it is determined that the records are no longer needed. This exception supersedes any previously or subsequently established destruction schedule for those records.

c. Minimum Retention Periods for Specific Categories of Records

1. Organizational Documents

Organizational records include ABMDI's Articles of Incorporation, By-laws and IRS Form 1023, Application for Exemption. Organizational records should be retained permanently. IRS regulations require that Form 1023 be available for public inspection upon request. Policy and Procedure Manual and its revisions should also be retained permanently.

2. Tax Records

Tax records include, but may not be limited to, documents concerning payroll, capital asset purchases and sales, expenses, proof of contributions made by donors, accounting procedures, and other documents concerning ABMDI's revenues. All records, including income tax and informational returns (including Form 990), payroll taxes and supporting documentation should be retained permanently.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

3. Employment Records/Personnel Records

ABMDI should keep personnel files that reflect performance reviews and any complaints brought against ABMDI or individual employees under applicable state and federal statutes. ABMDI should also keep in the employee's personnel file all final memoranda and correspondence reflecting performance reviews and actions taken by or against personnel. A copy of the Employee Handbook, and each revision thereof, should be retained permanently. Employment applications should be retained for three (3) years. Retirement and pension records should be kept permanently. Other employment and personnel records should be retained for seven (7) years after separation from service.

4. Members, Board and Board Committee Meetings

Meeting minutes and reports presented at Board meetings should be retained permanently. Advisory Council and Committee histories will be retained permanently.

5. Certificant Records

ABMDI should keep certification applications, ethics investigations and other certification records for seven (7) years after an individual ceases to be a certificant of ABMDI. Database of certificant files will be kept permanently.

6. Contracts

Real Estate purchase and sale contracts and records should be retained permanently. Leases and general contracts, along with supporting documentation, should be retained for seven (7) years after termination.

7. Legal Documents

Litigation documents should be retained for seven (7) years after the close of the matter. Court orders and judgments should be retained permanently, as should legal opinions.

8. Intellectual Property Documents

Intellectual Property documents, including trademark and copyright registrations, should be retained permanently.

9. Insurance

Expired insurance policies, insurance records, accident reports, claims and related documentation should be kept permanently.

10. Audit Records

Audit reports and financial statements should be kept permanently.

11. Banking and Accounting

Accounts payable ledgers, accounts receivable ledgers, bank statements, bank reconciliations, electronic funds transfers, cancelled checks and credit card records should be kept for seven (7) years.

12. Correspondence

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Unless correspondence falls under another category listed elsewhere in this policy, correspondence should generally be saved for three (3) years. Website updates will be saved for five (5) years.

13. Newsletters

Copies of ABMDI newsletters will be retained permanently.

d. Storage of Records

1. Tangible Records

Tangible records of active and inactive certificants should be stored in the main office. Defaulted and expired tangible records may be stored in an off-site storage facility.

2. Electronic Records

All e-mails sent or received should be reviewed within ninety (90) days after receipt or sending. E-mails related to the conduct of ABMDI's business and falling into one of the categories listed above should be retained, and e-mails not falling into one of the foregoing categories should be deleted. Those e-mails being retained should either be printed and stored as tangible evidence or backed up and stored electronically on a server, disk or other media. This back-up should be performed as needed to ensure that important documents are retained and, in any case, not less often than annually. Electronic records should be backed up by cloud storage.

e. Destruction/Deletion

1. Tangible records

Tangible records should be destroyed by shredding or some other means that will render them unreadable and unable to be reconstructed.

2. Electronic records

ABMDI will direct its IT contractors to ensure that electronic records are properly and permanently destroyed. All duplicate records must be destroyed along with the originals.

f. Administration of Policy

1. The Executive Director shall be responsible for administering and overseeing this Policy, including performing the following functions:

- a. Implementing the Policy;
- b. Ensuring that employees are properly educated, understand and follow the Policy;
- c. Providing oversight on actual retention and destruction;
- d. Ensuring proper storage of documents;
- e. Suspending the destruction of documents upon foreseeable litigation; and
- f. Communicating with the Board of Directors regarding any issues pertaining to the implementation and administration of the Policy.

2. All questions relating to document retention and/or destruction should be directly addressed to the Executive Director.

g. Adoption of Policy

1. Executive Committee Adoption

The Executive Committee of ABMDI has adopted this Policy as of the date set forth below. Amendments to this Policy may be adopted in conformance with ABMDI's Bylaws.

XXXV. Fee Schedule

Registry Application Fee	\$50
Replacement Application Fee	\$15
Registry Exam Fee	\$350
Registry Retest Fee	\$110/section, but not to exceed the cost of the original exam
Board Certification Application Fee	\$100
Board Certification Examination Fee	\$400
Board Certification Retest Fee	\$110/section, but not to exceed the cost of the original exam
Paper/Pencil Examination	\$50/person
Rush Fee for Examination	\$100/person
Recertification Administrative Fee	\$25 (every five (5) year period)
Recertification Test Fee (if unemployed at time of recertification)	\$110
Recertification Retest Fee	\$20 per section, not to exceed the cost of the original exam
Incomplete Recertification Packet Fee	\$50
Annual Maintenance Fee	\$50
Late Fee	\$25
Replacement Certificate Fee	\$25
Course Accreditation Fee	
• original accreditation	\$100
• approved by another agency or reaccreditation	\$50

XXXVI. Test Development

The ABMDI contracted with a professional test development and validation agency to develop two (2) levels of a certification test for medicolegal death investigators based on criteria demonstrated to be objective, valid and reliable.

Test Development Agency

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc. (ORA)
Steven C. Clark, Ph.D., Director
124 Elm Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
231-796-2822

Advisory Committee

The test development committee consisted of 14 veteran medicolegal death investigators from medical examiner and coroner jurisdictions representing various geographic locations throughout the country. The subject matter experts were nominated by their medical examiner, pathologist or coroner based on knowledge, experience and competence within the field.

Purpose of the Certification Examination

The purpose of the certification exam is to verify the knowledge, skills and abilities of medicolegal death investigators pursuant to a specific domain of knowledge.

Domain of Knowledge

There was no domain of knowledge for medicolegal death investigators prior to 1994. A technical working group of 144 professionals from across the country participated in a National Medicolegal Panel to establish guidelines. The project was co-sponsored by the National Institutes of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. After being selected, the Advisory Council then used a national survey distributed to medical examiners and coroners to create and validate a domain of knowledge.

ORA Test Development Process

Dr. Clark used the following nine procedures to develop and validate the certification test for medicolegal death investigators.

Phase 1: Needs/Occupational Analysis

Phase 1 had two objectives. First, the assessment of research need, and second, the development of a conceptual framework for the field of medicolegal death investigation. This was accomplished by literature review and a national survey of medical examiner and coroner offices

Phase 2: Job and Task Analysis

Using a DACUM (**D**eveloping **A** **C**urricul**U**M) method, "judges" from various geographic locations and employment circumstances (medical examiner/coroner) participated in a 2- day workshop to develop the skill and knowledge requirements for individuals who wished to call themselves medicolegal death investigators. The result of the workshop was the job profile, which consisted of duties and tasks considered essential for a professional medicolegal death investigator.

Phase 3: Curriculum Validation

The job profile or task-list was used to develop a survey instrument for national distribution. The development team identified respondents as experts in the field of medicolegal death investigation.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Phase 4: Objective Test Item Writing and Coding

Because there was no existing set of test questions available, the Advisory Council developed a test bank using data collected during the DACUM process. These written items were then coded to specific tasks.

Phase 5: Item Validation

Occupational Research and Assessment employs two types of validity evidence: content and criterion-related.

Content validity is related to how adequately the content of, and responses to, the test samples the medicolegal domain. All drafted test items were reviewed for bias and edited before the Advisory Council was reconvened to review each item in the test bank. To quantify each test item as valid, items were then run through a rating process to establish a point value for *importance* (for success as a medicolegal death investigator), *frequency* (of performance on the job), *difficulty* (compared to other questions in the test bank) and *level* (of education required to answer each item successfully). This detailed, systematic, critical inspection of test items is the single best way to determine content validity.

Phase 6: Test Construction

After national validation of the curriculum and test item writing, rating and review, the Advisory Council was directed through an item selection process. The DACUM research identified the percentage of test items required (by duty and task) on the test. The sorting process identified the highest rated (by importance) items within each duty area as well as the "easy" to "difficult" item progression. Using this data, the Advisory Council had the difficult task of granting "final approval" to each item with acceptable importance ratings. Once the final list of items was identified, each went through final edit and the correct answer was verified.

Phase 7: Pilot Testing

A final draft of the certification examination was pilot-tested at national training Conferences (i.e., Saint Louis University's Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course). Individuals submitted complete demographic information, years of experience as a medicolegal death investigator, specific duties and tasks performed on the job, as well as educational background and training programs completed/certifications held. This data was used to verify pilot test results.

Phase 8: Standards Setting

The certification examination is a "criterion-referenced" test (as opposed to a "norm-referenced"). Using data from the pilot testing and ratings of each item on the test, the Advisory Council established and set criterion levels for each section of the examination. Test takers must meet or exceed the criteria set for each of the eight (8) sections to achieve passing each section of the test. In other words, a number of correct responses within each section will indicate "competent" levels of knowledge and skill. Each section may have different criteria cutting score.

Phase 9: Test Reliability

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Initially, the test-retest method was established to estimate the reliability of the certification examination. Advisory Council members as well as others were asked to take the same examination twice. The scores provided a measure of stability (i.e. does an individual's score remain stable over time?). Because a data bank was used to create the tests, different examinations were administered to the same people and their scores correlated (i.e. does an individual's score remain consistent across versions of the same test?). The information provides a measure of equivalence.

The split-half estimates were then used for measures of internal consistency. This method basically takes the test and splits it in half, then the two halves are treated as separate tests for statistical comparisons. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient is used to estimate the reliability of a test half as long as the original. The Spearman-Brown statistic then estimates what the reliability of the entire test would be.

Conclusion

This process provides a basis for focusing on continual educational efforts in the actual needs of practitioners. The function of the evaluation instruments is two-fold: (1) to identify individuals who appear to possess the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to be a competent medicolegal death investigator, and (2) to identify areas of training needed for individuals who fall short of established standards. In addition, the validated test specifications will allow training efforts to focus on essential areas of knowledge. Training should follow a standardized curriculum for agencies, educational institutions, training organizations, and professional associations that wish to prepare individuals as professional medicolegal death investigators. The testing will ensure an adherence to a standard set of skills and knowledge.

Performance Examination

The Advisory Council designed the performance examination for the Board Certified test to measure the applicant's skills and practical ability in actual case assignments. Developing the performance section consisted of the following four phases.

Phase 1: Daily Work Analysis

The Advisory Council determined the kinds of cases handled routinely by medicolegal death investigators. Such cases involve scene investigations followed by written reports for deaths including natural, suicide, homicide or accident.

Phase 2: Case Construction

The Advisory Council constructed the cases so that the correct answer was predetermined. Each case consisted of analyzing a set of photographs and reviewing a written scenario about the death. The examinee must then determine (1) at least five items of evidence (2) ask at least ten questions to be asked of the suspect or witnesses (3) using medicolegal terms, write a brief description of the scene.

Phase 3: Case Validation

Each test case in the bank was administered to Advisory Council members. In order to validate the case as typical of routine cases handled by medicolegal death

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

investigators and to ensure that the case provided sufficient information to allow a competent medicolegal death investigator to further investigate, Advisory Council members had to agree on its suitability and to reach the same opinion/conclusion for the case to be accepted for performance evaluation.

Using standardized answers or key words sheets developed by the Advisory Council to score open-ended items controls performance test reliability, two (2) members are used to review the subjective items, which include the description of the scene and body. The two (2) reviews are then correlated as a measure of consistency. The evidence and investigative questions are treated as objective "matching" type items and are subjected to the same methods as described for the written testing.

Phase 4: Pilot Testing

The test taker would receive three (3) cases for examination from the following categories

(1) suicide (2) accident (3) homicide or (4) natural: The cases would be assigned from a bank of cases in each of the three (3) categories. The cases were pilot tested at national training conferences.

Test Revisions

Dr. Clark reviews the performance of both certification exams every three (3) years to identify areas that are not performing well. If necessary, the Advisory Council meets to address problems areas.

Every five (5) years, a two-day test revision workshop is scheduled to review (1) the continued validity of the identified domain of knowledge and (2) that all test items are related to the validated domain. Items are then reviewed for importance and difficulty.

The ABMDI's decided that exams can be administered by an ORA trained proctor or by a certified proctor located with a college or university. To ensure that the certification examination remains free of bias, the ABMDI contracted with ORA to grade the examinations and maintain security of the test bank.

Appendix A:

Code of Professional Responsibility

The ABMDI certified individual is expected to embrace the following principles:

Personal Knowledge:

- Be knowledgeable of all federal, state and county laws that dictate the authority and responsibility of the medicolegal jurisdiction served and the position of medicolegal death investigator.
- Be knowledgeable of medical, legal, law enforcement, forensic science and environmental information that will aid in conducting complete death investigations and apply this knowledge.
- Be proficient in the use of available investigative tools and knowledgeable of alternative resources accessible through other agencies.

Personal Behavior:

- Treat all those you come in contact with in your position as an investigator with respect, courtesy, fairness and consideration.
- Maintain a professional working relationship with all members of your office and cooperating agencies so that a positive rapport will be established between the agencies with whom you interact.
- Maintain an effective communication system with all forensic and ancillary personnel, to ensure that department and other persons involved in the death inquiry will be informed as to the progress of each case.
- Stay abreast of the 'state of the art' by attending continuing educational programs and conferences, establishing professional relationships with medicolegal death investigators in other jurisdictions and obtaining and maintaining ABMDI certification.
- Educate and publish scholarly works dealing with the field of medicolegal death investigation to assist fellow investigators.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Death Investigations:

- Maintain an open and objective approach to each death investigation for which you are responsible.
- Conduct thorough, timely, scientific and systematic death investigations of all persons whose deaths are reported to you.
- Accurately record statements made by witnesses, noting any discrepancies, additions or misinformation and present this information to the office and the courts.
- Prepare a complete, detailed report of each death that is reported to you as expediently as possible without sacrificing accuracy or thoroughness.
- Disseminate investigative information rapidly to departmental staff, forensic scientists and law enforcement personnel to achieve a coordinated, efficient and complete death investigation.
- Assist in accurately determining the decedent's identification.
- Identify, locate and notify the decedent's next of kin in the most rapid manner possible without sacrificing accuracy or civility.
- Maintain an effective communication system with all forensic and ancillary personnel so that departmental and other persons involved in the inquiry will be informed as to the progress of the investigation.

Office Etiquette:

- Conduct or attend regularly scheduled conferences with your superior and/or fellow investigators to review death investigations and methodology so that the highest quality death investigation can be achieved by ongoing assessment of investigative methods, policies and procedures.
- Suggest to superiors' new methods, policies and procedures that may improve the quality and/or accuracy of death investigations performed.
- Assist in the training and development of new investigative staff members as requested.
- Suggest at appropriate times those budget items that would/could increase the effectiveness or efficiency of investigative and departmental staff.

Appendix B:

ORA Web Testing Guide

Suggested browser is Google Chrome, but Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer or Safari will also work. It is suggested that screen resolution be set at 1024 x 768 (or greater) so all pictures and graphics show properly.

If you have questions before the test or should problems arise call 231-796-2822.

Proctor:

- 1) Direct the browser to: <http://abmdi.org/testing>
- 2) Sign in using the supplied information.
- 3) Click the "Activate" button next to each user and test combination you'll be proctoring (there may be only one, there may be several).
- 4) Sign out.

Test Taker:

- 1) Direct the browser to (if it's not already there after the proctor signs out): <http://abmdi.org/testing>
- 2) Sign in using the supplied information.
- 3) Click the "Begin Test" button next to the test you wish to start.
- 4) Answer a question by clicking on the radio button next to the answer you choose or by entering text if it is a case or short answer test. If a question has pictures or graphics associated with it, click on the picture/graphic to view full size in another window. You may need to use the slider bars to move vertically or horizontally to view the entire picture/graphic or set of pictures (some cases have several photos and may take a couple moments to load). You can enlarge the pictures by dragging or by the "maximize" button in the top right-hand corner of the browser. Sometimes with Internet Explorer, a black bar will obscure part of the photo. This can be eliminated by enlarging (even slightly) the picture.
- 5) Click either "Next" or "Previous" to navigate to another question or click a question number on the left to navigate directly to that question. (Questions in red have not been answered so you can use that as a check to make sure you've answered all questions.) You may review or change an answer by clicking directly on a question number. Do NOT review by repeatedly hitting the "back" button.
- 6) When completely finished go to the last question and click "Next".
- 7) Click "Submit". A warning will appear if you have not answered all questions.
- 8) You will return to the page listing available tests and click "View Results" to see how you did on that test or section.
- 9) Repeat this process until all tests have been completed.

Answers are saved as you go so there is no need for a backup answer sheet.

Appendix C:

ABMDI Proctor Responsibilities

The proctor is legally accountable for the security of all examination forms and materials.

I, _____ did

receive one (1) ABMDI Registry Examination on

_____ (date), at _____ (time).

No one, including myself, witness or any other person, has revealed any examination information to anyone.

The ABMDI examination materials have been continually secured until the time of the examination at:

Proctor signature: _____

Witness signature: _____

Appendix D:

Advisory Council Confidentiality Statement

ABMDI Advisory Council
Confidentiality Statement

The Advisory Council of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators having access to the submitted documentation is obligated under ABMDI guidelines to treat all information not disclosed in public documents as confidential.

An Advisory Council or Board member has the duty to recuse himself or herself from participation in any event which there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

An Advisory Council or Board members shall refrain from exercising personal or public conduct adverse to the ABMDI.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This statement is signed at the annual meeting.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) Conflict of Interest Policy applies to members of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Committee Members, Advisory Council members or any other individual who is in a position to influence the policies and procedures of the ABMDI.

The following ethical and legal obligations pertain to each individual above while performing duties on behalf of the ABMDI:

1. Duty of Loyalty – each person should make decisions based on the best interests of ABMDI.
2. Duty of Confidentiality - The Advisory Council and Board of Director member having access to testing documents are obligated under ABMDI guidelines to treat all information not disclosed in public documents as confidential.

An Advisory Council or Board member has the duty to recuse himself or herself from participation in any event which there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

3. Duty to Disclose Conflict of Interest – each person should make an annual disclosure of any financial or commercial interest, whether actual or perceived, in any commercial interest or organization.

The Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement must be signed annually by individuals named above. This document will be held in the ABMDI office by the Executive Director and can only be accessed by other Officers or Executive Committee members of ABMDI. Further access of these statements can be disclosed and open for discussion to the Board of Directors if a member of the Executive Committee or Officer deems it necessary to resolve a potential conflict of interest.

If a specific matter arises during meeting discussions where a conflict of interest is present, the individual should make a full disclosure of the conflict. The person may participate in the discussion at hand, but may not vote. If the conflict is deemed substantial, the President may disqualify the individual from participating in the discussion of the matter. If the conflict or the handling of the conflict is disputed, the matter shall be referred to the Ethics Committee for review.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

I attest that I have read ABMDI's Conflict of Interest Policy. I agree to respect the confidentiality of sensitive information deemed as such by ABMDI Bylaws and disclose any outside interests that may appear bias to any discussions or actions that I may participate in associated ABMDI business.

I do not, nor have any immediate family members or business partners, have a material financial interest that is likely to be impacted by a decision of a committee or board upon which I serve.

Exceptions to this statement are: _____

I do not, nor do I have any immediate family member or business partner, that expects to serve within the next 12 months as an officer, director, chair or consultant, nor has served as such in the last 12 months, with any commercial entity that is likely to be impacted by a decision of a committee or board upon which I serve.

Exceptions to this statement are: _____

If matters arise in which I have, or may have, a perceived conflict of interest, I will disclose this conflict when the matter arises. I may be asked by the President to abstain from voting on the matter. I understand that omissions or a violation of this Policy shall result in referral of the matter to the Ethics Committee for review.

I also attest to the fact that I have read and am familiar with the ABMDI Policy Manual and I agree to abide by all ABMDI Policies

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E:

Suggested Reading List for Registry Examination

Clark, S.C., Ernst, M.F., Haglund, W.O., Jentzen, J.M. Medicolegal Death Investigator: A Systematic Training Program for the Professional Death Investigator. Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc.: Big Rapids, MI, 1996.

Dudley, MH. Forensic Medicolegal Injury and Death Investigation. CRC Press. 2017.

Eliopoulos, L. Death Investigator's Handbook. Paladin Enterprises: Boulder, CO, 2003.

Geberth, V. Practical Homicide Investigation: Tactics, Procedures and Forensic Techniques, 3rd ed. CRC Press: Boca Raton, FL, 2015.

National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), 2006 Forensic Autopsy Performance Standards

National Guidelines for Death Investigation. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Washington DC: 2011.

Spitz, W.U. Medicolegal Investigation of Death: Guidelines for the Application of Pathology to Crime Investigation. Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, IL, 2005.

Wagner, S. Color Atlas of the Autopsy. CRC Press. Boca Raton, FL. 2004

Appendix F:

Skills Task List for Registry Examination

General Information:

Title: Medicolegal Death Investigator
Type: Objective Type (paper and pencil)
Items: 240
Time: 4 hours

AREAS COVERED:	%OF TEST	#OF ITEMS
A. Interacting with Federal, State and Local Agencies	3%	10
B. Communicating	10%	25
C. Interacting with Families	8%	20
D. Investigating Techniques	33%	70
E. Identifying and Preserving Evidence	10%	25
F. Maintaining Ethical and Legal Responsibilities	9%	20
G. Demonstrating Scientific Knowledge	25%	60
H. Coping with Job Related Stress	2%	10

A. INTERACTING WITH FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES

A1. Determine jurisdictional responsibility
Includes the proper methods used to determine medical examiner/coroner jurisdiction.

A2. Determine the scope of agency responsibility
Includes the proper methods used to determine deaths reportable to the medical examiner/coroner office.

A3. Report critical data
Includes proper methods of defining critical data and determining how data is to be reported.

A4. Share critical data
Includes proper methods of releasing critical data to outside agencies including forms used.

A5. Identify support agencies
Includes deaths reportable to outside agencies, outside agencies that support the medical examiner/coroner office, as well as decedent's families.

A6. Collect essential agency data
Includes methods used to define essential data, distribution of report forms, and other agency interactions.

A7. Arrange for organ and tissue procurement

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Includes organ procurement agencies, forms, recovery timing, organ and tissue types typically used in transplant and research.

A8. Certify the death (completing the death certificates)

Includes the death certificate format, release timing, and proper completion techniques.

B. COMMUNICATING

B9. Notify next of kin

Includes methods used to make proper notification, identification of legal next-of-kin, and release of information.

B10. Maintain confidentiality

Includes methods used to maintain confidentiality within an office and external to office.

B11. Interact with law enforcement personnel

Includes agency cooperation practices, statutory responsibility, and objectivity between agencies involved in the investigation.

B12. Interact with funeral directors

Includes strategies used to interact with funeral directors, as well as roles and responsibilities for families, investigators and funeral home directors.

B13. Write narrative reports

Includes content of the narrative investigative report, its structure and use in the overall investigation of a death.

B14. Complete report forms

Includes the proper use of report forms within the medical examiner/coroner office as well as the use of report forms as shared documents.

B15. Use effective interviewing skills (witnesses)

Includes techniques and strategies used to interview witnesses involved in the death investigation, including family, friends and associates.

B16. Communicate with the pathologist

Includes basic forensic medical terminology and the relationships that exist between the medical examiner/coroner investigators and the forensic pathologist who performs the autopsy.

B17. Maintain relations with the media

Includes strategies and techniques used to work with the media regarding public information release and accountability.

B18. Notify/Communicate with treating physician

Includes general medical terminology typically used by emergency room physicians as well as family practice physicians. Also included, the relationship that exists between the physician who last treated the decedent and the investigation.

B19. Utilize telephone and email etiquette

Includes proper use of the telephone and email within the professional medical examiner/ coroner office, strategies used in gathering information over the phone or via email, and methods used to communicate with individuals over the phone or via email.

C. INTERACTING WITH FAMILIES

C20. Obtain information

Includes methods used to gather investigative information from family members during the investigation (a time of stress).

C21. Explain procedures to families

Includes strategies used to assist families to understanding medical examiner/coroner procedures related to the autopsy and the investigative process.

C22. Respect family requests

Includes various types of religious objections to the autopsy and strategies used to overcome those objections (as necessary).

C23. Report findings to the family

Includes methods of interaction with family members during the release of medical examiner/coroner findings, autopsy results and appropriate timetables for release of additional information.

C24. Prepare family for identification viewing

Includes strategies used by investigators to inform families as to the condition of the decedent and the possible results linked to viewing the body.

C25. Respond to family's reactions

Includes strategies used by investigators to support family members during and after the identification viewing.

C26. Perform an investigative follow-up interview

Includes methods of conducting the follow-up interview with family members, friends and associates of the decedent.

D. INVESTIGATING DEATHS

D27. Determine scene safety (public health)

Includes methods used to determine scene safety prior to entry.

D28. Secure the scene

Includes methods used to interact with support agencies in the establishment of the scene.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

D29. Validate death

Includes methods used to assure death has been established and documented.

D30. Identify human remains

Includes knowledge of basic anthropology.

D31. Photograph the scene and the body

Includes proper uses of photography, of both scene and body. Also includes basic knowledge of photographic equipment and usage.

D32. Conduct the physical examination

Includes proper methods of conducting the on-scene physical examination of body

D33. Document the death scene

Includes systematic methods of documenting the death scene for later use by investigative staff and outside agency personnel.

D34. Write descriptive information

Includes strategies used to write investigative reports that describe the scene, including the environment and the body.

D35. Draw specimens

Includes standard medical protocol and methods used to draw fluids (blood, vitreous, and urine) from the decedent for analysis by lab personnel.

D36. Identify forensic instrumentation

Includes personal protective equipment, forensic equipment, forms, and scene processing aids.

D37. Recognize manners of death

Includes the five typically recognized manners of death and standard methods of determining each.

D38. Investigate multiple fatalities

Includes general knowledge of mass disaster protocol.

E. IDENTIFYING AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE

E39. Distinguish between personal property and evidence

Includes documentation procedures used to maintain evidence and personal property and the distinguishing factors between each.

E40. Ensure chain of custody

Includes need for chain of custody, methods of maintaining chain, and rationale for maintaining chain of custody

E41. Facilitate analysis of evidence

Includes proper evidence collection techniques for various types of evidence.

F. MAINTAINING ETHICAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

F42. Maintain the dignity of the deceased

Includes methods used by investigators to maintain the dignity of the deceased at the scene and throughout the investigation.

F43. Dispose of unclaimed/unidentified remains

Includes common methods and requirements for disposing of unclaimed and/or unidentified remains.

F44. Provide testimony

Includes strategy used by investigators, medical examiner/coroner offices when served with a subpoena.

F45. Identify potential conflicts of interest

Includes relationships between medical examiner/coroner offices with such outside service providers are: funeral homes, ambulance services, cleaning companies, etc.

F46. Safeguard personal property against theft

Includes methods used to protect decedent's property, until release.

F47. Project a positive/professional image

Includes important factors involved in the perception of the medical examiner/coroner office by the community and support agencies.

G. DEMONSTRATING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

G48. Demonstrate knowledge of forensic pathology

Includes basic forensic medical terminology, traumatic injuries, traumatic artifacts, therapeutic interventions, antemortem injuries on the body, postmortem artifacts on the body, time of death establishment. Decomposition, signs of death, systematic examination of external body, body systems, medical services, and various types of death.

G49. Demonstrate knowledge of forensic science

Includes basic forensic science terminology, the role of outside forensic experts in the medicolegal death investigation, drug names and terminology (Physician's Desk Reference), legal laboratory tests, gunshot wounds, and firearms documentation.

G50. Demonstrate medical knowledge

Includes basic medical terminology, universal precautions, medical anatomy, internal anatomy, basic physiology, use of medical charts and reports, identification of human disease, common medications, and hospital bureaucracy.

H. COPING WITH JOB-RELATED STRESS

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

H51. Identify the warning signs of stress

Includes common warning signs of stress, mood swings, behavior changes, and effects on job and domestic life.

H52. Identify appropriate coping mechanism (for stress)

Includes lifestyle changing, professional assist programs, and inappropriate methods of coping with stress.

Appendix G:

Suggested Reading List for Board Certification Examination

Clark, S.C., Ernst, M.F., Haglund, W.D., Jentzen, J.M. Medicolegal Death Investigator: A Systematic Training Program for the Professional Death Investigator. Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc.: Big Rapids, MI, 1996.

DiMaio, D., DiMaio, V. Forensic Pathology, 2nd Edition. Elsevier Science Publishing Co.: New York, NY, 2006.

Dudley, MH. Forensic Medicolegal Injury and Death Investigation. CRC Press. 2017.

Eliopoulos, L. Death Investigator's Handbook. Paladin Enterprises: Boulder, CO, 2003.

Froede, R. Handbook of Forensic Pathology. 2nd edition. College of American Pathologists: Northfield, IL, 1995.

James S., Nordby, J. Forensic Science- An Introduction to Scientific and Investigative Techniques. CRC Press. Boca Ratan, FL. 2009.

National Guidelines for Death Investigation. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Washington DC: 2011.

Saukko, P., Knight, B. Knight's Forensic Pathology. Fourth Edition. CRC Press, 2016.

Shemonsky, N. "Jurisdiction on Military Institutions." American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology. 14(1): 39-42.

Spitz, W.U. Medicolegal Investigation of Death: Guidelines for the Application of Pathology to Crime Investigation. Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, IL, 2005.

Sudden, Unexplained Infant Death Investigation: Guidelines for the Scene Investigator and Training Text. CDC, January 2007.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<http://www.eeoc.gov> - Types of Discrimination

Appendix H:

Advanced Skills Task for Board Certification Examination

A. Investigating Specific Death Scenes

- Investigate drug-related deaths
- Investigate child deaths
- Investigate motor vehicle deaths
- Investigate blunt force deaths
- Investigate firearms deaths
- Investigate fire deaths
- Investigate asphyxia deaths – hanging
- Investigate asphyxia deaths – drowning
- Investigate asphyxia deaths - mechanical
- Investigate asphyxia deaths – chemicals
- Investigate sharp force injury deaths
- Investigate electrocution deaths
- Investigate deaths by therapeutic complications
- Investigate deaths involving police action
- Investigate toxicological deaths (poison)

B. Investigating Multiple Fatalities

- Investigate deaths in plane/train/auto crashes
- Investigate weather-related deaths
- Investigate bomb-explosion deaths

C. Investigating Atypical Death Scenes

- Investigate masqueraded deaths
- Investigate media sensitive deaths
- Investigate deaths by animals
- Investigate deaths from infectious causes

D. Investigating Institutional Deaths

- Investigate deaths in custody (wards of the state)
- Investigate deaths in extended care facilities (nursing, group homes)

E. Demonstrating Leadership Skills

- Demonstrate professionalism by positive role modeling and mentoring
- Assume responsibility to recognize and correct deficiencies (procedures/policies)

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

Maintain high personal performance standards

Demonstrate positive professional interactions with coworkers and colleagues

F. Demonstrating Legal Knowledge

Solicit legal opinions

Demonstrate knowledge of legal procedures

Demonstrate knowledge of unique case problems

Review a death certification

Recognize agency jurisdiction

G. Communicating Skills

Demonstrate interviewing skills

Demonstrate report writing skills

Counsel families regarding autopsy findings and address concerns

H. Demonstrating Advanced Forensic Science Knowledge

Collect data/material for odontology

Collect data/material for anthropology/archeology

Collect data/material for toxicology

Collect data/material for entomology

Conduct postmortem identification

Collect data/material for serology

Collect data/material on ballistics/firearms

Collect data/material for tool marks

Collect trace evidence (latents, alternative light)

Collect data/material using advanced photography