

OSAC REVIEW SPRING 2025 (OSAC = Organization of Scientific Area Committees)

NAME OSAC UPDATE #09: OSAC 2022-N-0026

Medicolegal Death Investigation: Terms and Definitions

This Definitions Document was developed by the OSAC subcommittee Medicolegal Death Investigation. It has a place on the OSAC registry as a “proposed standard” but has been submitted to a standards development organization, and may change as it undergoes revisions in that consensus based process.

*This is a brief summary of OSAC 2022-N-0026, and as such may leave out or misinterpret important details. **See link to full document (below).***

Value: For information and education

SCOPE: The Medicolegal Death Investigation Subcommittee “determined that there was variation in the terms and definitions relevant to medicolegal death investigation”. The document standardizes terms and definitions to promote consistency.

DEFINITION HIGHLIGHTS:

The document includes 37 terms. The most relevant terms are copied below.

certified medicolegal death investigator

Medicolegal death investigator who has completed the requirements for Certification (Registry or Board) by an accredited credentialing body; currently American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators

coroner

An elected or appointed official responsible for overseeing medicolegal death investigations, usually for a single county, and for certifying the cause and manner of death in these investigations; duties vary based on local enabling statutes

forensic pathology

Practice of medicine in which the principles of pathology are applied to problems of potential legal, public health, or public safety significance; a common function is the performance of autopsies to determine the cause and manner of death

homicide

Death as a result of a volitional act committed by another person (e.g. injury, poisoning)

medical examiner

Appointed forensic pathologist whose duty is to oversee medicolegal death investigations, perform postmortem examinations, and certify cause and manner of death. In some jurisdictions, individuals with other qualifications hold the title “Medical Examiner”, but for purposes of this document those individuals are considered medicolegal death investigators

registry certified medicolegal death investigator

Medicolegal death investigator who has completed the requirements for Registry certification by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators or equivalent

Full Document:

<https://www.nist.gov/document/osac-2022-n-0026mdi-terms-definitionsregistry>