



# Equity and Inclusion Plan

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Dane County - Medical Examiner's Office

**November 2019**

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## How to Read This Document

This document identifies actions the Medical Examiner’s Office plans to pursue regarding efforts to improve all forms of equity and inclusiveness. Equity and inclusion strategies are designed to advance Dane County’s relevance, viability, and impact among county employees and customers we serve. Equity and Inclusion Planning helps to ensure that everyone can access and thrive in Dane County. In our effort to strengthen collaboration among county employees and agencies that provide services for the county we put into action our core belief that in a county that is diverse, we are stronger when we are inclusive and our county services are accessible to all.

The document is organized into five major concepts: Organizational Commitment, Leadership Development, Program Innovation, Collaboration, and Resource Mobilization. These concept-categories describe areas of opportunity for working toward a more inclusive and equitable approach to county administration.

### Organizational Commitment

These strategies describe actions the Medical Examiner’s Office will take to imbed equity and inclusion in Departmental operations.

### Leadership Development

A commitment to recruitment and leadership development works to ensure Dane County’s relevance and strengthens our ability to address critical social issues and future challenges. Exposing young students to science and medicine ensures momentum and continued diversity for future generations.

### Program Innovation

Developing a framework to support diverse, underserved, and isolated communities involves innovation that responds to specific local goals and needs. This includes developing new programs and evaluating existing ones for equity, inclusivity, and cultural relevancy. These strategies create programs that build awareness of cultural bias build cross-cultural understanding. Being aware of social trends and community needs and developing responsive programs helps to strengthen our connection to the community.

### Collaboration

Involving local partners within and outside of County government enables us to do more as a team than we can do alone with an effort to increase outreach and impact. Partnerships among County Departments, local businesses, and purchase of service agencies helps us work more effectively while connecting us to new and changing communities. Sharing resources allows us to access tools and competencies that complement and enhance our programs and services reach broader county goals for sustainability.

### Resource Mobilization

These strategies describe how the Medical Examiner’s Office will dedicate resources to equity and inclusiveness. A framework for increasing inclusiveness and equity requires resources in order to ensure that framework can make meaningful progress.

## Forensic Internship Program **Chart of Strategies**

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY	TIER 1 (BEGINNING)	TIER 2 (EMERGING)	TIER 3 (ADVANCING)
<b>Organizational Commitment</b>			
Maintain Diverse Culture		The ME Office has a diverse culture, but is interested in ways to enhance it	
<b>Strategic Plan</b> -Goals -Metrics <b>Polices/Procedures</b>	Identify the I&E commitment in policy Identify goals in policy Formalize office protocol		
<b>Leadership Development</b>			
<b>Mentorship</b> -MLI peer training - HS outreach  - Med School Outreach  <b>Work with DHS, prevention groups</b>  <b>Participate in local teaching opportunities</b>          <b>Summer Internship</b>	Continue MLI peer training of new hires, interns   Continue outreach programs with MLI presenting to HS students to engage in sciences and demonstrate opportunities and pathways   Pathologist outreach to Medical Schools to promote forensic pathology   Continue to provide opportunities to students interested in forensic science a venue to learn and train	Coordinate Anthropology teaching program with Waukesha          Coordinate with OEI to reach out to various high schools, universities	
<b>Program Innovation</b>			
<b>New construction</b>  <b>Equal opportunity hiring</b>  <b>National hiring program</b>	Green Bay building with similar goals/objectives/abilities		

<p><b>NAME Accreditation</b></p> <p><b>ACGME Fellowship</b></p>		<p>Submit application for NAME accreditation – 2020-21</p> <p>Apply for Fellowship - 2020-21</p>	
<b>Collaboration</b>			
<p><b>E &amp; I connections with Universities/HS</b></p> <p><b>Supplier diversity</b></p> <p><b>OEI lectures</b></p>	<p>Coordinate with OEI to identify programs, schools, individuals who would benefit from DCMEO training</p> <p>Continue to work with OEI compatible businesses</p> <p>Schedule OEI lectures at the DCMEO</p>		<p>The ME Office actively collaborates with many partner agencies on an on-going basis</p>
<b>Resource Mobilization</b>			
<p><b>Funding initiatives (Grants)</b></p> <p><b>Outreach</b></p>	<p>AAFS grant scholarships</p> <p>WCMEA grant scholarships</p> <p>Coordinate with OEI for additional grant funding for internship program</p> <p>Grant funded DC improvement study</p> <p>Continue open national hiring</p>		

The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office (DCMEO) is committed to promoting equity and inclusion in the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office, and strives to be an example for the medicolegal community in Wisconsin. Although not commonly considered to be a community-oriented profession, the role of the Medical Examiner is, in fact, for the benefit of the general public. The loss of a loved one affects members of all social and economic strata, cultures, religions, genders and backgrounds. As such, maintaining professional equitable relationships based on mutual respect and compassion are integral components of the work done by the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office. The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office works with families, community leaders, as well as local, national and state agencies to identify potential causes of inequity, and negative outcomes of the same. Through thorough death investigation, the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office provides insight into the trends of non-natural and natural deaths used to identify areas of inequity, determine preventative measures, and allocate funds to support neighborhoods and programs dedicated to improving the quality of life for Dane County residents.

Our office enjoys a diverse group of employees. Approximately 50% of our full time investigative staff identify as belonging to a minority group; women comprise 80% of our total staff; and in the last two years, we have created a pathway for qualified immigrant forensic pathologists to gain employment in Wisconsin. Our nationwide efforts of recruitment allow us to expand opportunities to individuals of many diverse backgrounds, and our dedication to equity have made Dane County a highly sought out employer. The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office is also committed to maintaining equity and inclusion goals of Dane County through our local and national business relationships, including toxicology, dictation services and funeral homes.

## **Organizational Commitment – Maintain Diverse Culture**

The goals of the DCMEO are to continue to promote a diverse employee group. These goals are established through leadership development, program innovation, collaboration, and resource mobilization, as described below. But standardization of these goals, and designation of metrics of success, include a priori establishment of written goals, policies, and procedures to ensure forward momentum and consistency.

Policies and procedures not only outline daily operations, but also provide the direction and pathway for all employees to succeed. Formal education and on-the-job training provide basic requirements to join the workforce. But daily practice outlined in well defined policies enables employees of various learning styles equal opportunity for success by providing access to work expectations and identifying resources to accomplish those goals. Likewise, policies and procedures additionally assure the employee of equitable treatment by standardizing expectations and consequences.

In order to maintain and promote equity and inclusion in daily operations, the DCMEO continues to review develop policies to provide employees guidance for daily operations. No policy will be able to cover all contingencies in a given office, particularly one in which the employee may be in a position to

improvise given case circumstances and available resources. However, robust guidelines can provide parameters to make appropriate decisions or seek appropriate direction from superiors, as needed. Yearly review of policies and procedures, and involvement of the entire administrative staff representing MLI, doctors, and clerical staff in the review process, ensures the opportunity to incorporate the perspectives, suggestions, and feedback of the individual employees as provided throughout the year. Likewise, policies established for more immediate review of protocols can address unexpected contingencies.

In 2018, the DCMEO Case Review Conference was approved by the American Board of Pathology as a program which meets mandatory compliance with quality assurance and improvement programs to satisfy national credentialing requirements (CC/MOC Part IV). This quality assurance program requires biweekly review of work product – including medical diagnoses, investigative work, and turn-around-times, with feedback to employees and corrective action to maintain an accepted standard of work practice.

The National Association of Medical Examiners, as well as the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, outline policies and procedures to ensure appropriate work place direction in pathology/investigation/autopsy, as well as in training of residents and fellows, respectively. Accreditation by these agencies, and the establishment of a fellowship program, will continue to supplement DCMEO policies, and drive innovative changes in the field of education and forensic medicine practice.

The metrics of success in establishing these goals include accreditation by national associations, quality assurance and improvement programs in the office (Case Review Conference), yearly policy reviews/updates, and regular review of this E&I policy for progress, continued tracking of emerging opportunities, furthering of directives and goals, and continued participation in the E&I program of Dane County. Additional metrics include continued participation in cooperative prevention and outreach programs, such as those described below.

## **Organizational Commitment – Implement Goals of Equity and Inclusion in Business Relationships**

The Dane County Medical Examiner’s office has several important business relationships in the community. The Medical Examiner’s office works with funeral homes, transcription, and toxicology service providers. The Medical Examiner’s office is committed to implementing the goals of equity and inclusion into these business relationships in order to advance the goals of equity and inclusion into the broader community. In addition, continued partnerships and interdepartmental agreements with other counties in Wisconsin promote the values Dane County offers the community.

## Leadership Development

One of the strongest assets of the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office is in our partnerships with the community, and our role as educators. The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office works with national and state agencies to identify potential causes of inequity, and negative outcomes of the same. Drug abuse, violence, inadequate medical care, and self-harm are all-too-common results of inequity such as poverty and discrimination. The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office provides agencies such as the Department of Health Services, Wisconsin State Vital Records, Public Health Madison and Dane County, and the CDC with insight into the trends of non-natural and natural deaths used to identify areas of inequity, determine preventative measures, and allocate funds to support neighborhoods and programs dedicated to improving the quality of life for Dane County residents. Examples of this include trends in opioid abuse and suicides, participation in review boards and grant-funded projects, infectious disease surveillance in conjunction with the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, and safe-sleep initiatives such as the Child Death Review Team. As a part of the community identifying areas of inequity, the Dane County Medical Examiner actively participates by providing the data needed to understand relationships between inequity and disease, and potentially identify pathways to prevention.

Medicolegal death investigation and forensic medicine require rigorous training and education extending far beyond a high school education. Yet, most young people do not have exposure to the benefits of this profession early enough to explore and prepare for this journey. Those who are interested in pursuing such a career find themselves unable to hone their skills due to lack of available internship programs, geographic confines and limited funding. The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office has provided college students interested in medicolegal death investigation and forensic pathology with a unique opportunity to train in Dane County for up to 3 months during their summer vacations, earning needed experience and college credits, while learning from highly skilled senior investigators. This internship draws students from small community colleges, such as the UW-Platteville and Fox Valley Technical College, who may otherwise not have exposure to death investigation in a large office. Cooperation with the OEI will further allow our office to reach underserved students through focused recruitment and new relationships with institutions of higher learning outside of WI. These relationships will also allow us to reach local students who simply lack previous exposure.

One tremendous strength of the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office is current staff who have the power to educate and expose young individuals to this profession. Providing students with exposure to the field of medicolegal death investigation and forensic medicine, and empowering them with a pathway to succeed, will have the greatest long term impact on improving equity in our profession. As such, it is the goal of the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office to extend community outreach - particularly older high school and younger college aged individuals, seek out funding to support the internship programs, and promote the opportunities that a career in death investigation and medicine can provide. Using the strength of our own diversity, the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office strives

to present young residents of Dane County with role models who reflect their diverse backgrounds, and provide a path forward to success in academia, particularly death investigation. In the last three years, the DCMEO has supported teaching opportunities for DCMEO employees engaged in teaching at local universities with forensic programs (UW-Platteville) in the department of anthropology, and has acquired tools used in hands on training of students in forensic anthropology. Uniting anthropologists from 5 counties of WI, the DCMEO coordinated a workshop at the Wisconsin Coroners And Medical Examiners Association conference in 2016, providing hands on experience. Moving forward, the DCMEO will coordinate with the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office (WCMEO) to facilitate training in anthropology for law enforcement and students in WI, at the direction of the WCMEO.

## Program Innovation

The Dane County Medical Examiner's Office is a growing department of Dane County. In addition to Dane County, the DCMEO serves Rock, Brown, Door and Oconto counties through intergovernmental agreements. Through the anticipated establishment of a second center of forensic excellence in Green Bay, with potential for expansion and availability to central and northern WI counties, the DCMEO provides training opportunities and exposure to smaller communities in Wisconsin.

In addition, the DCMEO will continue to practice equal hiring opportunities on the local and national level. The current hiring practice utilizes a standardized written test before applications are reviewed to ensure that the most qualified individuals are recognized irrespective of their previous background. Coupled with an interview process focused on identifying leadership qualities, this process allows applicants to express their abilities through diverse personal experience, as well as foundational knowledge and practical skills. This process allows us to provide opportunities to new graduates and individuals with diverse employment backgrounds (medical, law enforcement, pharmacy, investigation, retail, etc.) on a competitive level with experienced investigators. To underscore our commitment to diversity in the hiring process, the DCMEO, in conjunction with Dane County Corporation Counsel and the WI Department of Health Services worked tirelessly in 2017 and 2018 to include forensic pathology as patient-based practice serving an underserved community. Gaining this recognition at the state level has allowed immigrant pathologists with qualifying visas to apply for the Conrad Waiver Program in Wisconsin in the field of forensic pathology— an accomplishment only 5 states have achieved to date.

To further our policies and procedures, and ensure equitable workplace conditions and national standards, the DCMEO is currently in the process of applying for accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners. Accreditation by the NAME recognizes the commitment made by DCMEO to achieve the highest standards of forensic services and workplace standards in keeping with national guidelines. Furthermore, the DCMEO will begin the process of acquiring accreditation by the ACGME to develop a fellowship training program for pathologists interested in forensic pathology. The creation of a robust fellowship program will increase the number of forensic pathologists available for service in Wisconsin, and provide additional opportunities to introduce future leaders in forensic pathologists to equitable workplace practices. The ACGME has strict guidelines for equitable workplace conditions, and metrics of improvement and learning, which comply with Dane County goals of equity and inclusion. The goals of the DCMEO include NAME accreditation by the end of 2021 and ACGME accreditation by the summer of 2022.

## **Collaboration – Work with Partner Agencies in Cause of Death Investigations**

The Dane County Medical Examiner’s Office looks forward to continued cooperation with our state partners such as DHS, and prevention groups to provide services which advance equity goals to the people of Dane County. The DCMEO will also continue to conduct business with partners vested in equity and inclusion as outlined by Dane County protocols. In the past, the DCMEO has only contracted with toxicology vendors who incorporated equity (same sex benefits), and other Dane County equitable requirements.

In addition, the DCMEO looks forward to new relationships with the OEI, and new opportunities to reach communities that may have been previously unrecognized by our department. It is hoped that this collaboration will help the DCMEO identify schools, organizations and individuals who would directly benefit from education or experience through the DCMEO, and to extend outreach to universities outside of Wisconsin who focus on diversity in their undergraduate, graduate, and medical school curricula.

The DCMEO will additionally continue to seek out educational and grant opportunities from local, state and national organizations to enable the opportunities outlined above.

## **Resource Mobilization – Financial**

Numerous financial resources exist to support equity and inclusion in forensic sciences, in addition to those available through Dane County and the State of Wisconsin. These include institutional/association grants such as the Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association, which offer training grants to members, and opportunities at poster presentations during biannual meetings. Also, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences fosters Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, and certain sections offer substantial travel grants to qualified applicants specifically under the Diversity and Inclusion protocols. As new opportunities develop, the DCMEO will continue to seek out these opportunities.