

**Office of the Cook County Medical Examiner
Advisory Committee Meeting - April 17, 2015 - Revised**
CCME Office | Lower Level Conference Room| 11:00am**

Attendance

Present: Dr. Enrique Beckmann, *Chairman*; Detective Sergeant Jason Moran, *Cook County Sheriff's Office-Vice Chairman*; Mark A. Rizzo, *Funeral Director, I.D.F.P.R.-Secretary*; Deputy Chief Eugene Roy, *Chicago Police Department*; Rabbi Moshe Wolfe, *Police Chaplain (CPD/CFD)*; Reverend Vuanita Battle-Maze, *Vitas Hospice*; Daniel Gallagher, *Cook County State's Attorney's Office*; Spencer Leak, Jr., *Funeral Director*.

Absent: Susan Dyer, *Funeral Director*; Elizabeth Gorman, *Cook County Commissioner*; Isaac McCoy, *President/CEO Urban Mosaic*.

Guests Present: Dr. Stephen Cina, *Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County*; Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, *Deputy Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County*; James Sledge, *Executive Officer of CCMEO*; Attorney Robert Meza, *CCBOA*; Steven Smith, *Safety Coordinator of CCMEO*; Frank Shuftan, *CCBOA*; Dr. Michael Wagner, *Chief Toxicologist of CCMEO*; Mary Marik, *Records Supervisor of CCMEO*; Rebecca Perone, *Indigent Coordinator of CCMEO*; Lizveth Mendez, *Deputy Chief of CCBOA*; Eric Wong, *Assistant to Deputy Chief of CCBOA*; Gus Cage, *Funeral Director (Cage Memorial)*; Edward Callahan, *Funeral Director (Callahan Funeral Home)*.

Call to Order / Roll Call

MEAC meeting is called to order at 11:03 a.m. by Chairman Beckmann
Secretary Rizzo does roll call and announces there is a quorum

Introductions

Chairman Beckmann invited public guests to introduce themselves and address any opinions to the Committee. Gus Cage from Cage Memorial Chapels (Chicago) is the current President of the Cook County Funeral Home Owner's Association. Edward Callahan (Chicago) is the current President of the Illinois Selected Morticians. Both men expressed their groups concerns with the storage policy and with the recent change in cooperation they are receiving from the CCMEO Investigators in obtaining signed death certificates from attending physicians.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of January 16, 2015 meeting are reviewed by committee
Motion to approve by Rabbi Wolfe
Motion seconded by ASA Gallagher
No discussion
Motion passed unanimously by committee

Reports

Bureau of Administration

-Chief Martinez introduced Lizveth Mendez as the new Deputy Chief of the BOA.

-D/C Mendez related that she is in her fourth day on the job, been in government for over ten years, graduated with a B.A. from Notre Dame, and has worked out of Lisa Madigan's office.

-Chief Martinez related that she can still be contacted with any issues, but will be referring MEAC issues to D/C Mendez. She further related that in regards to the proposed amendment, until President Preckwinkle makes any decisions, the MEAC members are all status quo. There is still NO burial contract. Three interested vendors, but no commitments.

Chairman

-The chairman has had significant interaction with funeral directors since our last meeting in regards to their concerns about storage fees and death certificate policies. Susan Dyer and Dr. Cina have also participated in the interactions.

-Mr. Cage suggested a change in policy that would allow open meetings specifically between funeral directors and the CCMEO/MEAC regarding policy decisions.

-Dr. Cina encouraged continued conversation between himself, MEAC, and funeral directors.

-Mr. Callahan expressed concern to about fees charged to funeral directors who are attempting to provide a service to poor members of the community.

-Mr. Cage related that the fees went from \$350.00 to \$ 500.00.

CCMEO

-Dr. Cina congratulated Eugene Roy for being promoted to Deputy Chief of Detectives.

Introduced Chris Kalka as the new Chief of Investigations. Chris has been in law enforcement for 17 years working in violent crimes and as a medico-legal investigator.

Steven Smith will now focus on his role as Safety Coordinator due to new hire, Rebecca Perone. Ms. Perone will now be the full-time Indigent Coordinator. She comes from Indiana's Department of Child Services.

Thanks to Dr. Arunkumar for her work on the CCMEO Annual Report. Data from Jan. 1 to Aug. 10 2014 is the old system (Passport), while data from Aug. 11 - Dec. 31, 2014 is the new system (Lablynx). New case management system makes data collection easier, now tracking heroin overdoses and child homicide "hotspots" - handouts were made available.

Storage policy in effect with 250 racks and 25 carts, the census of 225 remains will halt storage cases. With the elimination of Public Aid monies since Jan. 2015, census must be protected especially as we head into summer months. CCMEO is aware that funeral homes may be reluctant to pick up remains due to lack of funds.

Dr. Cina related that there has been a change in policy in regards to unattended deaths. The age has changed from 50 to 60 years old for post-mortem examinations.

The goal is to have investigators reach 200 scenes from the current 100 scenes.

Reminded everyone that a funeral director can still bring remains down to the CCME Office when they need a “courtesy” death certificate signed.

-Records Supervisor Marik related that nursing homes get two bills for storage and are “locked-out” after 45 days of not paying.

Sub-Committees

-Vice-Chairman Jason Moran (Cremation Chair)

There should be language in the cremation policy providing an option of burial so we are taking into account the wishes of the deceased who were opposed to cremation in life.

-Dr. Cina added that the CCMEO will be making a policy change to hold cremated remains for one year rather than two years. This change would be in line with the current laws for funeral home/directors. Seeing that only 10% of families are picking up the cremated remains, storage space will fill up quickly.

-Vice-Chairman Moran adds that that is more of reason to have a burial option because the abandoned cremains will require a final disposition.

Old/New Business

-Dr. Cina

With regards to previous discussions about a “county morgue”, there is cooler space at Oak Forest Hospital that can hold 25-30 remains. It needs about 24 hours to cool to appropriate storage temperature. In the event of a Mass Fatality, Dr. Cina we have access to Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s cooler with an additional 24 spaces. It is beyond the scope of the CCME to create a “free-standing” county cooler.

-Mr.Cage

Can we find a workable solution to the storage situation before it becomes a health issue?

-Mr. Callahan

We need to educate the public as to what is going on with these social hazards of having no place to store remains.

-Secretary Rizzo

Put burden on nursing homes to capture pre-need dollars for the patient’s funeral expenses at the time of admission, as well as obtaining current next-of-kin records. Nursing homes should also have cold rooms, as they did in the past.

-Chairman Beckmann

MEAC is not in a position to resolve issues at the State level. Eugene Roy agrees, and relates that smaller meetings should be held like the one with the funeral directors to discuss specific concerns and create solutions.

-Vice-Chairman Moran

The CCMEQ should provide education to nursing homes and hospitals on locating next-of-kin if the CCMEQ is going to refuse storage cases. This process would be similar to what the CCMEQ does with cases now (i.e. veterans, public administrator, etc.)

-Chairman Beckmann

Seeks a motion to provide educational information to institutions being refused for storage of decedents. The educational information should include steps for properly "vetting next-of-kin"

Motion made by Vice-Chairman Moran

Seconded by Eugene Roy

No Discussion

Motion passed unanimously by committee

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Secretary Rizzo

Motion seconded by Rabbi Wolfe

No discussion

Motion passed unanimously by the committee

Meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.