Regional medical examiner’s facility

Support $25.9 million in state bonding for a Regional Forensic Science Center of Excellence

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s Office provides investigative services and forensic autopsy services for deaths that occur in Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties. The office also provides this core government service for counties across the region and the upper Midwest on a referral basis.

Regional services create greater efficiency and cost savings

A regional medical examiner facility makes fiscal sense. In 2012, Hennepin County tax dollars paid more than 90 percent of the Medical Examiner’s operating budget. By 2015, that number had decreased to 63 percent. Regional services increased efficiency for each county.

One-third of greater Minnesota counties do not have a trained and certified medical examiner, but rely on a coroner for forensic investigations. With additional space, the facility could formalize partnerships with other counties throughout the region, increasing opportunities for efficiency and excellence.

As the only medical examiner’s office in Minnesota with a training program for future medical examiners, we hold a critical role in assuring that we have educated professionals to meet the needs of our communities, the state of Minnesota, and also provide medical examiners nationwide.

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Current medical examiner facility
Current facility has inadequate space

The space in use by Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties is located in downtown Minneapolis, next to the Hennepin County Medical Center. At 28,800 usable square feet, the space is too small to meet the demand for services. In addition:

- Secured areas for bodies, evidence, medication, property and emergency response equipment are beyond capacity.
- Intake, processing and release of decedents occur in one cramped workspace that shares a single elevator.
- Location and structural elements prevent expansion of workspaces, secured evidence storage and onsite parking.

Regional facility supports public health

Having adequate space will allow the medical examiner to handle a disaster. We certainly hope to never face that need. But if it happens, a new facility will ensure we have what is needed to respond well. A modern facility will provide heightened biosafety from contagious diseases for autopsies, thereby reducing hazards to workers and the community.

Help us look to the future

The nationwide shortage of board-certified forensic pathologists supports a regional approach to medicolegal death investigations in a new regional facility. Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties have seen significant growth in recent decades; they will continue to increase in population, as will the rest of the region. The region needs a medical examiner’s facility that can accommodate the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population and ensure high-quality death investigative services far into the future.