

## Organizational and Foundational Standard for Medicolegal Death Investigation



### WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This standard outlines the minimum requirements, fundamental activities, general procedures, facilities, and trained personnel that are basic components of a competent medicolegal death investigation (MDI) system. Consistent and proper MDI investigations are important to national public health, legal and criminal justice communities, policy mandates, and public safety.

The standard articulates the use and applicability of a comprehensive compilation of existing standards and guidelines sourced from government and professional publications widely accepted in the medicolegal death investigation community as a representative of best practice guidelines and standards.

### WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

High-quality medicolegal death investigation depends on facilities, trained personnel, resources, and processes. This standard is important because it defines the educational frameworks, operational roles, and processes that are essential to the fundamentals of a competent medicolegal death investigation. It is designed to be used as a guide by the medicolegal death investigation and legal communities, public safety officials, and the public at large. It may be referenced for inclusion in resource allocation and planning or leveraged as a tool to justify projects, programs, and the development of standard operating procedures to comply fully with federal, state, and local laws.



### HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

- This standard provides guidance to medical examiners, coroners, and medicolegal death investigators (or equivalent) about publicly available references that are indispensable to a competent medicolegal death investigation.
- Medical examiner and coroner offices have responsibilities that extend well beyond the evaluation of cases from a legal perspective. Public health and policy tasks represent a large and demanding mandate. Resources to meet this need, including personnel, facilities and equipment, and processes, are described.
- The document can be leveraged as a tool for federal, state, local, and tribal governments to justify programs, projects, and standardized processes backed by sound data.
- Additionally, the document emphasizes the demand for opportunities to advance the body of reliable data for medical research, investigative research, and equal application of justice for all.
- Currently, inconsistent terminology, particularly used to describe the personnel performing death investigations, exists. Standardized definitions are provided to allow for consistent dialogue and communication at local, state, and national levels.
- The importance of training and certification for practitioners and accreditation for organizations increases the public's trust and should be a requirement for all medical examiner and coroner authorities.

