

MEDICAL EXAMINERS COMMISSION MEETING

Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa
1000 TPC Blvd.
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
August 12, 2025, 10:00 AM EDT

Commission Chairman Barbara C. Wolf, M.D., called the meeting of the Medical Examiners Commission (MEC) to order at **10:00 AM**. She advised those in the audience that the meetings of the Medical Examiners Commission are open to the public and that members of the public will be allowed five minutes to speak. She then welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Commission members, staff, and audience members to introduce themselves.

Commission members present:

Barbara C. Wolf, M.D., Districts 5 & 24 Medical Examiner
Brian Fernandes, J.D., Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor, Office of the Attorney General
Robin Giddens Sheppard, L.F.D., Funeral Director
Kenneth T. Jones, State Registrar, Department of Health
Hon. Charlie Cofer, J.D., Public Defender, 4th Judicial Circuit
Joshua Stephany, M.D., Districts 9 & 25 Medical Examiner (Virtual)
Hon. Amira Fox, J.D., State Attorney, 20th Judicial Circuit

Commission staff present:

Brett Kirkland, Ph.D.
Ashley Bullard
Natalie Bielby, J.D.

Megan Neel
Ashley Williams

District Medical Examiners present:

Deanna Oleske, M.D. (District 1)
B. Robert Pietak, M.D. (District 4)
Jon R. Thogmartin, M.D. (District 6)

Other District personnel present:

Tim Crutchfield (District 4)
Dan Schebler (District 1)
Chrissy Nieten (District 1)

Ricardo Camacho (District 2)
Iana Lesnikova, M.D. (District 23)

Guests present:

Chad Brown, Director of Criminal Justice Professionalism Standards and Training Services (FDLE)
Casey Smith (FDLE)
Leigh Clark, Chief of Forensic Services (FDLE)
Amanda Ball, Chief of Staff (FDLE)
Shane Lockwood (Florida Department of Health, St. Johns County)
Yasmine Fucci (Florida Department of Health)

J. Peter R. Pelletier, M.D., FCAP, FASCP (FEMORS)
Bernard Brzezinski (FEMORS)
Larry R. Bedore, MS CJ (FEMORS)
Rachel Moore (FEMORS)
Heather Markuson (LifeQuest)
Brittany Hill (Lifelink of Florida)
Karen Schebler (Citizen)
Elizabeth Blemmon (Citizen)

A MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY FOR THE COMMISSION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

A MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY FOR THE COMMISSION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE May 13, 2025 MEDICAL EXAMINERS COMMISSION MEETING.

ISSUE NUMBER 1: INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

- Status Report: MEC Appointments: Public Defender Charlie Cofer, J.D., and Sheriff Robert “Bob” Johnson, were nominated and unanimously recommended for reappointment to the Medical Examiners Commission for the cycle ending June 2029. Bureau Chief Brett Kirkland, Ph.D., advised that a recommendation letter will be sent to the Governor’s Appointment Office. He also informed the Commission that the County Commissioner seat is still vacant.
- Status Report: DME Appointments and Reappointments: Dr. Kirkland informed the Commission that a letter was sent to the Governor’s Appointment Office recommending the reappointments of District Medical Examiners by the Commission. We are currently awaiting appointments from the Governor’s Appointments Office.
- District 8 Medical Examiner Vacancy: Dr. Barbara Wolf on behalf of Dr. Joshua Stephany informed the Commission that the District 8 Medical Examiner’s position is still vacant and that there is no news to report. Dr. Jon Thogmartin will continue to provide coverage.
- 2024 Interim Drug Report: Ms. Megan Neel informed the Commission that drug data review has been completed and just awaiting final approval before publishing. Ms. Neel advised the Commission that it should be published soon.
- 2024 Annual Drug Report: Ms. Megan Neel informed the Commission that drug data has been received, and Ms. Neel advised the draft is completed and being reviewed for edits.
- 2024 Annual Workload Report: Ms. Megan Neel informed the Commission the draft is completed and being reviewed for edits.
- 2025 Interim Drug Report: Ms. Megan Neel informed the Commission that data has been received by a few districts and still waiting for the remainder. Ms. Neel reminded the Districts that the data is due by September 30, 2025.
- 2024 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program Status Update: Ms. Ashley Williams informed the Commission that FDLE Grants unit is working on reimbursements and asked that districts continue to send in their reimbursement forms.
- 2025 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program Status Update: Ms. Ashley Williams advised that 14 proposals were received for the 2025 Paul Coverdell Grant. Ms. Williams advised that there was indication that the 2025 Paul Coverdell Grant will be moving forward and we should have more information shortly.

ISSUE NUMBER 2: Disaster Reporting Form and Ready Op

MEC Staff Manager, Ashley Bullard informed the Commission of updates on disaster death reporting. Ms. Bullard advised that Commission staff would be using a program called ReadyOp which allows the electronic submission of the disaster death reporting forms. This system would make the information from the districts immediately available to FDLE. Ms. Bullard also went over the data management and what information would be required. Ms. Bullard advised that the paper form will still be available if needed.

ISSUE NUMBER 3: FDLE Forensic Update:

Bureau Chief Brett Kirkland, Ph.D., on behalf of Deputy Director Leigh Clark of FDLE's Forensic Services informed the Commission that Florida FIGG grant did not have funding appropriated for the 25-26 fiscal year. There were 86 applications received by FDLE for the 24-25 fiscal year, the funds of \$500,000. 49 of the applications met all technical specifications and provided all application requirements. 48 of the applications were unidentified human remains doe cases and 1 suspect case. 10 applications met the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Missing and Unidentified Human Remains (MUHR) grants requirements and FDLE sent those cases for FIGG analysis using the funds. The solicitation for the grant closed on June 30, 2025. Dr. Kirkland also advised that the Department of Justice BJA has approved FDLE's request for an extension and the grant will continue until September 30, 2026, for the FDLE Missing and Unidentified Human Remains grant. The requirement is that the unidentified human remain cases be suspected homicide victim remains. FDLE continues to accept and test unidentified human remain cases for entry into CODIS or for direct comparisons to potential relatives. Since October 1, 2023, FDLE has facilitated the identification of 42 unidentified human remains, via CODIS hits, direct comparisons, fingerprint searches and FIGG. Dr. Kirkland advised that if there are unidentified human remain cases in CODIS, and FIGG analysis is needed regardless of manner of death to contact Marcie Scott at MarcellaScott@fdle.state.fl.us or Leigh Clark at LeighClark@fdle.state.fl.us.

ISSUE NUMBER 4: FEMORS Update

Deputy Commander Larry Bedore, MS CJ, of Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System (FEMORS) gave an update on the Fatality Management Response Plan. Deputy Commander Bedore introduced the new FEMORS Command Team to the Commission. Commander J Peter R Pelletier, Logistics Chief Bernard Brzezinski, Fiscal Assistant III and Administrative Officer Rachel Moore, and Human Resource Officer Stacey Oliver. Deputy Commander Bedore also provided the Commission with updates and presented the newest draft of the Fatality Management Response Plan. The only addition for Fatality Management Plan was the Medical Examiners Staff's suggestion that was made at the February 2025 meeting, for adding the definitions for Direct and Indirect incident related. Mr. Bedore also advised that additional updates have been made due to federal changes. MEC Chairman

Dr. Barbara Wolf asked that MEC staff disburse copies of the update among the Commissioners for review and then have a vote at the February 2026 Medical Examiners Commission meeting.

ISSUE NUMBER 5: EMERGING DRUGS UPDATE

On behalf of Dr. Bruce Goldberger, Dr. Kirkland provided the Commission with an update on new drug trends. He informed the Commission that laboratories are seeing a significant decreases in the prevalence of novel benzodiazepines, carfentanil, cathinones, cocaine, fentanyl, fluorofentanyl, methamphetamine, and nitazenes in decedents. NPS and other substances identified in casework includes alpha-PiHPP (isoPV8), bromazolam, N-isopropyl butylone, ketamine, methylenedioxyamphetamine, 3,4-methylenedioxy- α -pyrrolidinoisohexanophenone (MDPiHP), MDMB-4en-PINACA, ortho-methylfentanyl, and tramadol. Two new adulterants have been identified in the illicit fentanyl supply in the state of Florida – 1) BTMPS (bis(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-4-piperidyl) sebacate), an industrial chemical; and 2) medetomidine, a veterinary sedative and anesthetic.

Furthermore, Dr. Kirkland informed the Commission that the toxicology laboratory directors continue to meet bimonthly to discuss the prevalence and emergence of drugs in the state of Florida. Participants of the meeting include representatives from the MEC, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Florida Department of Health, and the Office of Statewide Intelligence.

ISSUE NUMBER 6: OTHER BUSINESS

- 2025 FAME Conference: District 1 Medical Examiner's Office Director of Operations, Dan Schebler informed the Commission of an update for the 2025 FAME Education Conference being held in Fort Walton Beach, Florida on September 10-12, 2025. Mr. Schebler advised that the program has been approved for a maximum of 18 CME credit hours. Also, 19 of the 25 districts have register to attend. Mr. Schebler informed the Commission that the program is available and can be found on the Medical Examiners Commission website.
- Medical Examiner's Environmental Analysis Report: Dr. Brett Kirkland and Ken Jones informed the Commission that the Department of Health has completed it analysis of data collection and reporting. Dr. Kirkland advised that the findings will be presented at the October 2025 Medical Examiners Commission meeting.

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 10:46 A.M.