

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center
1109 North Minneapolis Street, Wichita, Kansas 67214

November 21, 2024

Board Members or Designated Attendees Present

- Dr. Shelly Steadman, Director, Regional Forensic Science Center
- Darrell Atterberry, Chief of Police, Bel Aire
- Aaron Breitenbach, District Attorney's Office
- Sharon Dickgrafe, Chief Deputy City Attorney, City of Wichita
- Chris Dugan, Fire Marshal, Wichita Fire Department
- Russell Leeds, Assistant County Manager
- Dr. Ron Varner, Coroner, 13th Judicial District
- Robert Timmons, Fire Prevention Division Chief, Sedgwick County Fire District #1

Board Members Absent

- Jeffrey Easter, Sedgwick County Sheriff
- Dr. Timothy Gorrill, Sedgwick County Coroner
- Kevin Lanterman, Chief, Sedgwick County EMS
- Dr. Garold Minns, Dean, KU School of Medicine-Wichita
- Dr. Stephanie Newbold, Director, WSU Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs
- Joe Sullivan, Chief, Wichita Police Department

Attendees Present

- Katie Asbury, Forensic Administrator, Regional Forensic Science Center

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM.

II. Introductions and Roll Call

III. File Minutes from the May 16, 2024 Meeting

IV. RFSC Performance Metrics and Center Updates - OD2A

Dr. Shelly Steadman

Performance Metrics and Trends

- Medical Investigations
 - 3,335 reported deaths to date for 2024
 - 449 death scenes to date for 2024 - slightly fewer scenes
 - Down slightly in autopsy case volume (792) - largely due to the decrease in cases from Reno County
- Pathology
 - 11% of work is out-of-county (15% in 2023)
 - Suicides cases have stabilized
 - Overdose cases have decreased slightly from 2022
 - Overdoses account for 23% of the caseload (2023)
 - 80% of overdose cases involve detection of fentanyl
- Toxicology
 - Backlog
 - Toxicology backlog (25) is now more manageable
 - HPT/DUI backlog cases are slightly higher due to instrumentation repairs and the 2 scientists in Fire Debris training
 - Number of submissions has remained stable
- Drug Identification
 - Backlog (809) is directly related to staffing challenges and training
 - Number of cases submitted has decreased; some cases going to KBI
 - Drug ID fentanyl positive exhibits are up 684% from 2021-2023
- Fire Debris
 - Had to train 2 new chemists
 - 10 cases were received May-July while analysts were in training
 - Training is completed and testing is currently underway
- Firearms
 - Back-logged cases from May-August 2023 were awaiting review by a secondary laboratory since RFSC only had one fully trained examiner
 - Firearms Examiner is now fully trained and accepting all types of firearms analysis
 - Firearms backlog (10) is a function of submission volume and in-house reviews
 - 139 firearms cases submitted to date in 2024 (twice as many cases per month as compared to 2021)
- Biology/DNA
 - Biology/DNA backlog (3) has decreased significantly
 - Implemented some robotics in January that helps process rape kits more quickly
 - Biology/DNA case submissions have remained stable - 169 so far in 2024
 - DNA will have time to complete validations, advance technology, and bring probabilistic genotyping online which will change the way statistics are presented in court

Quarterly Summary

- Both LC-MS/MS instrument validations continuing and entering into our final year of Coverdell-funded outsourcing in Tox
- Land acquisition for DNA addition is on hold -- space study is completed, and a cost estimation is underway
- Staffing has remained fairly stable
 - A second fully-trained Firearms Examiner was onboarded in August
- Laboratory staff spent 2 weeks performing an internal audit to prepare for our ANAB surveillance assessment
- The ANAB surveillance assessment audit resulted in no findings of non-conformity

OD2A Grant

- OD2A funded position is testing drugs and paraphernalia from scenes
- Medical Investigations have collected drugs and/or paraphernalia at 88 scenes since starting the project December 1, 2023
- Drug paraphernalia testing is caught up (435 items), some technical reviews of data ongoing (approx. 20 cases)
- Results are posted on RFSC website
- Have began data sharing with CDC as pilot for developing data coding processes

2024 Grants Submitted

- Coverdell Formula (\$99,900) - award in progress
- Coverdell Formula (\$84,769) - application submitted
- CEBR (\$294,461) - award notification received, budget revision in review (\$7,557 reduction)
- JAG (\$39,721) - grant application submitted
- OD2A Local (\$250,000) - program underway

New or Renewed in 2024-2025

- OD2A Local (\$250,000) - Year 2 budget approved
- KDHE OD2A (\$64,158) - renewed agreement executed
- Kansas Fights Addiction (\$68,400) - application submitted
 - Award recipients to be announced in January 2025

2025 Budget

- No decision package presented this year
- Need to start considering funding for LIMS - will fund with Coverdell one more year
- Need to increase contractals for maintenance plan

CIP Requests

- DNA Addition - considering moving additional disciplines to a second site in close proximity to central building, cost is currently being determined

Questions and Discussion

- Mr. Leeds added that the potential building addition/second site will be presented as a CIP amendment to the BOCC. The plan is for the Coroner services and Toxicology lab to remain in the original building and relocate the additional laboratory services.
- Mr. Breitenbach asked if the toxicology send-outs were being performed in-state by the KBI or by other laboratories.
- Dr. Steadman responded that, to her knowledge, the KBI is not currently performing comprehensive post-mortem toxicology testing, and that the send-outs were being completed by NMS or AXIS. She added that the Center is aiming to send out overdose cases or suicides that aren't likely to be prosecuted by the county.
- Mr. Breitenbach requested the Center give a presentation to District Attorney staff regarding the new probabilistic genotyping that may be implemented. Dr. Steadman indicated the lead scientist for implementing the technology, Dr. Hooper, will be preparing presentations and training.
- A brief discussion was held regarding testing and its impact on scientists testifying in court.

V. Agency Reports

There were no agency reports presented.

- Chief Atteberry discussed the possible correlations between the following:
 - The reduction in suicides with the institution of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Hotline
 - The decrease in fentanyl deaths with the increased availability of free Naloxone

VI. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 AM.

Next Meeting: May 15, 2025 at 9:00 AM

1109 N. Minneapolis Street, Wichita Kansas, 67214 or via Zoom (TBD)

Next Quarterly Update: August 2024