

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 19, 2022  
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
From: Brian Peterson, MD, Chief Medical Examiner, Medical Examiner's Office  
Subject: Medical Examiner's Office 2021 Annual Report  
File Type: Informational Report – File No. 22-550

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This informational report provides a report on how the Medical Examiner's Office set and achieved its 2021 goals.

**POLICY**

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	<a href="#">Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity &amp; Health</a>
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**BACKGROUND**

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year
- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department's performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy, if applicable)
- (c) Report the department's year-end results relating to the goals it had set, and
- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.
- (e) Explain the department's progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead.”

**ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

## **BODY**

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2021? Please explain why they are “SMARTIE” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy.
  - Goal 1: Promote equity by identifying disparities in health outcomes and sharing this information with multiple entities tasked with addressing these negative outcomes.
  - Goal 2: Our office will have a 100 percent accuracy rate and a turnaround time of four weeks in routine cases, and a turnaround time of 8-10 weeks in complex investigations, which will result in a better understanding of negative determinants of health especially as it relates to race and ethnicity.
  - Goal 3: Increase revenue by approximately 10 percent by marketing toxicology services to other governmental entities, thus reducing our office’s reliance on the tax levy.
2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2021? Please explain.
  - Goal 1: Through collaboration with various Milwaukee County partners, our office displays Medical Examiner’s mortality data on Milwaukee County’s strategy dashboard. This has increased transparency and highlights disparate health outcomes by race and ethnicity. Additionally, this collaboration enabled Milwaukee County to identify the racial disparities in COVID deaths in real-time and allow Milwaukee County and its partners to respond appropriately to communities in need of resources.

- Goal 2: Through collaboration with various Milwaukee County partners, our office created an interactive dashboard on the Medical Examiner's website that displays in real-time all reportable deaths in Milwaukee County. However, due to staffing and workload challenges, our turnaround time increased in 2021 so final death data lagged.
  - Goal 3: Entered into a contract to provide toxicology support to the University of North Dakota, increasing revenue for 2021 by approximately ten percent and creating a revenue surplus for our office at the end of 2021
3. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
    - Good working relationship with other County departments to achieve a common goal.
    - Our office's commitment to Milwaukee County's strategic plan.
  4. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
    - Increased workload led to increased turnaround time in determining cause and manner of death.
    - Staffing shortages that continue into 2022.
  5. What is the status of your department/office in developing its strategic plan? Our strategic plan is a work in progress, but we have established our goals for 2022 and plan to work with the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance to help us with our strategic planning efforts.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

### **PREPARED BY:**

Karen Domagalski, Operations Manager

### **APPROVED BY:**

*Brian L. Peterson, M.D.*

Brian L. Peterson, MD, Chief Medical Examiner

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk