

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST I

This is specialized professional medical work in the investigation of certain types of death-in the State of North Carolina to determine their cause and manner. Work involves the performance of autopsies, investigations of scenes of death, and examination of all available physical evidence relative to each individual death. Work includes reducing autopsy findings to written and verbal reports; and interpreting autopsy results for criminal hearings, court of law, law enforcement agencies, other public agencies, and families of the deceased. Work is usually performed independently but is subject to review by the Associate Chief or Chief Medical Examiner.

I. DIFFICULTY OF WORK

Variety and Scope - Work requires pathological investigation of a variety of cases resulting in death. Cases requiring autopsy may have resulted from severe burns, physical abnormality/deformity, homicide or other violent death, chemical or drug-related deaths, or a multitude of disease-causing agents and toxins. Cases are received from throughout the State.

Intricacy - Extreme skills is required in the performance of autopsy and death scene investigations. Work requires extensive knowledge of anatomy and pathological conditions resulting in death. Autopsies and related investigations require critical applications of judgement as to procedural guidelines and medical protocol. Work requires employees to explore or search unknowns or decide upon an appropriate pathological, chemical process, similar method to aid in the determination of cause and manner of death.

Subject Matter Complexity - Work requires detailed medical knowledges in the specialized field of forensic pathology, and skills to diagnose death causes, and demands skill in anatomical pathology.

Guidelines - Guides for the specialty include the General Statutes relevant to the medical examiner system and the Division of health Services; rules and regulations of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as approved by the Secretary, Department of Human Resources; and a variety of internal guides. Employees also consult current professional literature in the execution of assigned duties and responsibilities.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

Nature of Instructions - Work is performed independently under the administrative guidance of the Chief Medical Examiner and the programmatic review of the Pathology Branch Head and/or Chief Medical Examiner. Assignments may be short-term rotational or permanent, and are usually of a general nature.

Nature of Review - Work is reviewed by higher level pathologist according to established procedures of pathological investigation and autopsy. Employees perform autopsies with minimal technical review, but findings may be subject to review by the Chief Medical Examiner.

Scope of Decisions - Work results in direct impact on public health programs, preventive medicine programs, and control of epidemics. Law enforcement personnel, bereaved family members, and a variety of professional groups are directly affected by the work.

Consequence of Decisions - Judgement errors or invalid decisions may result in the spread or commencement of incipient disease or epidemic, or may present special problems in safeguarding public health. Errors may lead to wrongful imprisonment, erroneous litigation, litigation against the Chief Medical Examiner's Office, or unnecessary hardship to families of decedents.

III. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Scope of Contacts - Work requires frequent contact with families of deceased, law enforcement officers, and other physicians.

Nature and Purpose - Contacts involve exchanging information, gathering data, teaching, and solving problems.

IV. OTHER WORK DEMANDS

Work Conditions - Employees work in medical laboratory settings, as well as in the field. Work requires examination of decomposed, putrefied, badly burned, or mutilated human specimens.

Hazards - Employees are exposed to highly dangerous and contagious diseases and carcinogenic chemicals such as formaldehyde or benzidine.

V. RECRUITMENT STANDARDS

Knowledges, Skills and Abilities - Considerable knowledge of the concepts, principles, and practices of general medicine and surgery. General knowledge of forensic pathology. Working knowledge of the areas of law, botany, physical anthropology, and toxicology. Thorough knowledge of the diversified, specialized equipment, instruments, and materials required in all phases of pathology. Working knowledge of gas chromatography, ultra-violet and infrared spectroscopy, and photography.

Minimum Education and Experience –

Licensed to practice medicine in the state of North Carolina and two years of pathology residency.

Special Note –

This is a generalized representation of positions in this class and is not intended to identify essential functions per ADA. Examples of work are primarily essential functions of the majority of positions in this class, but may not be applicable to all positions.