



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: CORONER

File #: 16-630

Board Meeting Date: 10/17/2017

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: 4/5ths

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Robert Foucrault, Coroner

Subject: Resolutions Accepting a Grant from the National Institute of Justice in the Amount of \$164,564 for Implementation of Medical Examiner - Coroner Office Accreditation Program, and Authorizing Appropriation Transfer Request of Grant Funds

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt resolutions:

- A) Accepting a grant from the National Institute of Justice in the amount of \$164,564 for the implementation of the Medical Examiner-Coroner Office accreditation program during the period of January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2019; and
- B) Authorizing an Appropriation Transfer Request recognizing unanticipated grant funds in the amount of \$164,564 from the National Institute of Justice to the Coroner's Office for the implementation of the Medical Examiner-Coroner Office Accreditation Program.

BACKGROUND:

The Medical Examiner-Coroner system in the United States struggles with inconsistent death investigation practices, system variability, shortages of qualified staff performing investigations and related duties, and available funding to support the system. These systemic issues potentially impact the criminal justice system by compromising the investigation, prosecution, and prevention of criminal behavior associated with deaths resulting from homicide, traffic collisions, drugs and alcohol, negligent behavior, suicide, etc.

As a result, the National Commission on Forensic Science has recommended that, by 2020, all Medical Examiner-Coroner offices be accredited according to a national or international standard. Such accreditation provides quality assurance through the development and standardization of industry best practices related to staffing, equipment, training, facilities maintenance, and forensic specialties.

The San Mateo County Coroner's Office is currently seeking accreditation through the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME). Although the Coroner's Office has

implemented a number of improvements to its death investigation practices, including certification of veteran investigators and updating its policies to comply with new industry best practice standards, additional improvements are required in order to obtain IACME accreditation.

DISCUSSION

In March 2017, the Coroner's Office was awarded a two-year Medical Examiner - Coroner Office Accreditation Program grant from the National Institute of Justice ("NIJ") in the amount of \$164,564 (the "NIJ Grant"), to fund its IACME-accreditation efforts. Specifically, the Coroner's Office intends to use the NIJ Grant to (1) hire a limited term Management Fellow to assist in the development of required policies and procedures; (2) certify four medicolegal death investigators through the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI); and (3) acquire appropriate equipment for the morgue operations.

The NIJ Grant requires the Coroner's Office to provide semi-annual reports to the NIJ addressing progress made in achieving accreditation and, for example, costs, benefits, and other technical, administrative, policy, or legal gaps that support, sustain, or limit the achievement of accreditation.

A resolution from the Board is required since receipt of the NIJ Grant will require an adjustment to the Coroner's Office FY 2017-2018 budget. The NIJ Grant does not require matching funds. However, staff time will be dedicated to management of the NIJ Grant and participation in accreditation-related activities funded by the NIJ Grant.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

Approval of the NIJ Grant and Appropriation Transfer Request contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 goal of the Healthy Community by supporting thorough, independent, and high quality death investigations under the jurisdiction of the Coroner's Office.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

Measure	FYI 16-17 (Actual)	FY 17-18 (Projected)	FY 18-19 (Projected)	FY 19-20 (Projected)
Accreditation of San Mateo County Coroner's Office	0	0	0	1
Percent of ABMDI Certified Investigators	38%	50%	80%	100%

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval of the Appropriation Transfer Request will result in the appropriation of the NIJ Grant in the amount of \$164,564 to the Coroner's Office FY 2017-18 budget for the implementation of the Medical Examiner-Coroner Office Accreditation Program. There is no additional net cost to the County associated with this transfer.