

**Professional Associate – Scientific**  
**Autopsy Technician Fellow**  
**Division of Public Health**

This is entry-level professional work providing a full range of services to state agencies in a variety of disciplines. Positions in this class are assigned less complex projects or problems, or are assigned segments of an overall larger and more complex project. Work assignments are characterized by defined objectives and specific guidelines, but require an overall understanding of project design and purpose. The Professional Associate classification is intended as a resource to attract entry-level talent in various fields to the State.

**Project Description**

The primary purpose of this position is to provide an entry-level point for students who are interested in forensic autopsy, specifically autopsy technician or forensic pathology. While this position provides direct experience in the autopsy technician field, it also can provide helpful experience and connections with its work directly alongside forensic pathologists.

Deaths in North Carolina that are unattended, suspicious or the result of violence (homicides, suicides, and accidents) are investigated and certified by the State Medical Examiner System and represent approximately 14% of all North Carolina deaths yearly. The North Carolina Medical Examiner System is a network of approximately 450 medical doctors and other health professionals throughout North Carolina who devote their time, energy and medical expertise to see that deaths are adequately investigated. At the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), staff pathologists conduct external examinations for Durham, and Wake Counties and perform medico-legal autopsies for 30 counties in central North Carolina and for counties that have no regional pathologists. Cases are also referred to the OCME when regional pathologists are not available or when additional expertise is required to assess a case. As a result, more than one third of all autopsies in the Medical Examiner System are performed at OCME. The OCME Toxicology Laboratory serves all 100 North Carolina counties by providing forensic analytical testing of specimens and evidence, review of analytical testing and records maintenance for approximately 12,000 medical examiner cases per year. Data collected on each death are recorded in the Medical Examiner Information System (MEIS). These data provide valuable surveillance and research tools to assess existing and potential public health threats and to influence policies that could lead to the prevention of premature death due to injury.

The primary purpose of this position is to provide support to OCME pathologists and autopsy technicians. The employee provides technical assistance to forensic pathologists in the performance of postmortem examinations. The employee performs postmortem examinations, specimen collection, participates in decedent management within the facility, and provides support to the autopsy facility upkeep via supply and inventory, cleaning, and disinfecting.

## **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

- Working knowledge of law enforcement requirements for criminal investigations.
- Working knowledge of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner administrative procedures and policies.
- Working knowledge of firearms, ballistics and law enforcement procedures.
- Working knowledge with funeral service practices.
- Considerable knowledge of autopsy, radiographs, and photographic techniques and procedures.
- Considerable knowledge of anatomy and pathology and the embalming process.
- Considerable knowledge of investigative and identification procedures and techniques.
- Thorough knowledge and compliance with designated OCME Autopsy Facility engineering and work practice safety controls (e.g., personnel protection equipment, handling of infectious substances, decontamination, and disposal of medical waste).
- Skill in excellent written and oral communication.
- Ability to collect, document, and report information supportive of a death scene inquiry.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with the Medical Examiner staff, law enforcement agencies, transporters, and the public.

## **Minimum Education and Experience**

Bachelor's degree in a biological/anatomical, forensic, mortuary/funeral, or criminal justice sciences from an appropriately accredited institution.