



**COUNTY OF COLLIN
STATE OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
FY2019**

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OUR MISSION

To uphold Article 49.25 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

This includes establishment of a competent cause and manner of death for all reported cases to the office. The Medical Examiner is also tasked with the issuance of cremation permits, facilitating organ and tissue procurement, as well as meeting the needs of families, law enforcement, the District Attorney, Office of Emergency Management, medical and legal communities and funeral directors.

HISTORY

The Collin County Medical examiner's Office was created in 1986 and opened on January 1, 1987. Under the requests and orders of the Commissioners Court, William B. Rohr M.D. was appointed as the County Medical Examiner who retains this position to this day. The Office has full accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners. Part-time Assistant Medical Examiner Lynn A. Salzberger M.D. retired on September 30, 2016. Stephanie S. Burton, M.D. was added as the new full-time Assistant Medical Examiner on October 1, 2016. Converting the part-time position to full-time status enabled Dr. Rohr to maintain a personal workload acceptable for accreditation in a cost-effective manner yet still conduct autopsy services for surrounding counties. The office operated on an annual budget of \$2,136,635 FY 2019. Growing population and the re-opening of services outside of Collin County has increased the caseload handled by this office in terms of pathology, toxicology, investigation, evidence, property storage and disposal, transportation of bodies and courtroom testimony. Adult and Child Fatality Review Teams continue to be active. Both are chaired by Dr. Rohr.

Five-year on-site inspection of the Office by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) took place in mid-August 2016. The Office was inspected by Barbara Wolf, MD, head of the NAME Inspections and Accreditation Committee from Leesburg, Florida and Ponni Arunkumar, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County, Illinois. As a result of this office inspection, Full Accreditation was maintained. Only one deficiency in a lengthy checklist was noted: Dr. Rohr well exceeded the recommended case load of less than 250/year. It had approached 325/year. This situation was

corrected for FY 2017 by the conversion of the part-time medical examiner position to full-time. The position was filled by Dr. Burton. Each medical examiner is expected to have a case load under the recommended 250/year through FY 2017. In April 2017, April 2018 and April 2019 the Office had Full Accreditation maintained. In April 2019 no deficiencies in medical examiner operations were present. Full Accreditation is again expected to be maintained in April 2020. Recommended physician case load below 250/year continued throughout FY 2019.

Information presented in this annual report has been compiled on the deaths reported to the Collin County Medical Examiner's Office during FY 2019. It is meant to reflect workload and Office activity rather than public health concerns.

The statistics for FY2019 continue to reflect significant differences in how workload is handled compared to FY 2016. Fewer deceased individuals are now brought into our office in favor of record review only to establish cause and manner of death. The decision to bring cases into the office has become more of a negotiation between law enforcement and the family. This modified decision making is based on two issues. First and most importantly, morgue space has become a concern with our ever growing population. This situation was addressed by acquisition with grant funding of a portable morgue kept near the loading dock area. This has increased capacity for body storage. Second, concerns by human resources and administration about overtime and potential additional personnel, has driven the office to perform fewer scene visits and bring in fewer cases. Doing more by record review only is becoming more prevalent across the United States, not just Collin County.

An autopsy assistant was finally hired as a full-time county employee. Employment began August 2019. In the past contract labor was used by Dr. Burton for assistance on nearly every case. Dr. Rohr examined without assistance. The individual holding the position was trained on the job. Both examiners utilize the assistant to the fullest extent possible. This only covers approximately 240 days per year. Another autopsy assistant will be needed for 365 days per year coverage.

The on-line cremation permit and funeral home fee collection for permits was instituted January 2019. This software was developed by the county. It has been a success. Funeral homes adapted this process

immediately, no money passes through the office and permits are issued quicker. To our knowledge another system like this does not exist. Mr. Bilyeu was a driving force making sure its development stayed on track. It was a collaborative effort among several county departments.

A case management system was introduced into the Office on January 1, 2017. Office personnel responded with great acceptance. It has streamlined many office practices and helped everyone with organization of their work; it continues to do such throughout FY 2019. As software usually is, one continues to explore its capabilities. This certainly remains true for the case management system as the Office continues to find new uses for it. Statistics for this report were compiled from the case management system.

To understand just what these charts and graphs represent a glossary is included:

DEATH REPORT: Any reported death.

NO CASE: A reported death in which the attending physician is allowed to sign the death certificate. The death must meet four criteria.

1. Death in the presence of a good witness.
2. There is a physician able and willing to sign the death certificate.
3. Death not under confinement by law enforcement or a mental health institution.
4. Death unrelated to any possible trauma.

CASE: A death not meeting all of the above four criteria and requiring an examination by the medical examiner. The medical examiner always signs the death certificate.

ABSENTIA (IN ABSENTIA): A death not meeting all four of the above criteria but not undergoing an examination by the medical examiner. The medical examiner always signs the death certificate.

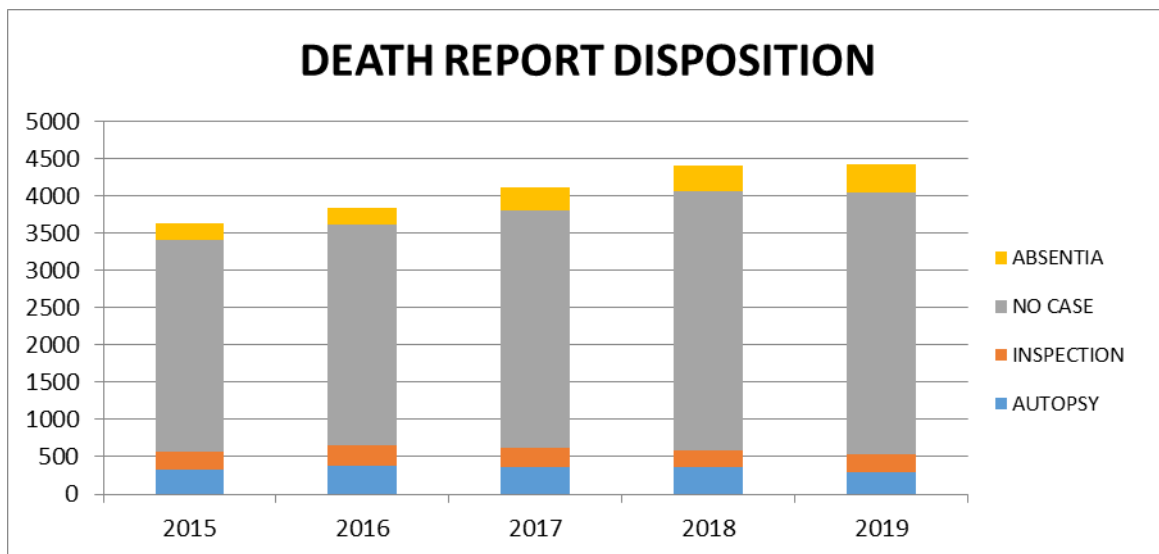
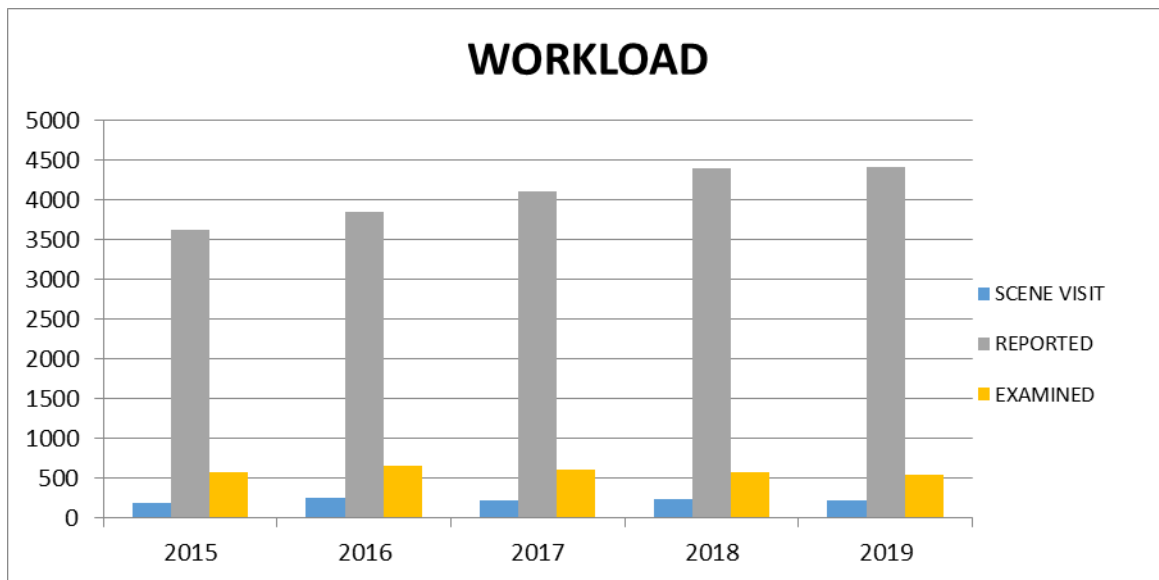
EXAMINED: Another term for case. There are two types of examination by the medical examiner. INSPECTION in which the body is only examined externally. AUTOPSY in which there is an external and internal examination of the body. Body fluids are obtained externally for further testing in either type of examination.

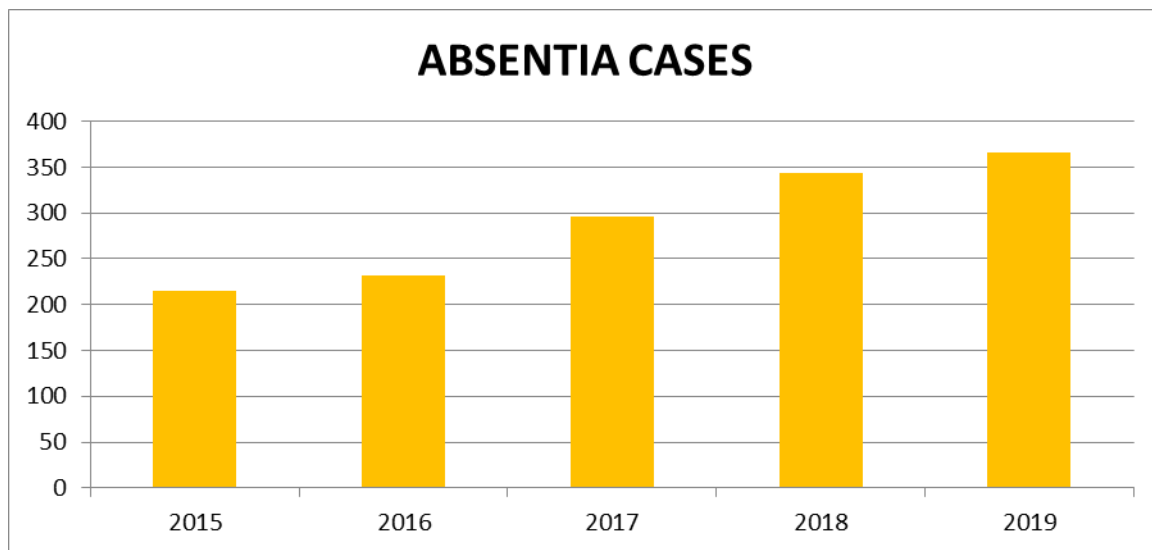
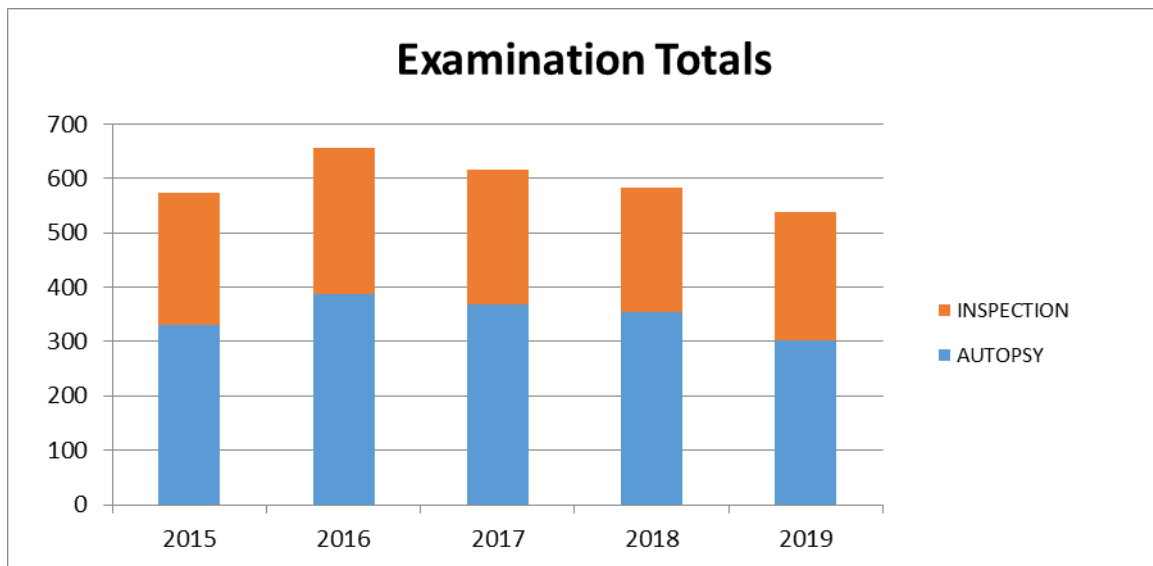
SCENE: The field agent travels to the scene of death to gather further information for the medical examiner and to assist law enforcement with their investigation. A medical examiner attends in select cases.

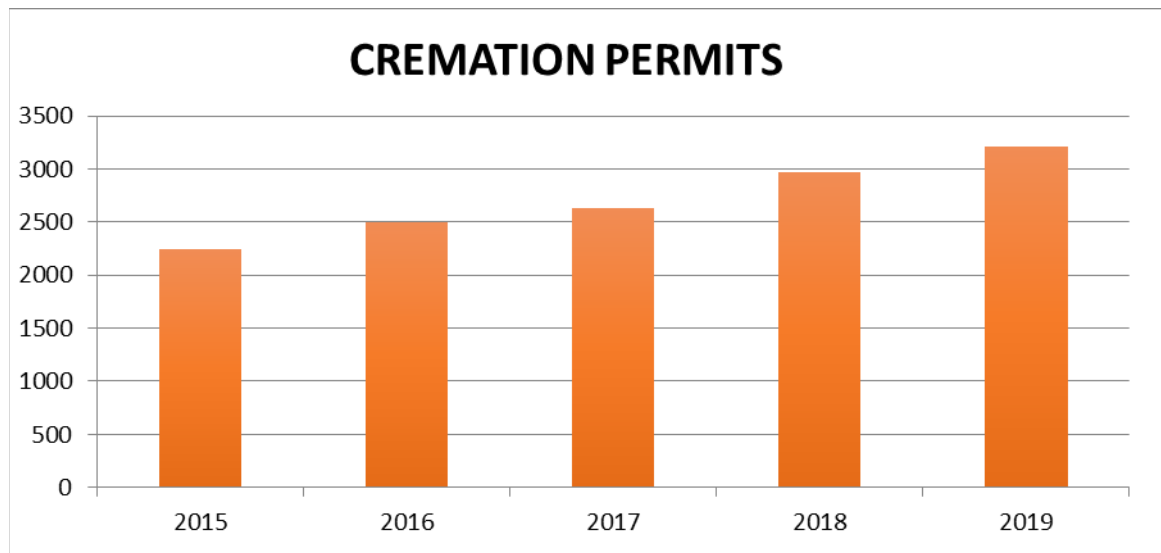
CREMATION PERMIT: A certificate issued by the medical examiner allowing a cremation to go forward. The certificate is required by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Authorization for the cremation always comes from the family. A short informal investigation is always undertaken by the Office before the certificate (permit) is signed. A few requests require a more significant investigation including full autopsy. There is a fee of \$25 charged for every permit issued. For FY 2019 a system was instituted to collect these fees electronically.

MANNER OF DEATH: This is the fashion about which death occurred. The medical examiner is required to make this determination for each death reported to the Office. There are several choices for manner of death. **NATURAL** is a death completely unrelated to trauma. **ACCIDENT** is when a death is in any way related to trauma. **SUICIDE** is a special type of traumatic death in which one dies at their own hand. **HOMICIDE** is a special type of traumatic death in which one dies at the hand of another. **UNDETERMINED** is when the medical examiner lacks sufficient information to make one of the above four determinations.

For the following charts and graphs years are fiscal years, not calendar years.

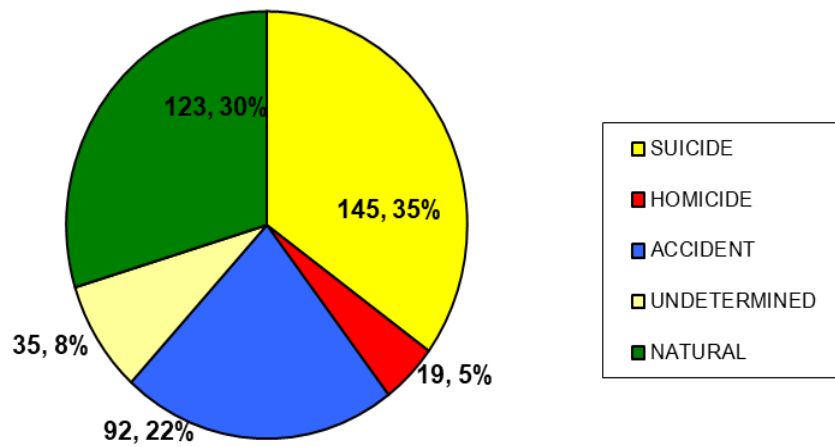






Homicide examinations generally create the most work. Natural deaths generally create the least amount of work. Homicides are almost always autopsied. The manner of death least likely to result in an autopsy is natural.

FY2019 Manner of Death by Examination



Y2015 through FY2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
SUICIDE	97	122	135	119	145
HOMICIDE	14	24	38	25	19
UNDETERMINED	37	36	26	26	35
CREMATIONS	2248	2501	2632	2969	3211
ABSENTIA	215	232	297	344	366
SCENE VISIT	192	248	222	232	220
REPORTED	3618	3848	4110	4402	4420
EXAMINED	574	656	617	582	537
ACCIDENT EXAMINED	154	180	185	177	92
NON-TRAUMA EXAMINED	268	284	219	230	246
AUTOPSY	331	373	369	355	301
INSPECTION	243	270	248	227	236
NO CASE	2841	2960	3196	3477	3517

ADULT FATALITY REVIEW TEAM FOR FY 2019

The Adult Fatality Review Team meets on the last Friday of every month at the Collin County Medical Examiner's Office. The team members are:

Dr. William Rohr – Chief Medical Examiner (Collin County)

Dr. Stephanie Burton - Deputy Medical Examiner (Collin County)

Sue Schultz, LPC, LMFT – Collin County CFRT Coordinator

Sabina Stern – CFRT Member

Jawaid Asghar MBBS, MHA– Epidemiologist - Collin County Healthcare

Representatives from the following organizations also in attendance:

Texas Health Resources of Plano
Plano Police Department
U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency
Collin County Substance Abuse
Allen Fire Department

The purpose of the Collin County Adult Fatality Review Team is to review all deaths of adults in Collin County from a public health perspective and to enhance the skills of those investigating death in Collin County, especially the Medical Examiner, Epidemiology, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health.

The interaction that takes place among these agencies during the Review Team meetings gives insight to everyone involved and helps them to understand why these deaths take place with a focus on prevention.

CHILD FATALITY REVIEW TEAM FOR FY 2019

The Child Fatality Review Team meets the first Friday of every month at the Collin County Medical Examiner's Office. The team members are:

Dr. William Rohr – Chief Medical Examiner (Collin County)

Dr. Stephanie Burton - Deputy Medical Examiner (Collin County)

Sue Schultz, LPC, LMFT – Collin County CFRT Coordinator

Sabina Stern – CFRT Member

Susan Etheridge - CASA of Collin County

Jawaid Asghar MBBS, MHA– Epidemiologist - Collin County Healthcare

Dr. Brad Tate - Pediatric Hospital

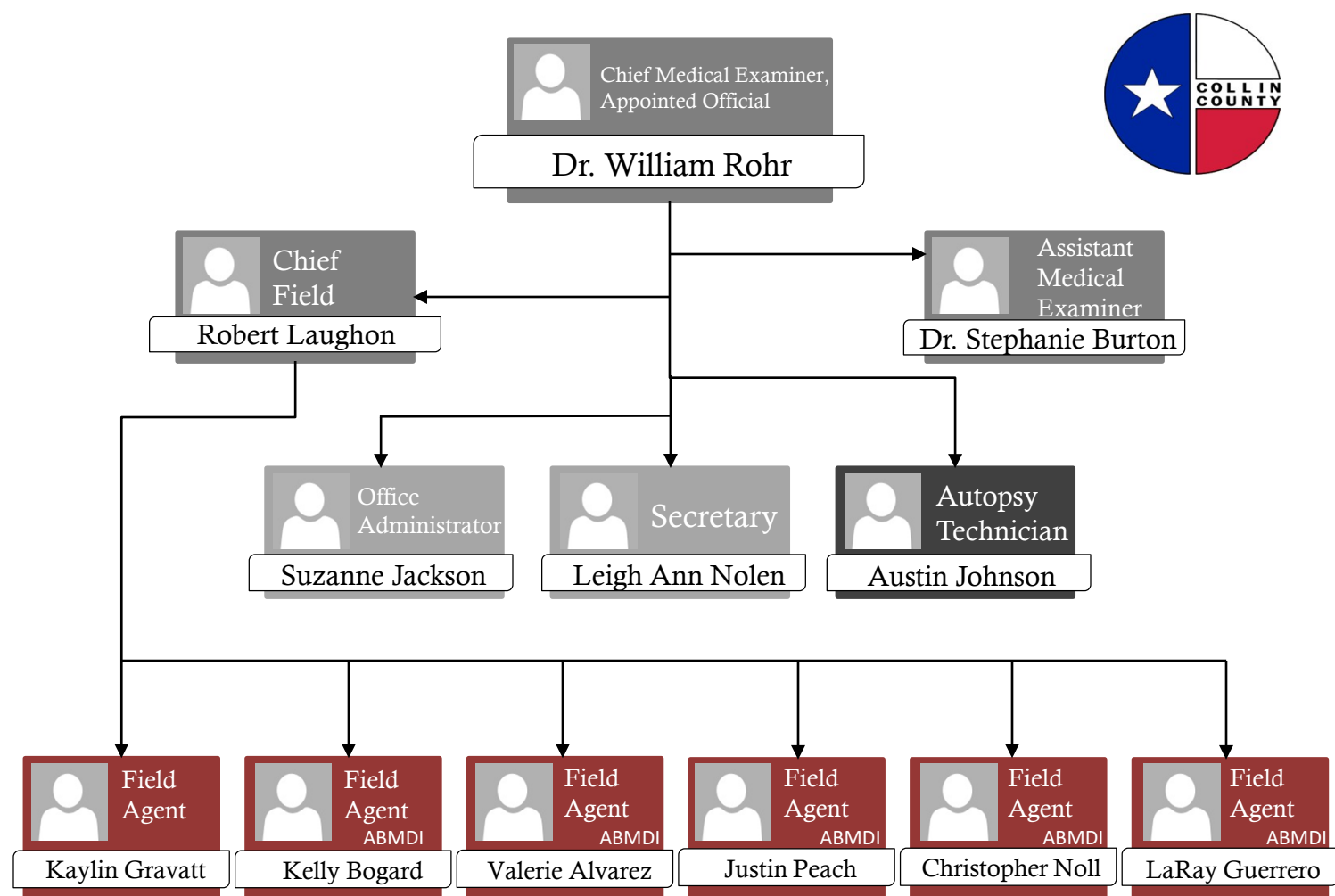
Dr. Jessica Williams - ED Physician

Dr. Kristen N. Reeder, Reach Program

Representatives from the following organizations also in attendance:

Collin County District Attorney's Office
Collin County Child Protective Services
Collin County Advocacy Center
Plano Fire Department
Plano Police Department
Allen Police Department
Allen Fire Department
McKinney Police Department
McKinney Fire Department
Frisco Police Department
Medical Center of Plano
Presbyterian Health Hospital of Plano
Texas Health Resources of Plano

The purpose of the Collin County Child Fatality Review Team is to review all deaths of children in Collin County from a public health perspective and to enhance the skills of those investigating death in Collin County, especially the Medical Examiner, law enforcement and Child Protective Services. The interaction that takes place among these agencies during the Review Team meetings gives insight to everyone involved and helps them to understand why these deaths take place with a focus on prevention.



Collin County Medical Examiner's Office