

AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATORS, INC.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL



**American Board
of Medicolegal
Death Investigators, Inc.SM**

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1402 S. Grand Blvd.; R512
St. Louis, MO 63104-1028
(314)-977-5970 Fax: (314)-977-5695
<http://www.slu.edu/organizations/abmdi>

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, Inc., was incorporated in 1998 as a national, not-for-profit, independent professional certification board to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators. The organization's headquarters is located in St. Louis, MO.
- 1.2. Medicolegal Death Investigator is defined as a professional having the legal authority to investigate deaths for a medicolegal (medical examiner/coroner) jurisdiction, who performs scene investigations, collects evidence and develops decedents' medical and social histories to assist the medical examiner/coroner in determining the cause and manner of death.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

- 2.1. To set forth the policies and procedures by which the officers and staff of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (hereinafter referred to as "ABMDI") conduct business and discharge their responsibilities, as set forth in the ABMDI Bylaws. These policies and procedures have evolved since the inception of the organization in 1998 and through the Board's decisions and interpretations of the Bylaws. It shall be subject to constant revision. Suggested changes to the manual should be forwarded to the Executive Director to disseminate to Board members for discussion and approval.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ABMDI

- 3.1. To enhance and maintain professional standards by evaluating knowledge, competency, and skills of medicolegal death investigators based on examination.
- 3.2. Administer objective and reliable examinations (basic and advanced) in the field of medicolegal death investigation.
- 3.3. Recognize qualified individuals who demonstrate mastery of basic and advanced skills and knowledge of medicolegal death investigation by granting certificates to those individuals who have met all application requirements and successfully completed rigorous examination.
 - 3.3.1 Certification renewal occurs every five years to insure the certificant is current in the field of medicolegal death investigation, maintains continuing education requirements and restates a commitment to abide by the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards.
 - 3.3.2 Disclaimer: Certification attests to the fact that the certificant has knowledge required to pass the ABMDI examination. The ABMDI makes no representation as to the certificant's work product or his/her skills on the job.

- 3.4. Encourage medicolegal death investigators to adhere to high standards of professional practice and ethical conduct when performing medicolegal death investigations.
- 3.5. Raise the level of professional competency in medicolegal death investigation by identifying appropriate training courses for professional development..
- 3.6. Maintain a publicly accessible listing of individuals granted ABMDI certification.

4. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 4.1. Prerequisites are published in the ABMDI brochure and on the ABMDI web site. Informational letters are mailed when requested by interested parties.
- 4.2. An application process is used to determine an applicant's eligibility. Only those individuals qualified should apply for ABMDI certification.
- 4.3. Participation in the certification program is voluntary.
- 4.4. Certificates shall be awarded only to applicants who meet or exceed the criteria as described for Registry or Board Certification. Grandfathering into the ABMDI is not permitted for any reason
- 4.5. Ownership of the certificate remains with the ABMDI.
- 4.6. The ABMDI does not discriminate based on race, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.
- 4.7. The ABMDI does not discriminate based on the applicant's membership with any professional association, nor require the applicant hold membership in any specific organization.
- 4.8. The certification program may be amended periodically in order to maintain or update criteria and procedures. The changes will be posted on the web site and updated in the brochure.
- 4.9. Fees and other costs associated with the certification are established by the Board and are subject to change. See appendix A.

5. GOVERNING BODY

- 5.1. A Board consisting of a minimum of seven (7) members governs the ABMDI. There shall be representation from both levels of certification (Registry and Board Certification) as well as one public member, as full voting members. The Board shall consist of the following:
 - 5.1.1. President
 - 5.1.2. Vice President
 - 5.1.3. Secretary
 - 5.1.4. Treasurer

- 5.1.5. Member
- 5.1.6. Member
- 5.1.7. Public Member

5.2. Board members shall be elected, as defined in the Bylaws, Article VII, 2.

5.3. The Board has complete authority to make all decisions relating to the management and operation of the Board as well as awarding certification. These decisions include, but are not limited to: approving applications for examination, verifying application information, administering the testing program, granting certification, renewing certification and investigating grievances.

5.4. A Board member has the duty to recuse himself or herself from participation in any event when there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

5.5. The Board has the authority to pay legal obligations incurred by the organization, collect fees for services and to invest assets wisely.

5.6. No Board member shall receive financial compensation for duties performed on behalf of the ABMDI.

5.7. Board members may make statements as representatives of the ABMDI. Any unethical, unprofessional or otherwise inappropriate statements may be subject to disciplinary action. Reference the Code of Ethics, Section 5.

5.8. Duties of the Board

5.8.1. The Board shall exercise its legal and bylaws authority and responsibility in the direction and conduct of the affairs of the ABMDI in order to promote and attain the objectives of the organization.

5.8.2. The Board shall supervise staff to ensure efficiency and quality of work.

5.8.3. The Board shall establish fees/dues and assure appropriate procedures for payment of same.

5.8.4. The Board shall determine the date and place of the annual meeting.

5.8.5. Actions of the Board shall be adopted by a majority vote of the Board.

5.9. Officer Qualifications

5.9.1. Any Diplomate or Fellow in good standing shall be eligible to hold office after at least one year's duration.

5.9.2. Functional duties of the officers are described in the Bylaws – Articles VIII – XIII.

5.9.3. Any officer may be removed during his/her term by a vote of the majority of the existing officers.

5.10. Staff

5.10.1. An Executive Director and Administrative Secretary will manage the daily affairs of the ABMDI at its headquarters in St. Louis, MO.

5.10.2. The Executive Director will be considered 50% FTE and the Administrative Secretary will be considered 20% FTE.

5.10.3. The Board shall determine the salary compensation and any salary increases for staff positions. A quarterly reimbursement will be submitted to Saint Louis University for this expense to cover salary and fringe benefits.

5.10.4. Staff will receive fringe benefits based on the Saint Louis University employee benefits policy.

5.11. Use of ABMDI Letterhead and Logo

5.11.1. These shall be used for conducting official ABMDI business and will not be used for any other purposes. Members of the ABMDI cannot use the logo for self-publication purposes.

6. INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS

6.1. The ABMDI shall obtain liability insurance indemnifying Board members and staff. Aggregate coverage will be for \$1 million annually.

6.2. Each present and future elective officer, whether or not then in office, shall be indemnified by the ABMDI against expenses actually and necessarily incurred by or imposed upon him/her (including but not without being limited to, judgments, costs, and counsel fees) in connection with defense of the action, suit or proceeding in which s/he is made a party by reason of being or having been an elective officer except in relation to matters as to which s/he shall be adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his/her duties for the ABMDI. Such indemnification shall not be deemed exclusive of other rights to which such officer may be entitled, under any bylaws, agreements or as a matter of law, or otherwise.

7. COMMITTEES

7.1. The President appoints committee members and committee chairs annually for permanent and ad hoc committees.

7.2. Committee members must be Diplomates or Fellows in good standing, or individuals with the necessary qualifications to fulfill specific committee requirements as deemed by the President.

7.3. The committee chair arranges and presides over all committee activities to include correspondence, conference calls, email communications and meetings.

7.3.1. Committee members act under the direction of the chair.

7.4. The following are considered permanent committees:

7.4.1. Advisory Council

- 7.4.1.1. Duties are described in the Bylaws – Article V-4.
- 7.4.1.2. The President appoints council members annually for a one-year term. Members may be reappointed to serve successive terms.
- 7.4.1.3. Members of the Advisory Council must have significant field investigation experience and represent the overall demographics of the application population served.

7.4.2. Ethics Committee

- 7.4.2.1. There shall be a standing Ethics Committee, whose primary function will be:
 - 7.4.2.2. To order or conduct investigations and, as necessary, to serve as a hearing body concerning conduct of individual members which may constitute a violation.
 - 7.4.2.3. To act as an advisory body, rendering opinions on the ramifications of contemplated actions by individual members.
 - 7.4.2.4. *Investigations*
 - 7.4.2.4.1. The following rules and procedures shall apply to any written complaint(s) or allegation(s) of unethical or wrongful conduct against a member of the ABMDI whether initiated by a member or resulting from an inquiry originated by the Ethics Committee.
 - 7.4.2.4.2. Written complaints or allegations against a member if delivered to the ABMDI office shall promptly be transmitted to the Chair of the Ethics Committee.
 - 7.4.2.4.3. The Ethics Committee shall determine whether the complaint(s) or allegation(s) fall(s) within its jurisdiction and whether there is a probable cause to believe that the complaint(s) or allegation(s) may be well founded.
 - 7.4.2.4.4. If the Ethics Committee, in its preliminary determination, finds that it does not have jurisdiction or that there is a lack of probable cause to believe that the complaint(s) or allegation(s) may be well founded, it shall dismiss the complaint(s) or allegations(s). It shall issue a report to the Board of such determination setting forth the basic facts but omitting the names of the parties, and stating the reasons for its decision to dismiss. Notice of the filing of the complaint or allegation shall also be given to the accused.

7.4.2.4.5. If the Ethics Committee finds that it has jurisdiction and that there is probable cause to believe that the complaint(s) or allegations(s) may be well founded, it shall give notice of the filing of a complaint(s) or allegations(s) to the accused. The respondent shall be required to respond within 30 days of mailing the notice by registered mail to the address on record. Failure to respond will be taken as acknowledgement of the facts as stated in the complaint.

7.4.2.4.6. If the Ethics Committee decides to formally hear the charge(s), it shall give both the accused and the accuser(s) a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to confront each other. It shall then make a decision and notify both parties of its decision. The Ethics Committee shall then make a report on its decision including reasons and any recommendations for further action.

7.4.2.4.7. Following the report and upon a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the members of the Ethics Committee, the party accused of unethical or wrongful conduct may be censured or expelled. No member of the Ethics Committee who is the subject of a pending accusation under the provisions of the Section shall sit in deliberation on any matter concerning ethics.

7.4.2.4.8. The accused has the right to appeal from the action of the Ethics Committee. In effecting an appeal, the appellant must file a brief written notice of the appeal, together with any written statement s/he may wish to submit on his/her behalf with the Executive Director within ninety (90) days. The Executive Director shall immediately advise all members of the Ethics Committee of the appeal and shall forward to each a copy of the supporting papers submitted by the appellant.

7.4.2.4.9. The Ethics Committee shall then prepare a written statement of the reasons for its actions and file the same with the Executive Director within forty-five (45) days.

7.4.2.4.10. The Ethics Committee shall formulate internal Rules and Procedures, designed to facilitate the expeditious, fair, discreet, and impartial handling of all complaints or matters brought before it. The Rules and Procedures, and any subsequent deletions, additions or amendments thereto, shall be subject to the approval of the Board.

7.4.2.5. *Confidentiality*

7.4.2.5.1. When a complaint is made, the matter shall be treated as confidential and all correspondence between members of the committee and the parties shall refer to the case by file number only

7.4.2.6. *Jurisdiction*

7.4.2.6.1. Should a member against whom an allegation has been made cease to be a member for any reason after a file is opened and before it is closed, the committee ceases to have jurisdiction.

7.4.2.7. Disclosure of Investigation

7.4.2.7.1. Other than the reports to the Board, the members of the Ethics Committee, the Executive Director and Administrative Secretary or any appointed investigator(s) shall scrupulously avoid any disclosure of the investigation and accord the respondent the fullest opportunity for access to information, opportunity to respond to the charges, to present evidence, and to be represented by counsel.

7.4.2.8. Ethics Committee Communications

7.4.2.8.1. The Ethics Committee has the authority to communicate by written correspondence, telephone, fax and e-mail, providing that communications are confidential.

7.4.2.9. Decisions

7.4.2.9.1. Decisions of the committee shall be based on a preponderance of evidence.

7.4.2.10. Case Files

7.4.2.10.1. Files of the Ethics Committee on open cases shall be securely maintained by the chair who shall transfer them to the new chair upon leaving office. Case files on closed cases shall be sealed by the chair and transferred to the ABMDI office where they shall be stored in a secure space designated for this purpose. Access to these files shall be available only to the Executive Director or chair of the committee. Other members of the committee shall destroy their files when a case is completed.

7.4.3. Council for Continuing Education

7.4.3.1. The Council for Continuing Education will consist of at least the chairperson. The President can appoint additional members as needed.

7.4.3.2. The Council for Continuing Education will review all requests for course accreditation and approve or deny accreditation in accordance with stated policy.

7.4.3.3. The Council for Continuing Education will review all Diplomate and Fellow recertification requests and approve or deny in accordance with stated policy.

7.4.4. Newsletter Committee

7.4.4.1. The ABMDI News is the official newsletter of the ABMDI. It is published quarterly to Diplomates and Fellows considered to be in good standing.

7.4.4.2. The President will appoint an Editor. Additional committee members may be appointed as necessary to insure a quality, timely publication.

7.4.4.3. The deadline for article submissions is one month prior to the publication date:

January 1	deadline December 1
April 1	deadline March 1
July 1	deadline June 1
October 1	deadline September 1

7.4.5. Nominating Committee

7.4.5.1. The Nominating Committee will consist of the chairperson and at least two additional members. The President appoints the Chair. Other committee members may be chosen from the Advisory Council or Fellows/Diplomates.

7.4.5.2. In order to comply with the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Boards ruling that the current Board cannot elect a majority of its successors, rotating Board terms are in existence. Not more than three Board members (minority) can be reelected in any given year.

7.4.5.3. The committee shall identify potential candidates and review their qualifications after securing their willingness to serve.

7.4.5.4. The committee shall then make written recommendations for Board and officer positions.

7.4.5.5. The committee report shall be forwarded to the Executive Director by the chair, who will forward it to the Board.

7.4.5.6. Nominations from the floor may be made during the annual meeting, at which time elections are held.

7.4.5.7. Board members shall have an equal vote.

7.4.5.8. The Executive Director shall tally ballots and officially announce elected positions during the annual meeting. Those elected shall be determined by a majority of the vote.

7.4.5.9. Officers and Board members shall take office immediately following the close of the meeting at which they are elected and shall

hold office for term of one year, or for such term not to exceed three years as described by the Bylaws, Article VII, 2. Individuals may be reelected to successive terms.

7.4.6. Education Committee

7.4.6.1. The purpose of the committee is to promulgate educational activities for medicolegal death investigators and others who would benefit.

7.4.7. Policies and Procedures Committee

7.4.7.1. At least two members of the Board or Advisory Council shall be appointed to the committee, with appointment lengths staggered to provide continuity.

7.4.7.2. The purpose of the committee is to update the manual following the annual ABMDI Board meeting. Revisions to the manual can be made as needed to maintain a quality program.

7.4.7.3. Each Board member will be provided a current version of the Policy and Procedure Manual within 45 days after the conclusion of the meeting at which they were elected.

7.4.7.4. Revisions to the Manual will be provided to Board members within 60 days after the conclusion of the meeting at which the revisions were approved.

7.4.7.5. An electronic Manual is available to certificants free of charge. If a hard copy is requested by a certificant or non-member, there will be a nominal fee to cover the cost of printing and mailing (see Appendix A)

7.4.7.6. The Executive Director is appointed as a standing member of the committee.

7.5. The following are considered ad-hoc committees:

7.5.1. Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB) Committee

7.5.1.1. A Board member is assigned to represent the ABMDI to FSAB and report updates back to the Board.

8. SUBCONTRACTING

8.1. The Board may subcontract with individuals or companies to assist in the operations of the organization when deemed necessary.

8.2. Any agency or individual must be reputable in the field of medicolegal death investigation and have no vested interest concerning the assignment.

8.3. Fees paid for service must be appropriate for the service(s) rendered.

9. EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

- 9.1. An independent, professional Educational Consultant who specializes in professional testing will be subcontracted by the ABMDI to provide testing expertise, develop cut scores, maintain the database of test questions and statistics, maintain records necessary for validation and reliability, conduct test revision and cut score workshops, grade examinations and report the results to the ABMDI office.
- 9.2. The Educational Consultant shall record all information required to maintain statistical data necessary to support the reliability and validity of examinations.
- 9.3. The Educational Consultant shall report to the Board as requested by the officers.
- 9.4. The Educational Consultant has no vested interest in the operation of the Board and does not have voting rights.
- 9.5. The Educational Consultant guides the Advisory Council in developing examinations by:
 - 9.5.1. Occupational Analysis (defining the scope of assessment)
 - 9.5.2. Task Analysis
 - 9.5.3. Curriculum validation
 - 9.5.4. Test item writing and assignment to content areas
 - 9.5.5. Item validation (rating)
 - 9.5.6. Pilot testing to medicolegal death investigators and non-investigators
 - 9.5.7. Cut score setting
- 9.6. The Educational Consultant is responsible for upgrading the test bank as required by the standards of the testing industry.
- 9.7. The Educational Consultant is responsible for maintaining statistics on measures of validity and estimates of test reliability.

10. MEETINGS

- 10.1. Roberts Rules of Order serve as the basis upon which the meetings are conducted and do ultimately govern the procedures of all Board meetings.
- 10.2. The annual meeting of the Board shall be held at such time and place as determined by the President.
- 10.3. Additional meetings of the Board may be held without notice at such time and place to be determined by the President. Notice of such meetings shall be mailed in any form and by whatever means by the Executive Director at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. Other meetings may be called at the discretion of the President.

10.4. Conference calls may be used in place of face-to-face meetings in order to facilitate business in a timely manner.

10.5. When mail ballots are necessitated by urgent business needs, the receipt of mailed votes by 100 percent of the total number of Board members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business by mail.

10.6. All meetings of the Board shall be fully recorded.

10.7. *Quorum and Voting*

10.7.1. Officer elections will be held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

10.7.2. A quorum shall consist of half plus one (1) of the total Board. Each officer shall be entitled to one (1) vote.

10.7.3. To approve amendments to the Bylaws, a three-fourths (3/4) vote must be obtained.

10.7.4. For other motions at the Board meetings, a majority in favor of the motion must be obtained.

10.7.5. Proxy voting is not permitted.

10.8. *Open Meetings*

10.8.1. A portion of the annual meeting will be open to membership except on those matters ruled "in executive session" by the President.

10.8.1.1. All matters discussed in executive session should remain confidential and may only be discussed outside of the executive session with legal counsel, persons present during the executive session, or with absent board members, unless otherwise determined by the President.

10.8.1.2. Matters of a sensitive nature, i.e. personnel issues, pending or threatened litigation, etc. should be considered confidential and discussed only with legal counsel and other staff whose need for information is required to further the best interests of the ABMDI.

10.9. *Minutes*

10.9.1. The Executive Director is responsible for the preparation and distribution of Board Minutes with the approval of the Secretary.

10.9.2. The meeting minutes will be distributed to the Board within thirty (30) days after the meeting. Notes from teleconference calls shall be distributed as soon as possible to the Board.

10.9.3. Non-substantive editorial changes, i.e. grammar, spelling, typographical errors, punctuation, etc., in the minutes can be performed by the Executive Director without approval from the Board.

10.10. Meeting Expenses

10.10.1. Board members are responsible for funding their own travel and meeting expenses.

11. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

11.1. Budget Preparation

11.1.1. The fiscal year will be recognized from July 1 – June 30. The annual budget shall be calculated on the basis of the fiscal year. The Executive Director and the Treasurer will prepare the budget.

11.1.2. The proposed budget will be distributed for review and comment to the Board at the annual meeting.

11.1.3. The Board will approve the budget at its annual meeting.

11.2. Internal Audit Controls

11.2.1. The Executive Director will balance the finances monthly and forward a report to the Treasurer and President, who will continuously evaluate the financial health of the organization.

11.3. Bank Accounts

11.3.1. The Executive Director and a designated officer assigned by the Board are authorized to sign checks on behalf of the ABMDI.

11.4. External Audits

11.4.1. The Board will require a certified audit by a licensed public accountant when deemed necessary. A compilation may suffice. Federal law does not require an annual audit for non-profit organizations.

11.4.2. A professional accounting firm will file the ABMDI's annual federal taxes.

12. REGISTRY CERTIFICATION

12.1. The Registry certification is the initial certification that provides official recognition that an individual has acquired specialized knowledge and demonstrated proficiency in the standards of practice necessary to properly conduct a competent, thorough Medicolegal death investigation.

12.2. *Application Criteria:*

12.2.1. Individuals can apply who have become knowledgeable of *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator*, Medicolegal death investigation practice standards and techniques and the ABMDI code of ethics and professional standards. Only qualified persons should apply for certification.

12.3. *Application Requirements*

12.3.1. Applications are available from the ABMDI Office upon receipt of an application request form, which is available in the brochure, online or at organization headquarters.

12.3.2. The application fee must accompany the request form.

12.3.3. Application materials must be completed in their entirety and returned to the ABMDI Office at least 30 days prior to an examination date.

12.3.4. Applicants are provided a Suggested Reading List in their application packet as a study guide.

12.3.5. The Executive Director or Administrative Secretary will process the following items for accuracy and completion:

12.3.5.1. Application Form

12.3.5.2. Work Verification Form

12.3.5.3. Copy of certificate from 30-hour medicolegal death investigator training course

12.3.5.4. Personal Reference Form or letter of personal reference

12.3.5.5. Notarized official Performance Training Checklist

12.3.5.5.1. Each task must be correctly performed in the presence of the trainer/skilled practitioner.

12.3.5.5.2. Each of the 52 tasks on the Verification Sign-off Sheet contains initials from the competent practitioner indicating the applicant can perform the task properly and independently.

12.3.5.5.3. The Executive Director or Administrative Secretary will call the competent practitioner and verbally verify that they have signed the Checklist.

12.3.5.5.4. A signed statement agreeing to abide by the ABMDI Code of Ethics and Conduct and Professional Standards.

12.4. *Scope of Knowledge*

12.4.1. The Scope of knowledge for the Registry exam is defined in the National Institutes of Justice publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* and further defined in the Performance Training Checklist.

12.4.1.1. The Board acknowledges that applicants may not be required to perform certain tasks in their daily operations but that the exam is national in scope; therefore, all applicants must possess the defined scope of knowledge in order to pass the exam.

12.4.2. Applicants can view example questions on the Educational Consultant's web site once they have met all pre-examination requirements.

12.4.2.1. The Educational Consultant will provide a pass code directly to the applicant for web access.

13. BOARD CERTIFICATION

13.1. The advanced Board Certification exam is available to experienced Registered medicolegal death investigators who prove their mastery of all aspects of medicolegal death investigation.

13.2. Application Criteria

13.2.1. Documentation of an Associate Degree in a related professional field from an accredited post-secondary institution.

13.2.2. The applicant must be a Registered Medicolegal Death Investigator for at least six months in good standing.

13.2.3. The applicant must have 4,000 hours of death investigation experience during the past six years.

13.2.4. The applicant must currently be employed in a medical examiner/coroner jurisdiction.

13.3. Application Requirements

13.3.1. Applications are available upon written request at the ABMDI headquarters and on the ABMDI web site.

13.3.2. An application fee must accompany the request.

13.3.3. Application materials must be completed in their entirety and returned to the ABMDI office at least 30 days prior to an examination date.

13.3.4. Applicants are provided a Suggested Reading List and Advanced Skills Task list in their application packet as study references.

13.3.5. The Executive Director or Administrative Secretary will process the following items for accuracy and completion:

13.3.5.1. Application Form

13.3.5.2. Documentation of associate degree

13.3.5.3. Notarized Work Verification Form

13.3.5.4. Forensic Science Specialist Reference Form

- 13.3.5.5. Administrator/Supervisor Reference Form
- 13.3.5.6. Law Enforcement Reference Form

13.3.6. The Executive Director or Administrative Secretary will call the person signing the Notarized Work Verification Form to verify the 4,000 hours of employment.

13.4. *Scope of Knowledge*

13.4.1. The scope of knowledge for the Board Certified exam is defined minimally in the National Institutes of Justice 1999 publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* and will rely heavily on the applicant's cumulative experience and further training in medicolegal death investigation. This might include independent study and attendance at workshops, seminars, and other training venues. As a minimum, and given that the examination is broad based and encompasses the Forensic Sciences, generally, the applicant is required to have an Associate Degree in a related field.

13.4.1.1. The Board acknowledges that applicants may not be required to perform certain tasks in their daily operations but that the exam is national in scope; therefore, all applicants must possess the defined scope of knowledge, time in service, degree in related field, and specific forensic references in order to pass the exam.

14. EXAMINATIONS

- 14.1. An ABMDI approved proctor must administer the examination.
- 14.2. Written portions of the examination are composed of validated multiple-choice questions within specific discipline areas. There are a specific number of questions per curriculum area.
- 14.3. ABMDI examinations are constructed to parallel field-based national standards. The Registry and Board Certification exams are crafted and kept up-to-date by an Advisory Council made up of a panel of experts from both public and private sector agencies (coroner and medical examiner). Advisory Council members are selected based on their expertise and experience in the occupational field and knowledge of national standards.
- 14.4. The test development process used is a modified version of the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) process, which defines the critical core competencies necessary to achieve professional competency. Each examination question is carefully constructed to assess these critical core competencies. Reference Appendix E.
- 14.5. Applicants are allowed four hours to complete the multiple-choice section, based on standard testing calculations.
- 14.6. Performance questions are presented at the Board Certification level, which apply experience to cases handled by medicolegal death investigators.

- 14.7. Applicants will be asked to provide information regarding identification and collection of evidence, interviewing techniques and written skills using medicolegal language.
- 14.8. Test questions are drawn from a databank of validated questions and rotated to insure test integrity.
- 14.9. Grading of exams is performed by a testing agency retained by the Board.
 - 14.9.1. A passing score for each area is predetermined using standard cutting score methods. The applicant must successfully pass each area of the exam.
 - 14.9.2. The testing agency will provide pass/fail scores to the applicant directly as well as to the ABMDI Office.
 - 14.9.3. A certificate, wallet card and continuing education folder will be mailed to the Diplomate or Fellow.
 - 14.9.4. A pass/fail score will be released and recorded by the ABMDI. The testing agency does not report numerical scores.
 - 14.9.5. The ABMDI will then notify the applicant on official letterhead of exam results.
- 14.10. Failing the Exam
 - 14.10.1. The applicant must contact the ABMDI headquarters in order to set up a retest.
 - 14.10.2. At least twenty-one (21) days must exist between testing dates.

15. CODE OF ETHICS

- 15.1 As a means to promote the highest quality of professional and personal conduct of its members, the following constitutes the Code of Ethics and Conduct, which is endorsed and adhered to by all members of the ABMDI.
- 15.2 Every member of the ABMDI shall refrain from exercising professional or personal conduct adverse to the best interests and purposes of the ABMDI.
- 15.3 Every member of the ABMDI shall refrain from providing any material misrepresentation of education, training, experience or fact. Misrepresentation of one or more criteria shall constitute a violation of this section of the code.
- 15.4 Every member of the ABMDI shall refrain from making statements that appear to represent the position of the ABMDI without specific authority first obtained in writing from the Board.

15.5 Any member of the ABMDI who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct may be liable to censure or expulsion by action of the Board.

16. CERTIFICATION

- 16.1. The ABMDI shall have the authority to issue certificates to persons who have complied with all application requirements and passed the certification exams.
- 16.2. Certificates shall be valid for a period of five years from the date the exam was passed.
- 16.3. Certificates will be numbered, bear the certificants name and status of certification, bear the date of issue and the expiration date.
- 16.4. Certificates remain the property of the ABMDI, but persons to whom a certificate is issued shall be entitled to its continued possession unless and until such certificate is revoked.
- 16.5. Certificates may be denied or revoked for the following reasons:
 - 16.5.1. Violation of the ABMDI Code of Ethics.
 - 16.5.2. Conviction of a certificant in a court of a felony or violation of any ethical standard as set forth in the ABMDI Code of Ethics.
 - 16.5.3. Determination that the certificant was not in fact eligible to receive such certificate at the time of its issuance.
 - 16.5.4. Written action of thirty (30) days notice of the nature of the charges or reasons for revocation will be provided to the certificant. The Board will then allow the certificant an opportunity for the certificant to be heard.

17. DUES

- 17.1. The Board shall determine the annual maintenance fee.
- 17.2. Notice to Diplomates and Fellows will be mailed by November 1 of the calendar year. The annual maintenance fee is due by December 31 of each calendar year
- 17.3. If payment is not received by July 1 of the following calendar year, the certificant will no longer be considered in good standing and their name will be removed from the Website
- 17.4. If payment has not been received by December 31 of the calendar year, their file becomes inactive and the certificant loses certification benefits to include: email listserv access, published name in the directory, receipt of newsletter.

- 17.5. Should the certificant choose to reactivate his/her file before certification expires, they will be charged an activation fee. See Appendix A. This fee and all monies in arrears must be paid in full at that time.

18. PROVISIONS FOR EXAMINATION

- 18.1. Annual ABMDI pre-approved examination dates and locations will be posted on the ABMDI website.
- 18.2. The Registry and Board Certified exams are offered at least three times a year in conjunction with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Annual Meeting, the National Association of Medical Examiners Annual Meeting, and a Saint Louis University Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course.
- 18.3. Examinations may be offered at other times and locations as determined by the Board.
- 18.4. Expenses associated with proctoring of tests/retests are the responsibility of the applicant and must be paid in full prior to taking the exam/retest.
- 18.5. Testing and retesting of specific section(s) may be proctored at a local college or university as verified by the Executive Director.
- 18.5.1 Proctors may be Board or Advisory Council members who have been trained by the professional testing agency and received a Test Administrator Guide.
- 18.5.2 Proctors at colleges or universities must complete a Proctor Verification Form, Test Security Agreement and Test Security Affidavit sent by the professional testing agency before the examination can be mailed via Federal Express. Appendix C
- 18.5.3 The testing room should be closed off from all other activity. It should be quiet and devoid of distracting movement. The room should have ample lighting, comfortable seating, and adequate workspace for each participant.
- 18.5.4 If more than one applicant is testing at the same time, participants should be seated with at least one empty chair between them.
- 18.5.5 The proctor will collect the test and all materials associated with it before the test taker leaves the room. The materials will be returned via Federal Express to the professional testing agency.
- 18.6. Upon completion of the application packet, a written notification will be mailed to the applicant informing them that they are eligible to sit for the Registry exam
- 18.7. The applicant must return the Exam Request Form to the organization headquarters at least 21 days prior to the exam date indicating the location and date they would like to sit for the exam.

- 18.8. If the Exam Request Form is postmarked after the 21-day deadline, an additional fee will be assessed.
- 18.9. Payment for exam and late fees must be paid in full before sitting for the exam along with any other outstanding fees. Applicants will not be allowed to test until these fees are received.
- 18.10. An applicant who is scheduled to test, but is prevented by circumstances from doing so, must notify the ABMDI Office of such cancellation immediately.
- 18.11. The testing fee may be applied to a future test date. The candidate is responsible for fees established at the time of application.
- 18.12. If the applicant fails to notify the ABMDI office of cancellation, a 20% fee will be assessed to cover the cost of mailing the exam. If there are no extenuating circumstances, a 100% fee may be charged.

19. EXAMINATION GRADING

- 19.1. A professional testing agency (educational consultant) retained by the Board performs grading of exams.
- 19.2. A passing score for each area is predetermined using standard cutting score methods. The applicant must successfully pass each curriculum area of the exam.
- 19.3. The professional testing agency (educational consultant) will provide pass/fail scores to the applicant directly as well as to the ABMDI headquarters via US Postal mail.
- 19.4. A pass/fail score will be released. Numerical scores are not recorded in the applicant's file or ABMDI Office.
- 19.5. The ABMDI will then notify the applicant on official letterhead of exam results.
- 19.6. A certificate, wallet card and continuing education folder will be mailed to the certificant along with instructions for acquiring 45-hours of continuing education within the next five-year period.

20. PROVISIONS FOR RE-EXAMINATION

- 20.1. The applicant is required to retest the section(s) failed on the original examination. Application shall be made to the Executive Director.
- 20.2. At least twenty-one (21) days must exist between testing and retesting.
- 20.3. Retesting is accomplished by offering equivalent forms of the examination questions that measure the same knowledge and skill area and are weighted the same difficulty rating.

- 20.4. Retests can be proctored at an ABMDI pre-approved local community college or university. Refer to 18.5.
- 20.5. Written retests can be administered via paper/pencil or via Internet Explorer. Performance retests must be administered via paper/pencil.
- 20.6. The Executive Director will contact the college/university to speak with the proctor to confirm date/time, availability and to explain ABMDI testing rules.
- 20.7. The Executive Director will email or fax the Educational Consultant the retest request, to include applicant name, date, time, type and number of retest and proctor information (name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and email address).
- 20.8. Written confirmation of the retest will be emailed to the applicant, unless the applicant specifies regular mail.
- 20.9. The proctor will collect the test and all materials associated with it before the test taker leaves the room. The materials will be returned via Federal Express to the professional testing agency.
- 20.10. The Educational Consultant will mail results directly to the applicant and ABMDI headquarters.
- 20.11. If the applicant fails the retest, a second retest can be administered twenty-one days after the original retest date. Procedures 20.4- 20.9 are again applicable
- 20.12. The applicant has three chances to successfully pass the certification exam in its entirety. If the applicant fails to do so, they must wait at least six months to reapply after proof of remediation. The applicant must complete the application and examination process again and pay all fees associated with both.
- 20.13. Time allowed for re-examination depends on the section(s) failed.
- 20.14. Fees associated with retests are the responsibility of the applicant and must be paid in full before the retest(s) is administered.

21. REVISIONS TO EXAMINATION

- 21.1. The Advisory Council and Board members will meet at least once a year to review the test bank and evaluate it for current knowledge and technologies to ensure that it remains reliable and valid to the profession.
- 21.2. Questions are reviewed after 100 administrations or one year of offering.
- 21.3. Test revision is considered every three years after statistical review. Revision is mandatory every five years.

- 21.4. Item analysis is also reviewed as an indicator of individual test item performance. Poorly performing items are marked for review.
- 21.5. Test revision will consist of revising, rewriting, eliminating or adding new questions as deemed necessary under the supervision of the Educational Consultant. Such revision will meet the requirements set forth in the initial test development.
- 21.6. The performance sections will be revised and updated as deemed necessary, using the guidelines previously established.
- 21.7. The ABMDI Board must approve all revisions to the testing program.

22. RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- 22.1. Recertification is mandatory every five-year period.
- 22.2. Forty-five (45) hours of approved ABMDI continuing education is required for the five-year period.
- 22.3. Approved ABMDI continuing education include courses accredited by: AMA, ANA, ABA, EMT, POST (or equivalent) or a post secondary institution recognized by a national educational accrediting agency.
- 22.4. All requirements must be completed and in the ABMDI office prior to the date of certification expiration.
- 22.5. Certificants are responsible for documenting 45-hours of ABMDI acceptable continuing education in the continuing education folder provided to them upon passing the certification examination. Documentation must show proof of attendance, number of hours, dates and approving agency.
- 22.6. The Administrative Secretary will prepare a list each December indicating the Diplomates and Fellows who will be required to submit audits during the upcoming year. The list will be forwarded to the President and Chair of the Council on Continuing Education.
- 22.7. A letter will be mailed from the ABMDI office six months and again ninety days prior to certification expiration advising the certificant to send in proof of 45-hours of continuing education.
- 22.8. Packets received in the ABMDI office will be opened to verify they were received on time and are complete.
- 22.9. The packet will then be forwarded to the Chair of the Council on Continuing Education for review.
- 22.10. The Chair of the Council on Continuing Education will advise the ABMDI office of certificants who meet all recertification requirements. The Administrative Secretary will then mail a letter to the certificant indicating that

they are recertified for another five-years. A new membership card and continuing education folder will be included in the mailing.

- 22.11. Packets not returned in the ABMDI Continuing Education Folder will be considered incomplete.
- 22.12. Incomplete packets will be returned and will not be audited. The certificant will be given thirty days from the date the original packet was received by the ABMDI in order to return a completed continuing education folder to audit. A penalty fee must accompany the returned packet in order for it to be processed. See Appendix A
- 22.13. If the packet is still not complete or is received beyond the stated date, the certificant will lose his/her certification status and all fees will be forfeited.
- 22.14. In order to regain certification status, the individual must pay the test fee and sit for the entire certification exam.
- 22.15. It is recommended that certificants keep a photocopy of all documentation submitted.
- 22.16. A current Code of Ethics and Professional Standards statement must be signed and returned by the certificant before recertification is granted.

23. EXAMINATION SECURITY

- 23.1. Security of the test bank will be vested with a professional testing agency.
- 23.2. All test items are secured on the educational consultant's secured server. Hard copies are secured in locked file cabinets in their office.
- 23.3. Access to test items is restricted to employees of the educational consultant.
- 23.4. Each time an exam is given, test questions are drawn from a rotating validated database.
- 23.5. If any test item were to become public, an equivalent form of the compromised exam would be created from the validated test bank and made available. Testing would be suspended until such equivalent form is available.
- 23.6. Any company or individual contracted to perform duties related to ABMDI certification testing shall have no vested interest in the certification program or a conflict with the task assigned.
- 23.7. The proctor must collect all test materials before the test can leave the room. These materials must be mailed via Federal Express to the professional testing agency.

24. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 24.1. The applicant is required to sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* prior to sitting for the certification exam, agreeing that he/she will not disclose exam content with other individuals. This agreement will be retained in the office of the educational consultant.
- 24.2. Members of the Ethics Committee are required to sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* concerning information learned relating to situations before the Committee. Information that is not public knowledge and is learned through the Committee must remain confidential.
- 24.3. Board members must sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* concerning information learned about an applicant/certificant, which is not public knowledge, through his/her position on the board and to disclose any potential conflict of interest.
- 24.4. Individuals signing the *Confidentiality Agreement* may discuss information among themselves as necessary to complete their assignments, disclose information to a third party upon written consent of the applicant or certificant, or upon subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction.
- 24.5. Any breach of confidentiality will result in charges brought forth to the Ethics Committee.

25. CERTIFICANT RIGHTS

- 25.1. An individual submitting an application but who does not meet the prerequisites will be notified in writing of the deficiency.
- 25.2. A certificate has the right to examine his/her file at the ABMDI office, upon written request and by appointment.
- 25.3. An applicant failing the certification exam has the right to discuss the test/retest with the educational consultant or Board member/staff. The applicant does not have a right to obtain a copy of his test/retest.

26. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- 26.1. Appeals, complaints, inquiries and disputes should be sent in writing to the attention of the Executive Director, who shall determine if they fall within the bylaws or policy and procedure guidelines.
- 26.2. If the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute can be answered within the prescribed guidelines, the Executive Director will respond by letter via the US mail system. The President will be made aware of the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute for informational purposes only.
- 26.3. If the appeal, complaint, inquiry or dispute cannot be handled within the prescribed guidelines, the information will be forwarded to the President for determination.

26.4. If an individual is found guilty of misconduct or a charge, the Board shall have the right to impose sanctions up to and including revocation of certification.

27. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

27.1. Information contained within applicant and certificant files is considered confidential and is not released to third parties

27.2. Information contained within working files (bylaws, minutes, newsletters) is available to any member who demonstrates a need for information to conduct official business for the ABMDI with the exception of certificant files, Ethics Committee records and records deemed necessary to be attorney-client privileged communications.

27.3. Upon the receipt of a subpoena or other legal process requesting the disclosure of information concerning an applicant or certificant, the ABMDI will consult with legal counsel concerning remedies and duties imposed upon by the law.

27.4. Where the law requires disclosure of information, the individual shall be notified immediately of the inquiry and of the information provided.

27.5. The ABMDI President will rule on any dispute between the requester and policy.

27.6. The Board must approve minutes of the Board meetings, committee meetings, Treasure or Executive Director reports, financial records or budgets to anyone other than an officer or Board member in advance.

27.7. Certification status of an individual is available on the ABMDI web site. All individuals who have passed the examination and are considered in good standing are listed as a Diplomate or Fellow, including the date of certification. Inquiries pertaining to certification status of an individual will be directed to the website listing.

27.8. A Directory will be published annually containing address, telephone and email information for Diplomates and Fellows unless they have specifically requested in writing not to have their information published. The Directory is the property of the ABMDI.

27.9. It is the responsibility of the certificant to notify the ABMDI office of any change in information.

27.10. Testing information will not be released to the applicant by any form other than US postal mail to ensure verification of the inquirer.

27.11. Certificant files shall be made available to the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB) upon request, to comply with guidelines published in FSAB quality assurance standards.

- 27.12. Files of certificants shall be made available to the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board upon proper inquiry, to comply with quality assurance, based on guidelines published by the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board.

28. QUALITY SYSTEM

- 28.1 The Executive Director shall in a continuous manner conduct evaluations and recommend changes to the Board, which would enhance the certification process or office operations.
- 28.2 The Administrative Secretary conducts annual audits of files for accuracy and completeness. Any deficiencies are addressed immediately for resolution.
- 28.3 Refer to Appendix F for office procedures.

29. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- 29.1. The Executive Director is responsible for the quality system of all ABMDI files. The Executive Director reports directly to the Board and supervises the Administrative Secretary.
- 29.2. In accordance with Article XVII of the Bylaws, the ABMDI staff is responsible for keeping permanent records of all meetings of the Board, a record of all actions taken by the Board without a meeting, and a record of all actions taken by committees.
- 29.3. The Board will retain all documents submitted in compliance with any part of its program, except testing documents held by the educational consultant, until the ABMDI ceases to exist which include:
- 29.3.1. Bylaws and all amendments to them currently in effect
 - 29.3.2. Articles of Incorporation and all amendments to them currently in effect
 - 29.3.3. The most recent annual report delivered to the Secretary of State
 - 29.3.4. Policy and Procedure Manual
 - 29.3.5. Certificant files
 - 29.3.6. Application files
 - 29.3.7. Database of same
 - 29.3.8. Examination dates
 - 29.3.9. Proctor Information
 - 29.3.10. Minutes of Board meetings
 - 29.3.11. Records deemed of historical significance by a Board member
 - 29.3.12. Annual reports of all committees, Treasurer, Executive Director and audit reports
 - 29.3.13. Financial records including monthly financial statements issued by the Executive Director
 - 29.3.14. Copies of ABMDI newsletters
 - 29.3.15. Committee histories
 - 29.3.16. Advisory Council histories

- 29.3.17. Copies of the Bylaws and Policy and Procedure Manual, as well as all records of revisions and proposed revisions to these documents are public record.
 - 29.3.18. Web site, current and archived information
 - 29.3.19. Other information deemed pertinent to ABMDI membership
- 29.4. Inactive files may be converted to electronic records or stored off site due to the shortage of storage space available within the ABMDI office.