



**HARRIS COUNTY
INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES**
SCIENCE. SERVICE. INTEGRITY

Luis A. Sanchez, M.D.
Executive Director &
Chief Medical Examiner

November 30, 2020

The Honorable Lina Hidalgo and
Members of Commissioners Court
1001 Preston, Suite 938
Houston, Texas 77002

	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
Judge Lina Hidalgo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Rodney Ellis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Adrian Garcia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Tom S. Ramsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. R. Jack Cagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Re: **Agenda Item for January 5, 2021**
Interlocal Agreement for Postmortem Examinations: Polk County

Dear Members of Commissioners Court:

Commissioners Court approval is requested for an Interlocal Agreement with Polk County for postmortem examinations of decedents and related court testimony on cases submitted to the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences.

Your favorable consideration of this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Sanchez, M.D.
Executive Director & Chief Medical Examiner

Presented to Commissioners Court

January 5, 2021

LAS/amg

Approve: R/G

Attachments:
Interlocal Agreement and Court Order

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT
FOR PERFORMANCE OF POSTMORTEM EXAMINATIONS
BY HARRIS COUNTY INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
 §
COUNTY OF HARRIS §

THIS INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT (the "Agreement") is made pursuant to chapter 791 of the Texas Government Code (the Interlocal Cooperation Act) and chapter 49 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, and entered into by and between Harris County, acting by and through its governing body, the Harris County Commissioners Court, and Polk County (the "Requesting County"), acting by and through its governing body, the Polk County Commissioners Court.

RECITALS:

Pursuant to article 49.25 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Harris County has established and maintains the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences which includes the Office of Medical Examiner;

The Requesting County does not have a medical examiner, and a justice of the peace is required to conduct an inquest into the death of a person who dies in the county under certain circumstances;

If the justice of the peace determines that a postmortem examination is necessary, the justice of the peace may order that a postmortem examination of the body be performed by a physician; and

The Requesting County desires to obtain the services of the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (the "Medical Examiner") to perform postmortem examinations on persons who died in the Requesting County and to provide sworn testimony in connection with any inquest by a justice of the peace or any criminal investigation or prosecution conducted by a prosecuting attorney.

NOW, THEREFORE, Harris County and the Requesting County, in consideration of the mutual covenants and agreements herein contained, do mutually agree as follows:

TERMS:

**I
TERM**

The term of this Agreement shall begin on January 1, 2021 and end on December 31, 2021, unless terminated in accordance with the provisions contained herein.

IL
SERVICES

A. Postmortem Examinations. Postmortem examinations will be performed by the Medical Examiner pursuant to chapter 49 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. In those cases where a complete autopsy is deemed unnecessary by the Medical Examiner to ascertain the cause and manner of death, the Medical Examiner may perform an external examination of the body, which may include taking x-rays of the body and extracting bodily fluids for laboratory analysis.

1. ***Written Request.*** When a justice of the peace in the Requesting County determines pursuant to article 49.10 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, that a postmortem examination is necessary on the body of a deceased person who died within their jurisdiction, the justice of the peace may request that the Medical Examiner perform an autopsy. Each request for a postmortem examination shall be in writing, accompanied by an order signed by the justice of the peace. However, the Medical Examiner shall have the discretion to perform an autopsy or external examination of the body based on his professional judgment.
2. ***Written Records.*** The following records shall accompany the body: (1) the completed form titled "Harris County Medical Examiner Out of County Investigator's Report" (attached hereto and incorporated herein); (2) the entire police report, including scene photographs, videos and; (3) all relevant medical records, including hospital admission and emergency room records, if applicable. Failure to provide all necessary records may result in the Medical Examiner refusing to accept the body for a postmortem examination.
3. ***Body Bag.*** Each body transported to the Medical Examiner for a postmortem examination must be enclosed inside a zippered body bag and sealed in such a way as to insure integrity of evidence between the time of scene investigation and arrival at the Medical Examiner. The body bag shall have the deceased's name affixed to the outside.

B. Laboratory Analyses. The Medical Examiner shall conduct a postmortem toxicological analysis, if appropriate, and any other tests considered necessary to assist in determining the cause and manner of death and identification.

C. Testimony. Medical Examiner personnel performing services pursuant to this agreement shall appear as reasonably necessary to provide testimony in a criminal case before a district court of the Requesting County. The Requesting County agrees to use its best efforts to schedule the testimony of the Medical Examiner's personnel in such a manner to cause the least amount of disruption in their work schedule.

D. Reports. Within a reasonable time after the completion of a postmortem examination, the Medical Examiner will provide a written copy of the autopsy report to the justice of the peace who requested the autopsy.

E. Transportation. The Requesting County shall have the sole responsibility for transporting the deceased to the Medical Examiner. Upon notification by the Medical Examiner that the autopsy has been completed, the Requesting County shall make arrangements for the deceased to be transported immediately to a funeral home.

F. Training. The Medical Examiner will conduct an annual training seminar in Houston for justices of the peace, their court personnel and other criminal justice officials, including investigators.

G. No Interment. Harris County shall have no responsibility for burying the remains of the deceased. Consistent with TEX. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE ANN. § 711.002(c), the Requesting County shall have sole responsibility for interment of the body.

III.

CONSIDERATION FOR SERVICES

A. Autopsy Fees. In consideration for the services provided by the Medical Examiner, the Requesting County agrees to pay Harris County all costs and expenses associated with performing the autopsy in accordance with the following schedule:

(a) Standard Autopsy Examination	\$2,887 per body
(b) External Examination	\$1,161 per body

B. Ancillary Tests. Ancillary tests (i.e. GSR tests) will be performed as deemed appropriate by the Medical Examiner at no additional cost. If further tests are requested by the Requesting County, but are deemed by the Medical Examiner not germane based on the circumstances of the case, the Medical Examiner may elect to decline the request, or to request that the laboratory of the HCIFS perform those tests with additional charges in accordance with the Fee Schedule, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit "A."

C. Testimony. The Requesting County shall additionally pay Harris County for the time spent by the Medical Examiner's pathologists, the Chief Toxicologist, or other personnel providing sworn testimony in connection with a postmortem examination requested by the Requesting County. Testimony fees are in accordance with the Harris County Medical Examiner's Fee Schedule, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit "A." These rates shall apply also to pretrial preparation, attendance at pretrial conferences, travel time and any time spent waiting to provide testimony.

D. Storage of Bodies. The Requesting County shall pay Harris County the additional sum of Forty Five Dollars (\$45) per day for each body that remains at the Medical Examiner beyond three (3) days (including weekends and holidays) beginning the day after notification by the Medical Examiner that the body is ready to be released to the Requesting County. This provision shall survive termination of this Agreement and shall apply to any bodies currently remaining at the Medical Examiner.

E. Invoice. Harris County shall submit an invoice to the Requesting County for post mortem services performed under this Agreement within thirty (30) days after the service is completed. The Requesting County shall pay the total amount of the invoice within thirty (30) days of the date

B. With Notice. It is understood and agreed that either party may terminate this Agreement prior to the expiration of the term set forth above, with or without cause, upon thirty (30) days prior written notice to the other party. By the next business day following the first ten (10) days of the subsequent calendar month after the effective date of such termination, Harris County will submit

A. Without Notice. If the Requesting County defaults in the payment of any obligation in this Agreement, Harris County is authorized to terminate this Agreement immediately without notice.

TERMINATION
V.

D. Overdue Payments. It is understood and agreed that chapter 2251 of the Texas Government Code applies to late payments.

C. Other Statutory Liability. This Agreement is not intended to limit any statutory liability of the Requesting County to pay for services provided by Harris County when the funds certified by the Requesting County are no longer sufficient to compensate Harris County for the services provided under this Agreement.

B. Certified Availability. The Requesting County has available and has specifically allocated \$28,870.00, as evidenced by a certification of funds by the Requesting County's County Auditor. In the event funds certified available by the Requesting County's County Auditor are no longer sufficient to compensate Harris County for the services provided under this Agreement, Harris County shall have no further obligation to complete the performance of any services until the Requesting County certifies sufficient current funds. The Requesting County agrees to immediately notify Harris County regarding any additional certification of funds for this Agreement.

A. Current Funds. The Requesting County agrees and acknowledges that the contractual payments in this Agreement shall be made to Harris County from current revenues available to the Requesting County.

FUNDS
IV.

G. Death Certificates. The justice of the peace who requested the postmortem examination be performed shall provide the Medical Examiner with a copy of the signed Certificate of Death no later than fourteen (14) days after receipt of the autopsy report. Failure to comply with this provision may result in termination of the contract by Harris County.

F. Fair Compensation. Harris County and the Requesting County agree and acknowledge that the contractual payments contemplated by this agreement are reasonable and fairly compensate Harris County for the services or functions performed under this Agreement.

of receipt of the invoice by the Requesting County. If the Requesting County fails to pay any invoice within sixty (60) days after receipt, the Medical Examiner may refuse to accept any additional bodies for autopsy.

an invoice showing the amounts due for the month in which termination occurs in the manner set out above for submitting monthly invoices.

**VI.
NOTICE**

Any notice required to be given under the provisions of this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be duly served when it shall have been deposited, enclosed in a wrapper with the proper postage prepaid thereon, and duly registered or certified, return receipt requested, in a United States Post Office, addressed to the parties at the following addresses:

To Harris County: Harris County
Harris County Administration Building
1001 Preston, Suite 911
Houston, Texas 77002-1896
Attn: County Judge

with a copy to: Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
1861 Old Spanish Trail
Houston, Texas 77054
Attn: Chief Medical Examiner

To Polk County: Polk County
101 West Church Street, Suite 300
Livingston, TX 77351
Attn: County Judge

Either party may designate a different address by giving the other party ten days' written notice.

**VII.
MERGER**

The parties agree that this Agreement contains all of the terms and conditions of the understanding of the parties relating to the subject matter hereof. All prior negotiations, discussions, correspondence and preliminary understandings between the parties and others relating hereto are superseded by this Agreement.

**VIII.
VENUE**

Exclusive venue for any action arising out of or related to this Agreement shall be in Harris County, Texas.


**IX.
MISCELLANEOUS**

This instrument contains the entire Agreement between the parties relating to the rights granted and the obligations assumed. Any oral or written representations or modifications concerning this instrument shall be of no force and effect excepting a subsequent modification in writing signed

by both parties. This Agreement may be executed in duplicate counterparts, each having equal force and effect of an original. This Agreement shall become binding and effective only after it has been authorized and approved by both counties, as evidenced by the signature of the appropriate authority pursuant to an order of the Commissioners Court of the respective County authorizing such execution.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Christian D. Menafee
County Attorney

By: 
NICK TURNER
Assistant County Attorney

HARRIS COUNTY

By: 
LINA HIDALGO
County Judge

Date Signed: January 05, 2021

POLK COUNTY

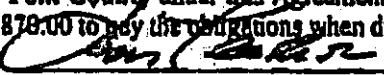
By: 
LUIS A. SANCHEZ, M.D.
Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
Executive Director & Chief Medical Examiner

By: 
County Judge

Date Signed: November 24, 2020

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

Pursuant to section 111.093 of the Texas Local Government Code, I certify that the county budget contains an ample provision for the obligations of Polk County under this Agreement and that funds are or will be available in the amount of \$28,878.00 to pay the obligations when due.


Polk County Auditor
Date Signed: 11/24/2020



HCIFS Fee Schedule – Medical Examiner Services

Effective January 1, 2015

Service Description	Unit Pricing	Fees
Post Mortem Examinations		
Full Autopsy	Case	\$2,887
External Examination	Case	\$1,161
Decedent Storage	Day	\$45
Records, Reports, Permits, & Photo Reprints		
Copy Charge per Open Records	Page	\$0.10
Images on CD (Plus copy charge)	Each	\$11
Notarization of Document (plus copy charge)	Document	\$7
Photo Reprints (3 1/4 x 5)	Print	\$3
Photo Reprints (8 x 10)	Print	\$5
X-Ray Copy (per film)	Film	\$6
Subpoena/Court Order Documents (plus copy charge)	Hour	\$55
Professional Services		
Medical Examiner Expert Witness Testimony / Consultation		
Preparation Fees	Fixed Fee	\$179
Medical Examiner, Travel & Witness /Consultation	Hourly	\$139
Anthropology Expert Witness Testimony / Consultation		
Preparation Fees	Fixed Fee	\$81
Anthropology Travel & Witness /Consultation	Hourly	\$70
Investigation Expert Witness Testimony / Consultation		
Preparation Fees	Fixed Fee	\$39
Investigator /Entomologist, Travel & Witness /Consultation	Hourly	\$37
Crime Laboratory Expert Witness Testimony / Consultation		
Preparation Fees	Fixed Fee	\$78
Laboratory personnel, Travel & Witness /Consultation	Hourly	\$49

Prepared by HCIFS
Approved 08/26/2014

January 5, 2021

Approve: R/G

**ORDER OF COMMISSIONERS COURT
Authorizing Interlocal Agreement with Polk County**

The Commissioners Court of Harris County, Texas, met in regular session at its regular term at the Harris County Administration Building in the City of Houston, Texas, on January 05, 2021, with all members present except none

A quorum was present. Among other business, the following was transacted:

ORDER ADOPTING INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH POLK COUNTY

Commissioner Ramsey introduced an order and moved that Commissioners Court adopt the order. Commissioner A. Garcia seconded the motion for adoption of the order. The motion, carrying with it the adoption of the order, prevailed by the following vote:

<u>Vote of the Court</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Judge Hidalgo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Ellis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Garcia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Ramsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Cagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The County Judge thereupon announced that the motion had duly and lawfully carried and that the order had been duly and lawfully adopted. The order adopted follows:

RECITALS

Pursuant to article 49.25 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Harris County has established and maintains the Institute of Forensic Sciences which includes the Office of Medical Examiner.

The Requesting County does not have a medical examiner, and a justice of the peace is required to conduct an inquest into the death of a person who dies in the county under certain circumstances.

If the justice of the peace determines that an autopsy is necessary, the justice may order that an autopsy of the body be performed by a physician.

The Requesting County desires to obtain the services of the Office of the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences to perform autopsies on persons who died in the Requesting County and to provide sworn testimony in connection with any inquest by a justice of the peace or any criminal investigation or prosecution conducted by a prosecuting attorney.

Harris County Commissioners Court desires to enter into an agreement with Polk County for such services. **NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT ORDERED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS
THAT:**

Section 1: The recitals set forth in this Order are true and correct.

Section 2: The Agreement is approved and the County Judge of Harris County or his designee is authorized to execute an Agreement with Polk County under the terms and provisions set out in the Agreement, which is incorporated by reference and made a part of this Order for all intents and purposes as though set out in full word for word.

Section 3: All Harris County officials and employees are authorized to do any and all things necessary or convenient to accomplish the purpose of this Order.