

Medicolegal Death Investigation Systems, by County

Across the United States, the responsibility for conducting medicolegal death investigation (MDI) falls to medical examiners, coroners and other types of county or regional officials. For some states, the type of MDI system is the same for all counties, while for other states, the type of system varies by county. Additionally, some states have a state medical examiner (ME). Although the role of the state MEs varies by state, in general, they provide oversight and standardization to MDI.

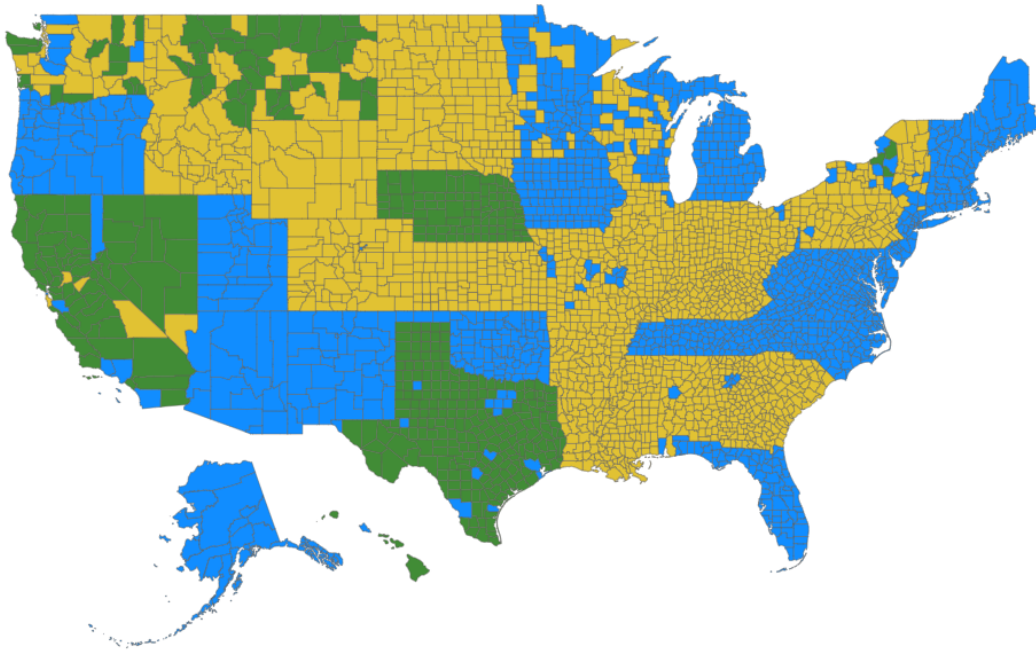
A brief description of different types of MDI systems:

- **Coroner System:** In a coroner system, coroners are usually elected and serve a single county. The requirements to be coroner vary. In some jurisdictions, coroners are not required to be a physician or to have medical training. They usually rely upon the help of a pathologist to perform autopsies. Many coroners are also funeral home directors.
- **Medical Examiner System:** In general, medical examiners are appointed officials. They are typically physicians and often forensic pathologists. Medical examiners can serve either at the county, regional, or state level.
- **Other County Official Systems:** These systems utilize a county official, other than a coroner or medical examiner, to perform the medicolegal death investigation. These officials can include Justices of the Peace, county attorneys, sheriff-coroners and other law enforcement personnel.

The following maps provide information on the type of MDI system by county and show which states have a state ME.

Map 1: Type of Medicolegal Death Investigation System, by County

● Coroner ● Medical Examiner ● Other County Official



States where the majority of counties are served by:

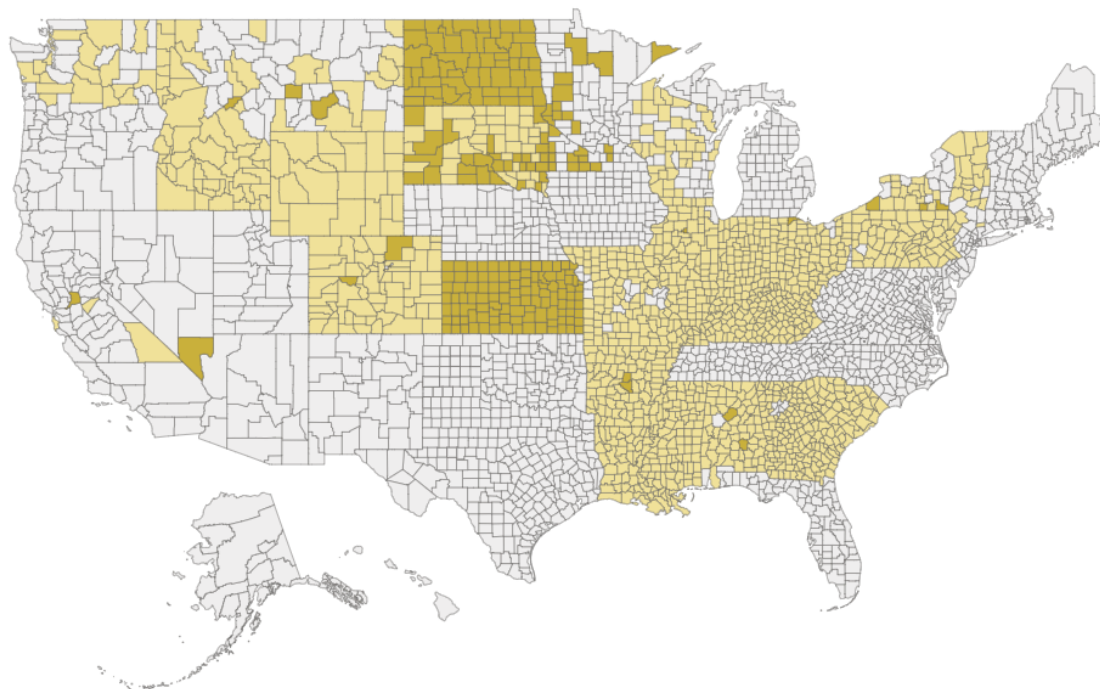
- Medical examiners (23 states and DC): AK*, AZ, CT*, DC*, DE*, FL, IA*, MA*, MD*, ME*, MI, MN, NC*, NH*, NJ*, NM*, OK*, OR*, RI*, TN*, UT*, VA*, VT*, WV*
- County coroners (20 states): AL, AR*, CO, GA*, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY*, LA, MO, MS*, ND*, NY, OH, PA, SC, SD, WI, WY
- Other county officials (6 states): CA, HI, MT*, NE, NV, TX

In Washington State, counties are served by a mix of medical examiners, coroners and other county officials (no majority).

* Indicates the state has a state medical examiner, regardless of the type of medicolegal death investigation system.

Map 2: Type of Coroner Office, by County

● Appointed Coroner ● Elected Coroner ● Non-Coroner Death Investigation System

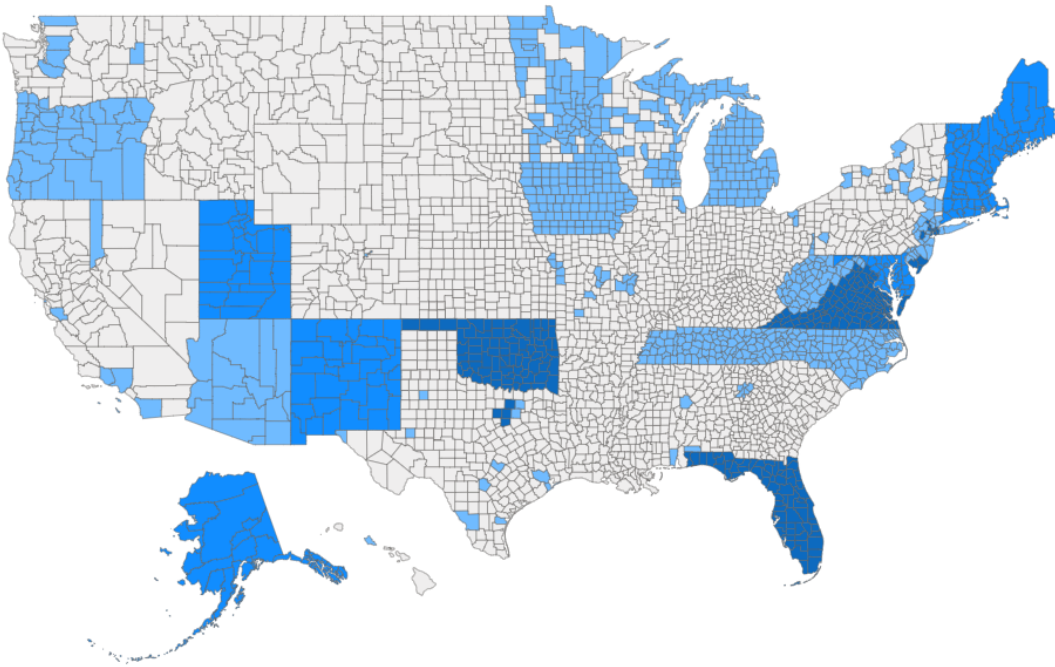


States served by coroners:

- In all counties (11 states): AR, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MS, ND, SC, SD, WY
- In at least one county (14 states): AL, CA, CO, GA, IL, MN, MO, MT, NV, NY, OH, PA, WA, WI
- In no counties (25 states and DC): AK, AZ, CT, DC, DE, FL, HI, IA, MA, MD, ME, MI, NE, NC, NH, NJ, NM, OK, OR, RI, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WV

Map 3: Type of Medical Examiner Office, by County

● County Medical Examiner ● Non-Medical Examiner Death Investigation System ● Regional Medical Examiner ● State Medical Examiner

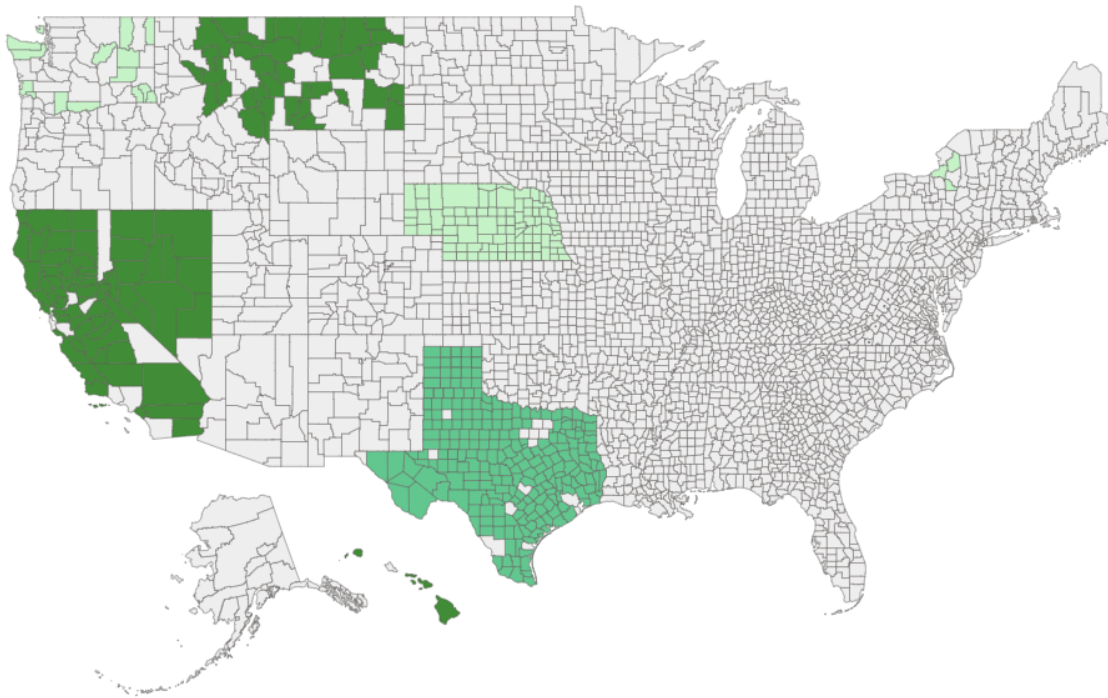


States served by medical examiners:

- In all counties
 - Centralized state medical examiners (11 states and DC): AK, CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NM, RI, UT, VT
 - Regional medical examiners (3 states): FL, OK, VA
 - County medical examiners (8 states): AZ, IA, MI, NC, NJ, OR, TN, WV
- In at least one county (15 states): AL, CA, CO, GA, HI, IL, MN, MO, NV, NY, OH, PA, TX, WA, WI
- In no counties (13 states): AR, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MS, MT, ND, NE, SC, SD, WY

Map 4: Counties Served by Other County Official

● County Attorney ● Justice of the Peace ● Law Enforcement (Sheriff) ● Non-Other County Official Death Investigation System



States served by other county officials:

- County Attorney in all counties (1 state): NE
- County Attorney in at least one county (2 states): NY, WA
- Justice of the Peace in at least one county (1 state): TX
- Law Enforcement (Sheriff) in at least one county (4 states): CA, HI, MT, NV

About this Document

This document was compiled from publicly available information as of December 2023. It was created by the [Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners \(COMEC\) \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/comec/). COMEC works to bring together resources from across the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support the work in the medical examiner and coroner community.