

Idaho Criminal Justice Commission - Coroner Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Date: July 7, 2026

Location: Idaho Association of Counties,
700 W. Washington St., Boise, ID 83701

Time: 2:00 PM Mountain Time

Facilitators: Senator Melissa Wintrow and Kelli Brassfield (IAC)

Subcommittee Members:

- Senator Melissa Wintrow, JLOC Co-chair
- Kelli D. Brassfield, Idaho Association of Counties
- Ryan Langrill, Director, Office of Performance Evaluations
- Sheriff Bart Quayle, Fremont County
- Matthew Gamette, ISP Forensic Services
- Bernie LaSarte, Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Robert Beers, Bonner County Coroner
- Joshua Hall, Nez Perce County Coroner
- Brett Harding, Ada County Chief Deputy Coroner
- Torey Danner, Bannock County Coroner
- Jimmy Roberts, Bingham County Coroner
- Will Carson, Twin Falls County Coroner
- John Fudenberg, Executive Director, IACME
- Robert Bleazard, Ada County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney
- Brent Mendenhall, Madison County Commissioner

Subcommittee Members Absent:

- Kirt Gaston, Bellevue Police Department
- Tara Beard Parsons, Butte County Coroner

Action Item – Approval of the minutes from January 12, 2026

Bingham County Coroner Jimmy Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes from January 12, 2026, ? seconded. Motion carried.

Strategic Plan/Charter - Kelli D. Brassfield & Senator Melissa Wintrow

Kelli Brassfield reviewed the project charter, noting the progress made on past objectives such as record confidentiality and autopsy reporting. The group discussed the need to focus on achievable goals—specifically certification requirements, data reporting, and autopsy standards—while acknowledging current budget constraints that limit infrastructure projects, such as establishing a new autopsy facility.

Possible Legislative Ideas – Kelli D. Brassfield & Senator Melissa Wintrow

Kelli Brassfield addressed the challenging budget climate and the Governor's directive limiting requests to maintenance budgets. Despite these limitations, participants agreed on the importance of continuing to identify and prioritize key legislative recommendations to advance the office's professionalism.

- Required certification within a certain timeframe
The group discussed a draft proposal requiring all new coroners to obtain certification within one year of taking office . Participants noted that while American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) certification is the current standard, rural counties face significant challenges due to low case volume. To address the difficulty of achieving certification in rural counties, participants explored strategies such as signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or hiring ABMDI-certified investigators to conduct investigations. This approach could promote regionalization, allowing counties to share expertise and resources rather than requiring every elected coroner to meet all technical certification requirements independently.

Participants suggested that if the group does not want to specify ABMDI in the statute, they should require certification from an organization recognized by the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board to ensure high standards and prevent unqualified programs.

It was noted the potential for closer collaboration between coroners and sheriffs, drawing parallels to law enforcement models where resources are shared between counties . The group discussed how such partnerships could allow smaller counties to access certified investigators employed by larger neighboring agencies, regardless of which office holds the budget.

- Data reporting
A subcommittee was created to work on data reporting requirements. Will follow up at future meetings.
- Death Certificate fee increase
This draft is still being discussed.
- Required autopsies (possible facility update)
Draft policy was introducing outlining mandatory autopsy standards based on national guidelines . The group discussed the importance of consulting with forensic pathologists to determine the appropriate level of examination, particularly in complex or drug-related death cases, and acknowledged that these standards would represent a significant step forward for professionalism. The group emphasized the necessity of autopsies for cases involving possible anti-mortem trauma or

asphyxiation, particularly in skeletonized remains, arguing that these determinations should not be left to the judgment of a coroner.

The group identifies a "catch-22" regarding case volume: meeting national standards for autopsies would require significantly more doctors. With Idaho's population estimated at roughly 2 million, the group notes that implementing these standards could result in approximately 1,800 to 2,000 autopsies per year, which would overwhelm the current workforce. It was confirmed that current staffing is at a threshold, and the existing three doctors are unable to take on additional cases beyond those already under contract. There is concern that creating legislation mandating increased autopsy requirements without building in proper facilitation or resources could cause current pathologists to leave the state to pursue locum tenens work, making it essential to have a plan for resource capacity before formalizing new requirements.

Other Business – Kelli D. Brassfield & Senator Melissa Wintrow

The group discussed strategies to improve public understanding of the coroner's role. John Fudenberg offered to provide social media graphics and templates for press releases to assist coroners in highlighting their work. Jimmy reported on the success of infant and child death investigation classes, which reached 240 students, though they noted a continued need for broader public outreach.

- [Brett] Distribute White Paper: Resend the white paper regarding the roles and standards of a modern coroner office in Idaho from Brett Harding.
- [Jimmy and Brett] Create Education Kit: Develop a community education kit to assist coroners with public outreach and highlight positive office achievements. Provide these materials for presentation at the upcoming board meeting or the September conference.
- [Kelli] Update Legislation: Revise the draft legislation to require certification by an organization recognized by the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board. Ensure this language replaces previous mentions of specific accrediting bodies.
- [Torey] Update MOU: Incorporate suggested changes from the coroner's association board into the draft memorandum of understanding.
- [Torey] Share MOU: Distribute the revised memorandum of understanding to the committee upon completion.
- [The group] Define Pathologist Standards: Evaluate whether to mandate board-certified or board-eligible status for forensic pathologists and determine the final language for the next meeting.
- [The group] Address Capacity Needs: Develop recommendations that document the state-wide requirement for forensic pathology services and the resources needed to meet national standards.

