



HARRIS COUNTY  
INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

CELEBRATING **60** YEARS OF SCIENCE. SERVICE. INTEGRITY.

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### HCIFS Earns Accreditation from National Association of Medical Examiners

HOUSTON, Texas (Feb. 28, 2017) – The [Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences](#) (HCIFS) has earned its reaccreditation from the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Inspection and Accreditation Program, which promotes standards for a quality medicolegal death investigation system.

“Accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners provides assurance to the Harris County community and justice system that the Institute provides the proper environment in which unbiased forensic death investigations take place,” said Dwayne A. Wolf, M.D., Ph.D., HCIFS deputy chief medical examiner. “In addition, the accreditation further certifies that the Institute’s Medical Examiner service upholds a high standard of quality.”

Established in 1957 as the first Medical Examiner system in the state of Texas, the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences Medical Examiner Service investigates cases of sudden and unexpected deaths, and deaths resulting from physical or chemical injury in accordance with the [Texas Code of Criminal Procedure \(Chapter 49.25\)](#).

HCIFS is one of nine medical examiner’s offices in Texas accredited by NAME. Nationally, 79 medical examiner’s offices are NAME-accredited. First granted in 2006, HCIFS must continue to maintain new and more stringent guidelines established by NAME and re-earn the accreditation every five years,

The accreditation was awarded following a rigorous on-site inspection of 350 standards that address all aspects of the agency’s operations, including Forensic Investigations and Emergency Management, Morgue Services, Forensic Anthropology, Forensic Toxicology as well as other crime laboratory services, Quality Management, Records, Reports Preparation and Distribution, Systems (IT) Security, and Finance and Administration.

“The Institute continuously improves the quality of its practices and facilities in order to maintain accreditation and demonstrate our commitment to serving the needs of our community,” said Michal Pierce, M.S., HCIFS Quality director.

HCIFS maintains [seven accreditations](#) spanning both the Medical Examiner and the Crime Laboratory services. The agency has successfully maintained the accreditation for the past 10 years.

“The best objective measure of scientific validity in death investigation is the NAME accreditation, which the Institute has held for the last 10 years and strives to maintain,” said Luis A. Sanchez, M.D., HCIFS executive director and chief medical examiner. “Our successful completion of the re-accreditation process recognizes the outstanding performance by our highly skilled staff who personify the Institute’s mission of quality and service every day.”

#### **About the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences:**

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences, an independent, science-based organization, provides two distinct forensic services for the Harris County community – the Medical Examiner Service and the Crime Laboratory Service. To learn more about the Institute of Forensic Sciences, visit: [ifs.harriscountytexas.gov](http://ifs.harriscountytexas.gov).

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**About NAME Accreditation:**

NAME accreditation is an endorsement indicating that an office or system provides an adequate environment for a medical examiner in which to practice his or her profession and provides reasonable assurances that an office or system well serves its jurisdiction. The NAME accreditation standards have been prepared and revised by NAME for the purpose of improving the quality of the medicolegal investigation of death in this country. The objective of NAME is that the application of these standards will aid materially in developing and maintaining a high caliber of medicolegal investigation of death for the communities and jurisdictions in which they operate. For more information: [thename.org](http://thename.org)

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