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**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER  
BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS**

**BOARD MEETING AGENDA  
SPECIAL MEETING**

Thursday, May 18, 2023, 2:00 PM.  
1627 Southwest Blvd., Tulsa OK 74107 – 918-295-3400

The Board may discuss, vote to approve, vote to disapprove, vote to table, or decide not to discuss any item on the agenda.

- I. Roll call
- II. Adoption of minutes from the February 2, 2023.
- III. Update from the Chief Medical Examiner
  - ◆ Presentation of OCME operations, agency update.
- IV. Update from Deputy Chief Medical Examiner
  - ◆ Tulsa office updates.
- V. Adjourn

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**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER  
BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS**

**BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS  
REGULAR MEETING**

Board Meeting Minutes from  
Thursday February 2, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.  
921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105  
and Via Videoconference

*In conformity with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, advance notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State on November 9, 2022, at 4:26 P.M. and public notice of this meeting, together with the agenda, was posted in prominent public view on the front door of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK.*

Members present: Ms. Andrea Fielding, Mr. Keith Reed, Mr. Tyler Stiles, Dr. Michael Magguilli, and Dr. Eric Pfeifer.

Members present via videoconference: Dr. Robert Allen, Dr. Eric Harp, and Dr. Doug Stewart.

Members absent: Ms. Angela Marsee

Others Present: Madalynn Martin (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME), Via videoconference, Dr. Josh Lanter (OCME).

Dr. Harp called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was established.

Mr. Reed motioned to adopt the minutes as written from November 3, 2022, meeting. Mr. Stiles seconded the motion. Roll was called, Dr. Allen, Ms. Fielding and Dr. Stewart abstained, all others were in favor.

- Update from the Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Eric Pfeifer

~ Dr. Pfeifer presented the agency update to the Board.

Dr. Pfeifer announced the overarching priority has been and continues to be NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) reaccreditation. With the Tulsa practice location being completed the agency is moving toward the goal of reaccreditation.

We did not anticipate the caseload increase due to COVID-19. Historically, since 1965 the practice grew at about 11% per decade. During the 2 years of the pandemic, the caseload grew 25% and has not gone down.

The 3rd floor of the Oklahoma City building is currently a shell. We received a bid from the owner of the building for reconstructing that area to add 12 offices and a conference room. To their estimate we need to add furniture, fixtures, equipment, and information technology build out and provisioning. This would give us approximately 4700 square feet of added space. The agency is in a good position to receive federal funding through the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) for this project.

A major project for the agency is a new case management system. The agency is currently using a 22-year-old system that was developed by an individual and is supported by our vendor who works alone. It is a Microsoft Access front end that transfers information to a SQL server. It is beginning to show its age and does not communicate with other platforms. For instance, electronic death registration with the OSHD, Division of Vital Records. We have participated in demonstrations from a few vendors. The exact cost of a new system is unknown at this time, however, we are estimating it to be approximately \$1.6M. OSDH has been a great help in providing assistance with the justification for this funding. We expect to hear from them soon advising us on the approval status.

#### Forensic staffing and recruitment –

As mentioned in our last meeting, the agency lost 3 forensic pathologists (FP) almost simultaneously. This was due to retirement and moving closer to family. We have recruited 2 pathologists who have an Oklahoma connection and are currently in Los Angeles, CA. They are both forensic pathology board certified. One has 2 years of radiology training and the other is currently training to become a neuropathologist. The negative side to this is they are 14 months away from joining the practice. We still have 2 open positions in the Tulsa practice that we are trying to fill.

#### Case turn-around time –

There is a slight increase in the open cases over 90 days old. Currently there are 893 open cases over 90 days old. This increase coincides with the departure of our 3 FP. We are working hard to get these cases completed and recruit additional FP staff to get these cases back down to an acceptable level.

#### Fellowship –

The fellowship program continues to be accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). An Instagram account was set up a few months ago that has developed a lot of interest. For the first time, the OCME fellowship has entered a residency match program. Over the last few months, we've interviewed 5 candidates. We should know the results of the match for the 2024-2025 academic year in early May.

#### Administration –

House and Senate budget hearings were attended at the capital last month. The most challenging aspect of the budget is determining how much money is needed to continue operations. An additional \$813K was requested for FY24 supplemental appropriation. This amount would fund an additional FTE

forensic pathologist, 4 investigators and allow for some modest salary adjustments to administrative personnel within the toxicology laboratory lab.

#### Anthropology –

Dr. Sara Getz joined the agency last month. She is fully certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology. With the large number of clandestine shallow graves in the state of Oklahoma, the agency would benefit from a fourth anthropologist. This will be a consideration for the budget request next year.

#### Autopsy services –

With the opening of the new Tulsa practice, the agency has 18 autopsy tables, 2 Lodox, and 2 CT scanners.

#### Information technology (IT) –

The State announced it's cancelled the contract with NTT. This is the group who provide state agencies with IT assistance.

We seem to be getting close to having the toxicology laboratory LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) project completed.

The agency is working on acquiring a new case management system in the next couple of years.

#### Investigations –

This fiscal year we were given appropriations to hire 4 additional investigators. These new positions have been filled and we are looking are requesting 4 more next year. Scene response time average for the month of January was 1 hour 13 minutes. The only way to reduce this time is to add more investigators. We would like to get the average scene response time down to about an hour.

With assistance of Oklahoma City Police Department, OCME has formed a new wellness unit. Some employees can be adversely affected by the scenes they attend, particularly ones that involve children. This is a venue for OCME employees.

#### Permit turnaround time –

Permit turnaround time has decreased slightly to 12 hours 6 minutes. The goal is to have permits issued in 48 hours (2 business days) or less. We are doing well in this area.

#### Toxicology lab –

The toxicology lab recently hired a new forensic toxicologist. Dr. Angelica Harper came to us from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). She has been trained in our systems and has begun signing out cases. The lab also using the services of a contract toxicologists who is helping on some technical certifications on overdose cases.

#### Legislation –

We've spoken with Senator Paul Rosino regarding certifying deaths when physicians in the state refuse to sign. For instance, a family physician or an emergency room doctor refuse to sign the death certificate (DC). This leaves the families waiting because the doctors won't sign a DC, eventually the death

certificate ends up at the ME's office. Last year alone, OCME signed approximately 600 death certificates that were not within our jurisdiction. Due to the amount of time this activity requires, we would like to request another FP. This would be in addition to the FP we asked for in the current budget request.

Financial update –

The monthly carryover seems to have stabilized at approximately \$60K-\$70K. Earlier in the fiscal year we were still paying for equipment for the new Tulsa practice which included the CT scanner. The carryover must fund 3 forensic pathologist positions that we are waiting to fill. Once these positions are filled, the monthly carryover will be much less at roughly \$10-\$15K.

The present available cash is at \$9.8M. With this balance, we should be able to manage for a couple of years, however, this will eventually be exhausted.

Dr. Pfeifer shared a photo taken at the NAME conference in October 2022, showing the job boards with a vast number of forensic pathologist job postings. Currently, there are approximate 50 openings nationwide. Harris County, Texas and Charleston, South Carolina starting salaries with benefits are \$275K which is at our top salary range. The phenomenon that was recognized a few years ago in the south-eastern and south-western area of the United States is happening again. The competition is becoming very fierce for forensic pathologists and salaries are on the rise.

● Update from the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Josh Lanter

The Tulsa office is in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of occupation of the new building, and we are 98% moved in. There are still a few items waiting to be received.

This week has seen a very heavy caseload running anywhere from 15-25 cases per day. Fifteen years ago, this was unheard of. With the new autopsy lab, there are no more bottleneck issues that were experienced in the previous building. We have seen positive changes, specifically in morale and the building has far exceeded their expectations.

The previous building is almost demolished at this point. During the next phase OSU (Oklahoma State University, Health Science Center) plans to turn the site into a green space and to create a restaurant in the area adjacent to the old office site.

Recently Tulsa has added 3 district investigators on the east side of the state. With this addition, each district will now have 3 investigators. This will help reduce the response time for investigators to arrive on scene on the eastern side of the state.

We received new fleet vehicles which should be in service soon. They are Ford Explorers which replace the Ford F150s.

- No new business.

Mr. Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Stewart seconded the motion. Roll was called and were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 pm.

DRAFT

# OCME Report to the Board of Medicolegal Investigations, May 2023

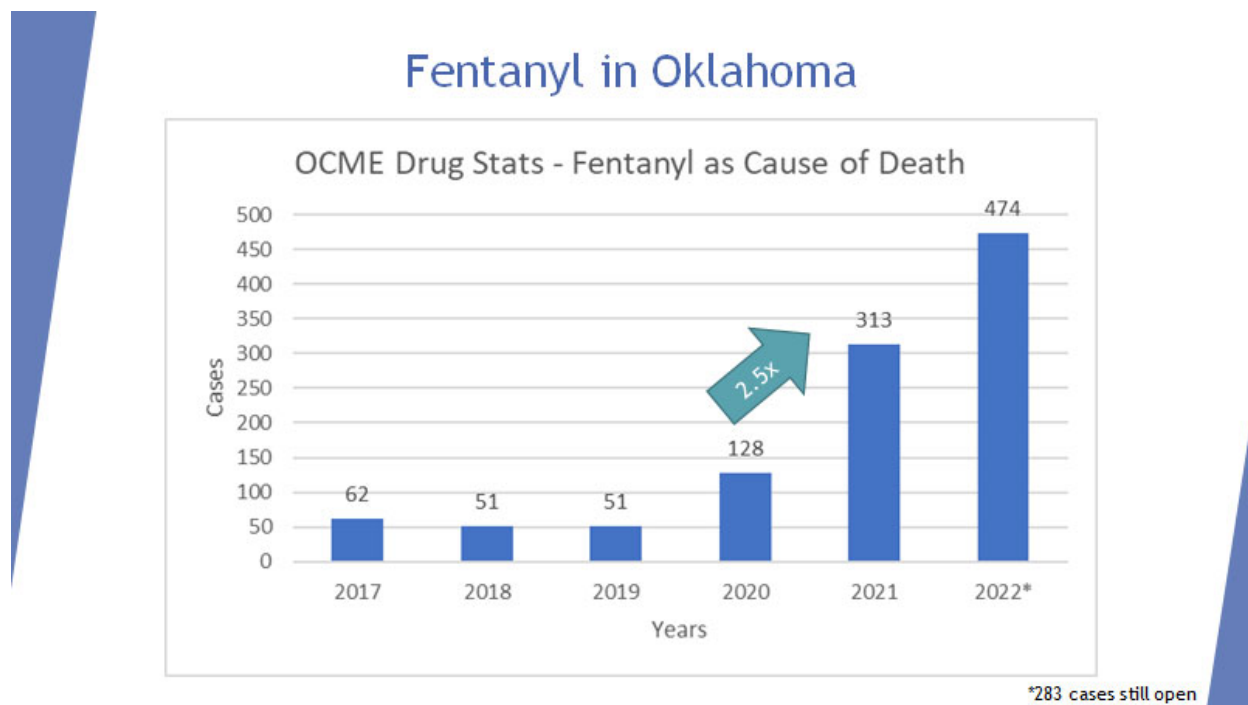
Eric Pfeifer, MD

## Foreword

The following is a reporting format that includes key operational components of the practice and quality indicators important to the mission of the OMCE. New information and data is **bolded**. Previous relevant material is *italicized*.

## Top Concerns for OCME operation

1. **The caseload does not appear to be waning after all. We are on track do examine about 8,500 patients this year. Deaths due to Fentanyl are skyrocketing. This is slowing us down in terms of case completion and certification of death certificates.**



*The caseload trend continues to be decreasing; we will continue to watch carefully so that we may make accurate assessments of future need for staffs, etc., this coming July.*

2. **We are optimistic about next year's appropriations request.**

**We have requested \$1.3M additional for one physician, 4 investigators.** Talks with legislative leaders have been positive.

- 3. We have (under the auspices of the Department of Health) received a grant to purchase a new CMS.**
- 4. Our grant proposal to expand the office and toxicology spaces in OKC was deemed out of scope. Time to regroup.**
- 5. We are open to contract/locums work from forensic pathologists to help with the workload. Full time employment is still the priority.**

*The caseload for body examinations has increased approximately 25% in the last two years. We are watching this trend and hope it subsides by this summer. This increase will not be sustainable in the long run without adding appropriate numbers of staffs.*

## **Physicians**

- 1. Open autopsy cases >90 days (excluding anthropology), May 2, 2023: 438.**
- 2. We are recruiting for FTE pathologists for OKC (2), and Tulsa (2).**
- 3. We are opening the practice to contract/locums work. This is hopefully temporary.**

*Open autopsy cases >90 days (excluding anthropology, April 1, 2021): 369 (up from 354).*

*We are recruiting for an additional FTE forensic pathologist for OKC.*

*Open cases >90 days (excluding anthropology, Nov 1, 2021): 354 (up from 325).*

*We estimated we need 16 staff and 2 fellow physicians (18 total) to meet re-accreditation parameters. We have offered staff positions to this year's fellows. One has accepted to join the staff.*

*There has been a substantial increase in caseload (>20%) since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. This seems to be slowing down.*

## **Fellowship in Forensic Pathology**

- 1. One new fellow (OKC) joins us in July 2023 for a year of forensic pathology training.**
- 2. We have applied for a grant to augment our fellowship program, including expanded compensation.**
- 3. National Match Day was May 3, 2023.**



- 4. One of this year's fellows will not be graduating.**
- 5. We have invested in increased advertising and visibility of our program, through presence at national conferences and in social media.**

*The Fellowship was just again granted continued accreditation by the ACGME.*

*Our OKC fellow has chosen to practice next year in Chicago. We are recruiting to fill the staff position we offered him.*

*Two new fellows join us in July 2022.*

*Our fellowship program has been granted continued ACGME (American Council of Graduate Medical Education) accreditation for two concurrent fellows. Two new fellows have joined us in July for their one year of subspecialty training in Forensic Pathology. Should they both remain as staff we will have 16 staff forensic pathologists. Fellowship applicants are continually being evaluated for admission to our training program.*

## **Administration**

**We are in the procurement phase of a new CMS.**

## **Anthropology**

- 1. We now have three full time forensic anthropologists on staff and have identified a justifiable need for a fourth; next year's budget request will include additional funding for that FTE.**
- 2. Dr. Getz had been appointed to the Board of Directors of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology.**

## **Autopsy Services**

- 1. We had a visit and OKC autopsy lab tour by Irina Flige of "Memorial."**
- 2. We had an OKC site visit by the German government department for organ and tissue donation.**

## **Information Technology**

- 1. We are in the procurement phase for a new CMS.**

## **2. Installment of LIMS and quality control software is ongoing.**

*We were offered by OMES to have an IT manager embedded with the OCME full time, and agreed it would be mission critical, given the IT-intense nature of our practice, to have such a person join us. This individual has been identified and embedded with us since July. The cost to OCME will be an additional (approximately) \$105,000 per year. We have enough funding to sponsor this person for at least two years, and will be requesting appropriations next fiscal year to sustain this position. We have already noticed a great positive change in the rapidity of IT issues and projects getting resolved. This person has been invaluable for the IT provisioning of the Tulsa building project.*

## **Investigations**

### **1. Scene response elapsed times (average, April 1): 1 hr., 25m.**

*Scene response elapsed times (average, April 1): 1 hr., 29m.*

*Scene response elapsed times (average, February 2022): 1 hr., 24m.*

*We are continuing to use Geosafe on a trial basis in OKC and Tulsa to optimize distances between investigators and scenes. This system maps the nearest investigator with a scene. So far this appears to be going well, and we hope to see a small improvement in scene response TAT.*

*We have recently been given permission to use My Health, which provides direct electronic access to electronic medical records across the state. The long-standing "bottleneck" for issuing permits has been waiting on medical records, and this should speed things up. This will cost the agency approximately \$25K per year for end-user licenses and we feel this is an appropriate investment in keeping our permit process as efficient as possible.*

*We will be requesting appropriations next fiscal year for an across-the-board salary adjustment for the investigators, as well as new equipment requests. The investigative leadership have presented us with a detailed report of market data and anticipated needs, and we will be discussing this in detail in the coming weeks as we prepare for the next budget cycle.*

### **2. Permit turnaround times (average, April 2023): 11hr., 59 m.**

*Permit turnaround times (average, May 2022): 12hr., 21 m.*

*Permit turnaround times (average, March 2022): 15hr., 56 m.*

*Permit turnaround times (average, Oct 2021): 16hr., 13 m.*

### **3. The Investigations fleet has been updated with new vehicles.**

## **Toxicology**

### **1. We now have four forensic toxicologists working to address the workload.**

### **2. Dr Cliburn is the new President-elect of the Southwestern Association of Toxicologists (SAT).**

- 3. Our chemists presented two important platform talks at the last SAT meeting.**
- 4. The tox lab desperately needs more space for personnel and instrumentation.**

*Two new GC instruments have been installed.*

*A LCMS will be installed in June.*

*The toxicology laboratory workload has been increasing every year for at least the last ten years, and they are on track to handle over 6,000 cases this year. They have continuously maintained national accreditation by the ABFT (American Board of Forensic Toxicology). The toxicology laboratory were inspected this year for the conventional accreditation by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology, and this will be the last year this accreditation track is available; afterward, the lab will need to secure and maintain ISO accreditation, and this means a substantial increase in complexity and workload required for this certification. This is one of the reasons we have requested an FTE increase of one additional Forensic Toxicologist.*

*We have signed a statement of work to have a LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) installed, costing us approximately \$358,000. This has been a five-year process and the selected system will be compatible with most of our analytical apparatus, and also offers advanced data mining capability.*

*We will be requesting appropriations next fiscal year for an across-the-board salary adjustment for the toxicologists and forensic chemists, as well as new equipment requests. The toxicology leadership have presented us with a detailed report of market data and anticipated needs, and we will be discussing this in detail in the coming weeks as we prepare for the next budget cycle.*

## **Legislative Issues**

- 1. SB707**
- 2. Multi-disciplinary group to address DC process in Oklahoma**

## **Priority Projects**

- 1. Re-accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners; anticipated by 2025. ???**

## Financial

FY23	APPROPRIATIONS	MONTHLY DEPOSITS	TOTAL	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	Profit/Loss
July	\$1,267,179.00	\$426,426.00	\$1,693,605.00	\$1,845,618.04	(\$152,013.04)
August	\$1,267,179.00	\$458,158.00	\$1,725,337.00	\$2,725,743.45	(\$1,000,406.45)
September	\$1,267,179.00	\$447,406.03	\$1,714,585.03	\$1,885,128.13	(\$170,543.10)
October	\$1,267,179.00	\$385,411.00	\$1,652,590.00	\$1,554,879.42	\$97,710.58
November	\$1,267,179.00	\$781,066.65	\$2,048,245.65	\$1,971,467.51	\$76,778.14
December	\$1,267,179.00	\$494,488.73	\$1,761,667.73	\$1,698,097.36	\$63,570.37
January	\$1,267,179.00	\$419,731.00	\$1,686,910.00	\$1,689,610.61	(\$2,700.61)
February	\$1,267,179.00	\$445,577.00	\$1,712,756.00	\$1,706,454.77	\$6,301.23
March	\$1,267,179.00	\$458,104.00	\$1,725,283.00	\$1,899,913.82	(\$174,630.82)
April	\$1,267,179.00				
May	\$1,267,179.00				
June	\$1,267,179.00				

Total Available Cash (April 4, 2023): \$9.97M

END



State of Oklahoma  
 Allotment Budget and Available Cash  
 As Of March 31,2023

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<u>Business Unit</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Dept</u>	<u>Bud Ref</u>	<u>Allocations</u>	<u>Pre Encumbered</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Current Yr Exp</u>	<u>Prior Yr Exp</u>	<u>Allotment Budget</u>	<u>Available Cash</u>
34200										
	191									0.00
	19101	01	21	1,286,430.14	.00	.00	.00	1,286,430.14	.00	
	19101	10	21	8,411,636.19	.00	.00	.00	8,411,636.19	.00	
	19101	90	21	5,500,000.00	.00	.00	.00	5,500,000.00	.00	
	19111	01	22	201.86	.00	.00	.00	201.86	.00	
	19111	10	22	2,073,434.81	.00	.00	.00	2,073,434.81	.00	
				<u>17,271,703.00</u>				<u>17,271,703.00</u>		
	192									2,384,035.89
	19201	01	22	1,219,848.00	.00	.00	1,204.76	1,218,643.24	.00	
	19201	10	22	11,942,209.00	.00	.00	16,073.95	9,542,099.16	2,384,035.89	
	19201	90	22	6,000,000.00	.00	.00	1,000,000.00	5,000,000.00	.00	
				<u>19,162,057.00</u>			<u>1,017,278.71</u>	<u>15,760,742.40</u>	<u>2,384,035.89</u>	
	193									82,368.64
	19301	01	23	1,325,650.00	.00	.00	1,008,493.61	.00	317,156.39	
	19301	10	23	13,880,494.00	.00	413,860.53	10,313,748.75	.00	3,152,884.72	
				<u>15,206,144.00</u>		<u>413,860.53</u>	<u>11,322,242.36</u>		<u>3,470,041.11</u>	
	200									7,288,799.84
	20000	01	21	30,950.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	30,950.00	
	20000	01	22	33,450.00	.00	.00	12.29	662.49	32,775.22	
	20000	01	23	33,449.00	.00	.00	3,299.32	.00	30,149.68	
	20000	10	21	4,402,531.00	.00	217,216.56	848.85	2,762,488.29	1,421,977.30	
	20000	10	22	4,375,745.78	8,469.16	549,446.58	677,936.38	2,176,182.48	963,711.18	
	20000	10	23	4,152,447.00	40,300.00	988,521.31	2,053,943.41	.00	1,069,682.28	



State of Oklahoma  
 Allotment Budget and Available Cash  
 As Of March 31,2023

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<u>Business Unit</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Dept</u>	<u>Bud Ref</u>	<u>Allocations</u>	<u>Pre Encumbered</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Current Yr Exp</u>	<u>Prior Yr Exp</u>	<u>Allotment Budget</u>	<u>Available Cash</u>
34200										
	200									7,288,799.84
	20000	88	21	1,965,757.00	866.64	194,657.16	502,055.50	1,169,002.94	99,174.76	
	20000	88	22	2,681,609.90	249,914.98	71,817.33	(260,919.11)	1,940,658.07	680,138.63	
	20000	88	23	1,859,908.00	136,159.09	416,728.28	1,093,508.71	.00	213,511.92	
	20000	90	21	500,000.00	.00	.00	.00	500,000.00	.00	
				20,035,847.68	435,709.87	2,438,387.22	4,070,685.35	8,548,994.27	4,542,070.97	
	383									0.00
	38301	10	21	500,000.00	.00	.00	.00	500,000.00	.00	
				500,000.00				500,000.00		
	400									216,229.44
	40000	01	21	25,020.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	25,020.00	
	40000	01	22	23,382.00	.00	.00	13,963.19	.00	9,418.81	
	40000	01	23	24,220.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	24,220.00	
	40000	10	21	56,117.00	.00	.00	.00	51,409.08	4,707.92	
	40000	10	22	46,648.00	.00	.00	.00	46,626.93	21.07	
	40000	10	23	142,161.00	.00	.00	41,522.40	.00	100,638.60	
	40000	88	22	500,000.00	.00	.00	454,114.82	.00	45,885.18	
	40000	88	23	500,000.00	.00	.00	22,558.24	.00	477,441.76	
				1,317,548.00			532,158.65	98,036.01	687,353.34	
Business Unit Totals				73,493,299.68	435,709.87	2,852,247.75	16,942,365.07	42,179,475.68	11,083,501.31	9,971,433.81



State of Oklahoma  
Allotment Budget and Available Cash  
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<u>Business</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Dept</u>	<u>Bud Ref</u>	<u>Allocations</u>	<u>Pre Encumbered</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Current Yr Exp</u>	<u>Prior Yr Exp</u>	<u>Allotment Budget</u>	<u>Available Cash</u>
Grand Totals					<u>73,493,299.68</u>	<u>435,709.87</u>	<u>2,852,247.75</u>	<u>16,942,365.07</u>	<u>42,179,475.68</u>	<u>11,083,501.31</u>	<u>9,971,433.81</u>