

**MEMORANDUM**  
**COUNTY OF PLACER**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**PROCUREMENT SERVICES DIVISION**

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: David Seward, Purchasing Manager 

DATE: February 20, 2007

SUBJECT: Approve the Sole-Source Request to Renew Blanket Purchase Order No. 13427 with National Medical Services for Forensic Toxicology Laboratory Services, and Approve the Issuance of a Blanket Purchase Order with National Medical Services in the Maximum Amount of \$70,000.00

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**ACTION REQUESTED**

Approve the sole-source request to renew Blanket Purchase Order (BPO) No. 13427 with National Medical Services of Willow Grove, PA, for forensic toxicology laboratory services on behalf of the Coroner's Office, and approve the issuance of a blanket purchase order with National Medical Services in the maximum amount of \$70,000.00, and authorize the Purchasing Manager to sign the resulting BPO.

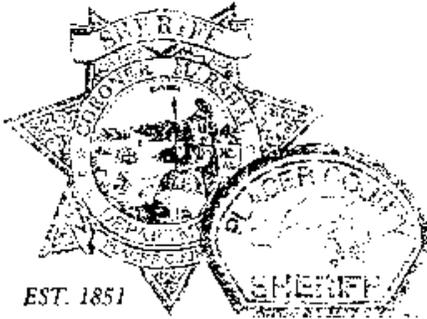
**BACKGROUND**

The Coroner's Office has requested the sole-source renewal of their forensic toxicology laboratory services BPO with National Medical Services. The last bid issued for this service was in 2002, and since then has undergone four contract periods that were within the Purchasing Manager's authority. The last BPO required two increases in the maximum amount, which received your Board's approval on 8/22/06 and 1/9/07, due to the unusually high workload in the Coroner's Office in the last year. The Coroner's Office has submitted a letter requesting your Board's approval to sole source the fifth annual contract period to National Medical Services. The sole source request is supported by Purchasing Policy Manual (PPM) 1.3(a), which states that contracts for expert and professional services that require extensive knowledge and expertise are exempt from competitive bidding. Since the Coroner's Office has requested a maximum amount of \$70,000.00, the BPO will require your Board's approval per PPM 2.1(b).

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The Coroners Office has budgeted sufficiently for their anticipated expenditures.

cc: Dennis Watt, Coroners Office  
Barbara Besana, Administrative Services Manager – Sheriffs Office  
Elisabeth Zmyslowski, Accountant Auditor/Supervisor – Sheriffs Office  
Attachment A: Letter from Dr. Donald M. Henrikson, Forensic Pathologist



PLACER COUNTY  
**SHERIFF**  
**CORONER-MARSHAL**



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**EDWARD N. BONNER**  
SHERIFF-CORONER-MARSHAL

**STEPHEN L. D'ARCY**  
UNDERSHERIFF

12/15/2006

Re: Forensic Toxicology Services with National Medical Services (NMS)

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for the Placer County Coroner to continue its contract with NMS for forensic toxicology services.

We are finding that comprehensive toxicology testing is becoming increasingly important for us to determine cause and manner of death. In part this results from the State of California's intent to promote pain relief, using powerful pain-relieving medications prescribed by physicians. State law now requires clinicians to receive regular continuing medical education training on pain relief. Secondly, young people are increasingly abusing prescription medications (especially pain relievers) with consequent lethal outcome so that ethanol plus illicit drug testing post mortem is not enough to identify these cases (as it was in the past, when young people were content to abuse ethanol and illicit drugs). NMS is fully capable of this comprehensive testing.

NMS has a national – indeed, international – reputation. NMS has the expertise (at least three individuals with Ph D degrees), equipment and quality control assurance programs in place to provide results that will stand up in court. I have attended several national meetings, where presentations were made by personnel from NMS, reflecting their well-recognized expertise.

NMS has so much more experience providing forensic toxicology services than California based labs that it actually serves as a reference lab for local labs.

As part of their reports to us NMS Toxicologists provide brief interpretations (what the results mean) that save us a lot of time (and money) in determining cause and manner of death. Otherwise – for example, if we have received results with no interpretations - we would have to spend time consulting reference works and other experts to understand what the results mean.

Currently, we do not have facilities to store toxicology samples after autopsies. Instead, we send all of our samples to NMS; I doubt very seriously that any other labs would be willing to receive all of our samples and we would have to spend money on larger storage facilities.

Whatever the decision Placer County makes regarding forensic toxicology services will have an impact on other counties, too. Currently, Nevada and Sierra County Coroner's autopsies are conducted at the Placer County Morgue. If Placer County were to contract with any other lab, while Nevada and Sierra counties continued to contract with NMS, it would complicate our handling of toxicology specimens significantly.

Recently, we became aware of a case in which a cause of death was botched because post mortem toxicology testing was not carried far enough (vitreous electrolyte chemistry studies were needed to establish diabetic ketoacidosis as the cause of death). I am convinced that at least part of the reason this happened is that counties, where this Pathologist usually works, do not spend enough money on post mortem toxicology services.

As you can see, I cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for Placer County Coroner to continue its contract with NMS for forensic toxicology services.

Sincerely,

*Donald M. Henrikson, M.D.*  
Donald M. Henrikson, MD  
Placer County, Forensic Pathologist

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