



Health Careers Fact Sheet

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Forensic Pathology / Medical Examiner

Forensic pathologists, or medical examiners, are specially trained physicians who examine the bodies of people who died suddenly, unexpectedly or violently. The forensic pathologist is responsible for determining the cause (the ultimate and immediate reasons for the cessation of life) and manner of death (homicide, suicide, accidental, natural or unknown). They also ensure that procedures regarding evidence collection are followed, and coordinate their work with law enforcement operations. A city, county or state may appoint a forensic pathologist to act as a medical examiner. Clinical forensic pathologists examine living patients, usually in cases where sexual assault or abuse is suspected. Once all the evidence is analyzed, the forensic pathologist prepares a written report and may also testify to these findings in court. ([EHC](#))

Degree

A forensic pathologist must first earn a bachelor's degree, then a medical degree, either an M.D. or D.O. Extensive additional education and training is required, including four to five years of training in anatomic, clinical and/or forensic pathology and a one-year residency or fellowship in forensic pathology. Once training is completed, a forensic pathologist must then pass an examination given by the American Board of Pathology. ([EHC](#))

Program Length

Bachelor's Degree (4 Years), then M.D. or D.O. (4 Years), plus additional training and certification (another 4-5 years).

Professional Organizations

[American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#)

[National Association of Medical Examiners](#)

[American Society for Investigative Pathology](#)

[Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\)](#)

- [Program Finder](#)
- [Program List](#)
- [Medical Detective Information](#)

Application Service

For M.D., apply through [AMCAS](#).

For D.O., apply through [AACOMAS](#).

Academic Admission Requirements

An undergraduate degree. One year each: Biology, Inorganic Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Physics, English. Some schools may also require a full year of Calculus; it is recommended to discuss your math plans with the premedical advisor. Note: Some schools have very specific requirements often including Microbiology, Statistics, and Biochemistry. See Allopathic Medicine and Osteopathic Medicine Fact Sheets for more information.

Students should also consider volunteering for or shadowing a medical examiner/examiner's office.

Admission Exam

[Medical Admissions Test](#) (MCAT) for M.D./D.O. Program

PREMEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH ADVISING

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