ABANDONED BODIES

State law (California Health & Safety Code Sections 7100-7104) requires San Diego County to handle the disposition of decedents who have been declared indigent, whose body is abandoned by the legal next of kin, or when next of kin is unable to be located. The disposition is the final state of the body after death: *identified* abandoned bodies are always cremated, while *unidentified* abandoned bodies are always buried to allow for possible identification in the future.

A family that is unable to take care of the disposition of their loved one due to financial reasons can apply for Indigent Assistance through the Public Administrator's Office. Provided they meet the financial criteria, the Public Administrator will assist the family in selecting a cremation service and will pay for the cremation.

If the family cannot be located, fails to act, or does not apply for or qualify for Indigent Assistance, a decedent's body may be declared "Abandoned" after 30 days have passed since the death. The Medical Examiner's Office handles abandoned bodies over which we have taken jurisdiction, as well as those abandoned at a hospital or mortuary.

On a rotating basis, county mortuaries and cremation service providers have agreed to take part in this process for a specific reimbursement amount. As the funding falls under the budget of the Public Administrator/Public Guardian (PA/PG), the PA/PG is involved in the disposition of every abandoned body and every Indigent body.

In 2010 the Abandoned Body Investigator was involved in 178 cases. Of those:

140 (79%)	Family failed to act.
38 (21%)	Family was not located.
91 (51%)	Were Medical Examiner cases
8 (4%)	Abandoned infants who were referred to the Garden of Innocence for burial
9 (5%)	Veterans whose ashes were inurned at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery
1	John Doe buried at La Vista Memorial Park