



MEDICAL EXAMINER

Annual Report

2022

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Mission Statement

To provide accurate and timely medicolegal death investigations, while maintaining the highest standard of professionalism and integrity. Our staff is dedicated to respecting the needs of families as well as the interest of the general public.

Office History

The Jefferson County Medical Examiner's Office was established in 2015, after replacing the long-standing coroner's office. A medical examiner differs from a coroner in that a medical examiner is appointed by the county administrator/executive and is required to have specific qualifications, while a coroner is elected to fulfill the position. In four Wisconsin counties, the medical examiner must be a licensed physician that is board certified in forensic pathology. The Jefferson County Medical Examiner's Office is headed by a non-physician medical examiner that has met designated education and experience requirements for this position. When further investigation of a case is needed, autopsy services and toxicology testing are contracted with local pathologists and toxicology labs.

The office is currently staffed with one full time medical examiner, one part time in-office investigator, and a pool of per diem medicolegal death investigators. Due to the nature of the job, the office operates 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, with all staff members rotating on-call hours.

Office Responsibilities

The Medical Examiner's Office is responsible for conducting thorough death investigations to determine the cause and manner of death as required under Wisconsin State Statute 979. Autopsy and other testing may be ordered to assist in these determinations. Specialists in the fields of forensic anthropology, forensic odontology, forensic entomology, radiology, pediatrics, cardiology, neuropathology and other specialties are sometimes contacted for additional support.

Other responsibilities of the office include:

- ❖ Cremation investigations
- ❖ Disinterment permitting
- ❖ Death certification
- ❖ Decedent identification
- ❖ Notification of next of kin
- ❖ Courtroom testimony
- ❖ Disposition of unclaimed decedents
- ❖ Community education and outreach

Following the completion of case investigations, medical examiner reports and statistical data are shared with interested parties such as families, medical providers, healthcare agencies, law enforcement, insurance companies, and attorneys. Other agencies with which important case information is shared includes but is not limited to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Drug Enforcement Administration, Jefferson County Health Department, and Jefferson County Human Services.

A Message from the Medical Examiner

The Medical Examiner's Office staff is dedicated to providing professional and precise death investigations to Jefferson County. We also strive to participate in local events and outreaches in an effort to provide awareness to the community. Below I would like to share with you a list of accomplishments from 2022 and goals for 2023.

Highlights of 2022:

- ❖ Began paperless filing and scanning old case files to decrease storage needs
- ❖ Participated as co-leader of the Zero Suicide Team
- ❖ Applied for and received a grant for the Zero Suicide Team to fund a suicide prevention vehicle window vinyl for the Jefferson Police Department
- ❖ Organized and participated in a Zero Suicide Team fundraiser
- ❖ Began process of restarting the Child Death Review Team
- ❖ Trained part-time in-office investigator on office duties to relieve Medical Examiner
- ❖ Provided education to outside agencies and healthcare providers
- ❖ Provided mutual aid to other counties

Goals for 2023:

- ❖ Resume Child Death Review Team meetings in effort to prevent child deaths
- ❖ Participate in Overdose Fatality Review Team
- ❖ Finalize and distribute grief brochure to grieving families
- ❖ Implement more efficient and accessible case database
- ❖ Continue scanning old case files to minimize storage needs
- ❖ Continue to co-lead the Zero Suicide Team and participate in awareness events
- ❖ Continue to provide education to outside agencies
- ❖ Continue to provide mutual aid for other counties

Respectfully,

Nichol Tesch
Medical Examiner

Statistical Data

Monthly Case Totals¹

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2018	58	50	50	56	36	44	48	40	32	54	42	41	551
2019	47	34	47	44	33	56	45	43	56	40	44	59	548
2020	55	61	68	47	38	48	45	52	55	68	78	74	689
2021	64	58	49	45	45	44	53	72	57	64	67	78	696
2022	68	52	52	43	65	58	53	61	59	63	53	64	701

Case Type

Year	Scene Investigation	Phone Investigation	Cremation-Only	Mutual Aid
2018	156	189	206	4
2019	118	264	166	7
2020	172	304	213	8
2021	155	330	211	11
2022	155	350	196	5

Manners of Death²

Year	Natural	Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Undetermined	Pending
2018	477	56	15	1	2	0
2019	473	59	14	0	2	0
2020	602	69	13	3	2	0
2021	632	55	8	1	0	0
2022	612	73	8	1	7	0

¹ Includes all cases reported: Phone and scene investigations, mutual aid, and cremation-only cases.

² Includes all cases

Drug Death Statistics (Most Common)

Year	Total Drug-Related Cases	Opiates (All)	Heroin	Fentanyl and/or Fentanyl Analogs	Cocaine	Methamphetamine
2018	13	10	3	7	3	2
2019	18	16	1	15	4	0
2020	15	14	2	11	3	0
2021	16	12	2	8	5	4
2022	22	18	2	17	8	10

Other Statistics of Interest

Year	Pathological Exams Completed	Death Certificates Signed	Cremation Permits Issued	Disinterment Permits Issued	Indigent Cases	Traffic Fatalities
2018	50	127	403	1	2	15
2019	52	120	419	0	2	7
2020	63	212	504	1	4	9
2021	46	199	495	0	3	12
2022	56	180	530	1	4	9

Revenue Details

Source	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cremation Permits	\$77,764	\$78,699	\$99,002	\$98,130	\$104,500
Death Certificates	\$2,900	\$2,800	\$5,050	\$4,574	\$4,750
Tissue Recovery	\$3,625	\$1,300	\$1,600	\$1,300	\$1,200
Other	\$375	\$1,200	\$475	\$850	\$0
Total	\$84,664	\$83,999	\$106,127	\$104,854	\$110,450

END OF REPORT