



MEDICAL EXAMINER

Annual Report 2019

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A Message from the Medical Examiner

The annual report for the Medical Examiner's Office provides a statistical breakdown of the cases reported to the office as well as data related to other office functions. In comparison to the 2018 annual report, the office investigated approximately the same number of cases; however, staff spent more time investigating the deaths, as the number of cases requiring further investigation increased. Additionally, as the nation continued to see an increase in drug-related deaths, Jefferson County also showed an increase in drug-related deaths. The statistics on page 7 of this report provide details of these deaths.

Highlights of 2019 Include:

- ❖ Participation in Palmyra-Eagle mock crash event
- ❖ Participation in the Jefferson County Child Death Review Team
- ❖ Participation in the Jefferson County Zero Suicide Team, including developing and attending community awareness events
- ❖ Installation of indigent vault at Potter's Field
- ❖ Provided education to local law enforcement, first responders, healthcare agencies, and local students
- ❖ Provided mutual aid to other counties

Goals for 2020 Include:

- ❖ Develop a general grief/resource brochure
- ❖ Continue to cross train medical examiner staff
- ❖ Continue to participate in the Child Death Review Team
- ❖ Continue to participate in the Zero Suicide Team and community awareness events
- ❖ Continue to provide education to outside agencies and local students
- ❖ Continue to provide mutual aid for other counties

The Medical Examiner's Office staff is dedicated to providing professional and precise death investigations to the Jefferson County community.

Respectfully,

Nichol Tesch
Medical Examiner

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 specified qualifications, while a coroner is an elected official who generally does not need to meet specific qualifications other than a minimum age. In a few 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 required to meet designated education and/or experience requirements. 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 and six per diem medicolegal death investigators. All staff members are required to complete at least one training per year for continuing education purposes. They are also encouraged to complete death investigation certification through the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. Multiple staff members currently hold this certification. 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.

Statistical Data

Monthly Case Totals¹

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2015	60	46	40	36	35	39	33	47	48	48	53	40	525
2016	44	39	51	43	41	42	34	32	30	38	39	40	473
2017	45	44	51	36	50	43	36	50	36	49	40	44	524
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

Case Type

Year	Scene Investigation	Phone Investigation	Cremation-Only	Mutual Aid
2015	123	223	179	11
2016	116	201	156	9
2017	160	161	203	6
2018	156	189	206	4
2019	118	264	166	7

Manners of Death²

Year	Natural	Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Undetermined	Pending
2015	465	46	11	1	2	0
2016	407	56	9	0	1	0
2017	443	60	19	1	1	0
2018	477	56	15	1	2	0
2019	473	59	14	0	2	0

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

² Includes all reported deaths, mutual aid, and cremation-only cases.

Cause of Death Statistics of Interest

Year	Total Drug-Related Cases	Heroin Contributing	Fentanyl and/or Fentanyl Analogs Contributing	Other Opiates Contributing
2015	14	6	2	5
2016	12	6	3	7
2017	16	11	4	4
2018	13	3	7	4
2019	18	1	15	4

Other Statistics of Interest

Year	Cremation Permits Issued	Disinterment Permits Issued	Deaths Certified	Autopsies Completed	Indigent Cases	Traffic Fatalities
2015	374	0	124	43	3	9
2016	339	1	116	40	2	8
2017	398	1	127	48	4	14
2018	403	1	127	50	2	15
2019	419	0	120	52	2	7

Revenue Details

Source	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cremation Permits	\$74,000	\$63,760	\$72,200	\$77,764	\$78,699
Death Certificates	\$3,100	\$2,675	\$3,125	\$2,900	\$2,800
Tissue Recovery	\$800	\$2,850	\$3,025	\$3,625	\$1,300
Other	\$255	\$1,545	\$939.28	\$375	\$1,200
Total	\$78,155	\$70,830	\$79,289.28	\$84,664	\$83,999

END OF REPORT