

Jefferson Parish Coroner



2020 Annual Report

Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office
2018 8th Street
Harvey, 70058



Accredited by the
National Association
of
Medical Examiners

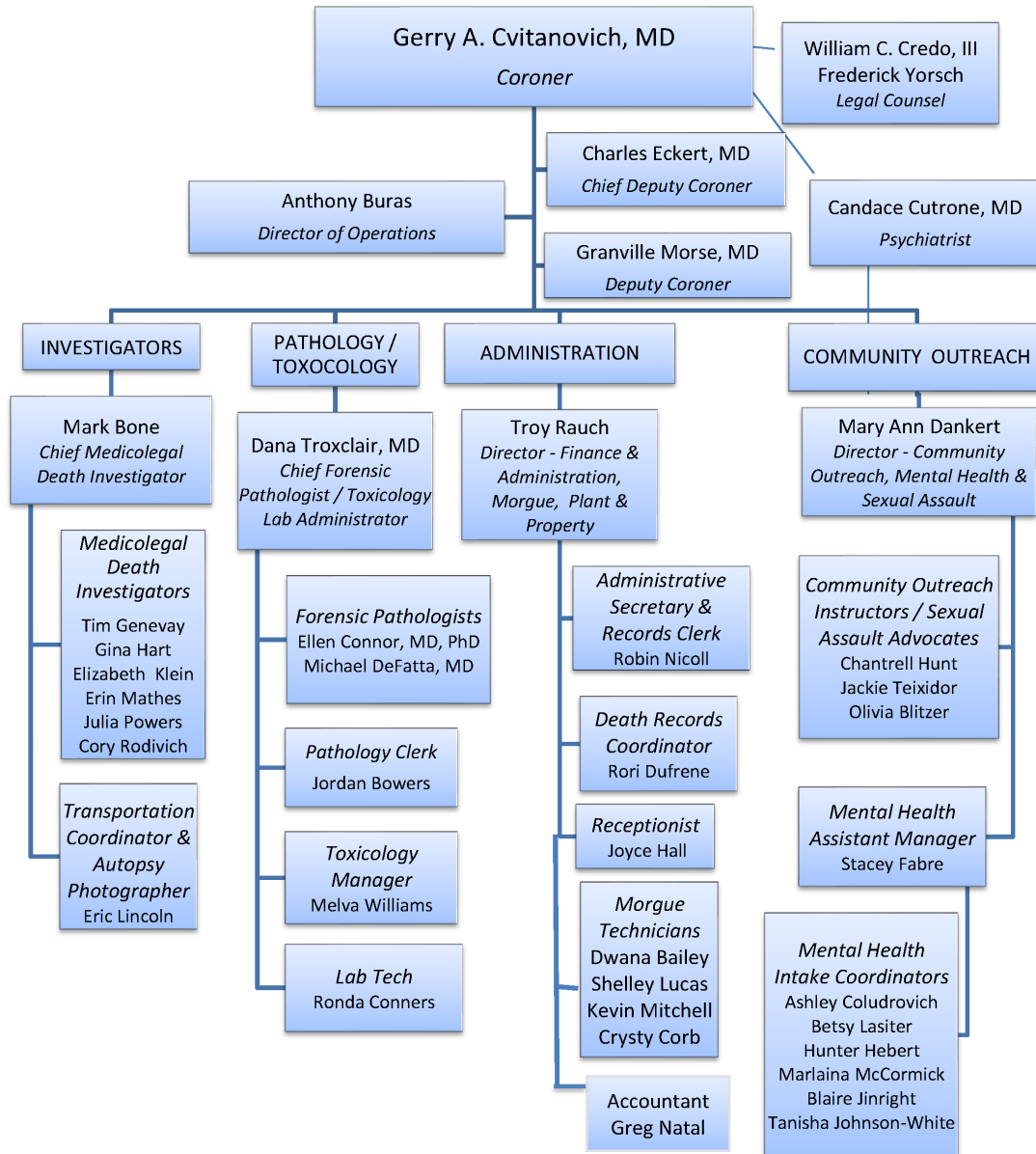
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Organizational chart

JEFFERSON PARISH CORONER'S OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2020



Brief Summary

Population (est. 2019)	432,493
Cases Reported to Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office	4467
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	536
1. Number of coroner cases with complete autopsy and toxicological analysis	472
2. Number of coroner cases with external examination and toxicological analysis	64
3. Number of hospital autopsies retained under coroner's office jurisdiction	0
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	631
C. Number of death scene investigations	551
D. Number of unidentified bodies	1
E. Number of exhumations performed	0
F. Number of bodies transported to the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office	862

The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) is the only Coroner's Office in the State of Louisiana Accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners and is under the direction of Dr. Gerry Cvitanovich, who was elected Coroner in 2011. The office is staffed by board certified forensic pathologists, certified death investigators, toxicology lab technologists, morgue technicians and trained administrative staff. State statute mandates that JPCO provide death investigations, mental health evaluations and the examination of victims of sexually-oriented criminal offenses. As a result, Coroner's Office staff members are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year to provide competent death investigations, prompt transportation services and the timely completion of case reports and death certificates to be used by families and the legal system.

The Coroner may order an autopsy as he deems necessary to help certify the death. Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest and successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case or may also exonerate an innocent person. We are an independent and autonomous office who works for neither the prosecution nor the defense. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies when appropriate. Our team of professionals are also available to answer questions and address concerns regarding deaths within the Parish. Death investigators frequently make personal contact with family members and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death and also give answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and may distribute resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2012, Dr. Cvitanovich began a program of community outreach in the schools and community at large. The purpose of this program is to educate our children regarding the dangers of drugs and the consequences as it relates to teens, sex and the law. The program has been received well by educators, students and their parents. The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office will continue to serve the community with professionalism and integrity throughout the death investigation process as well as providing guidance and compassion for those suffering from mental illness and victims of sexual oriented criminal offenses. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Jefferson Parish Council for their support of the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office and the services we provide to the citizens of the Jefferson Parish.

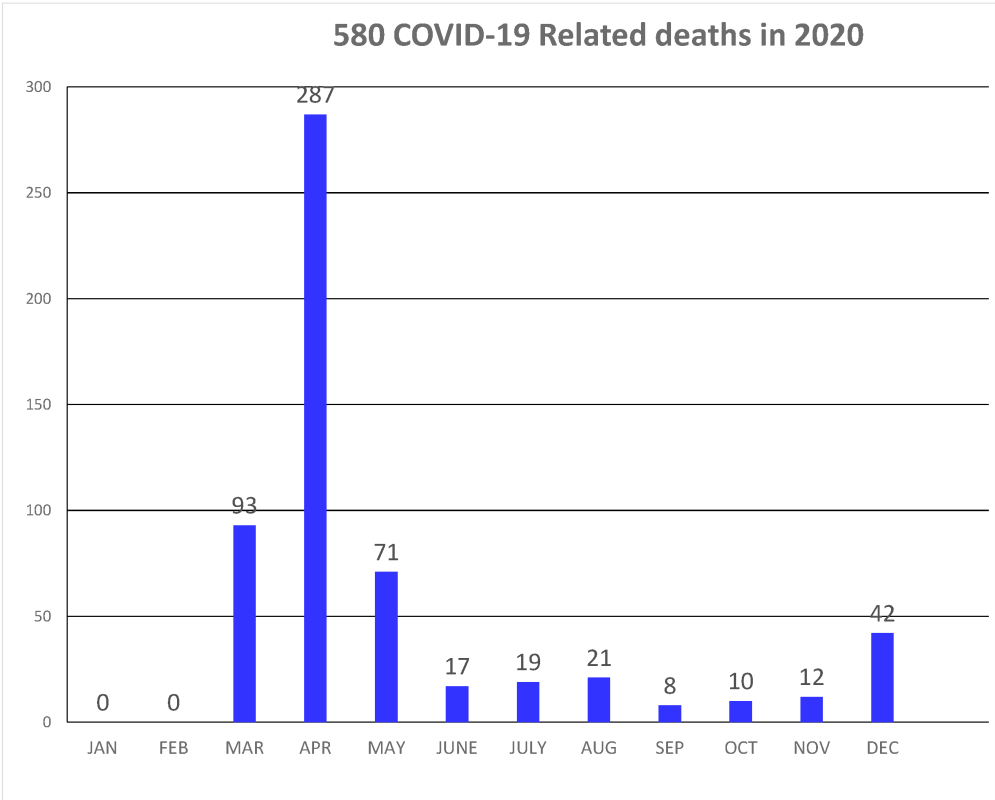
The COVID-19 pandemic poses unique challenges for the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) and significantly changed death investigation processes. As a state of emergency was declared by Governor Edwards in March, a plan was developed to provide for the continued delivery of essential medicolegal services while protecting the health and safety of staff during the pandemic. Our department had to assume that all cases were potentially COVID-19 positive. Increased PPE was necessary, and our department felt obligated to ensure the safety of law enforcement and funeral home staff who were necessary to complete removals. Our team has displayed consistent and stringent adherence to the strictest precautionary measures during our time in decedents' homes to ensure the safety of our community members. Adherence to CDC guidelines is strongly modeled by leadership and expected of our team members. We also were required to have contact with members of the public who may or may not have respected social distancing and mask recommendations. Our risk of exposure to COVID19 is a daily challenge for our team.

Key components of the JPCO COVID-19 Response Plan included:

- All reported decedents that fall under JPCO jurisdiction were accepted for examination by the JPCO per routine practice.
- Steps were initiated to streamline usual operations, namely to increase workflow efficiency to allow for management of a potential excess of deaths related to COVID-19 and maximize safe handling of potentially infectious human remains by JPCO workers and others in the public involved in death care services.
- Operational modification strategies targeted decreasing the number of physical examinations when not necessary to determine cause and manner of death and minimizing excess handling of potentially infectious human remains during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Physical placement of employees within the office was revised and scheduling changes were made in order to maximize social distancing requirements. The JPCO identified and conferenced with managers from all hospitals and major health care facilities that had mortuaries with the expressed goal of avoiding any undue delay in achieving final

disposition for decedents during the COVID-19 pandemic. • The JPCO communicated support strategies with law enforcement and first responders who would be handling the deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic that did not occur at a health care facility. • The JPCO implemented a comprehensive temporary Storage Facility to handle the surge in deaths and planned to take the lead and manage these bodies to ensure that death care and mortuary services remained functional and uninterrupted throughout Jefferson Parish and the Metro area, The Storage Center allowed for processing, identification, temporary storage of decedents, which required constant communication and coordination with funeral homes, crematories, and hospital mortuaries. Our response plan provides the framework for maintaining essential functions for the duration and aftermath of this pandemic.

COVID-19 Related Deaths



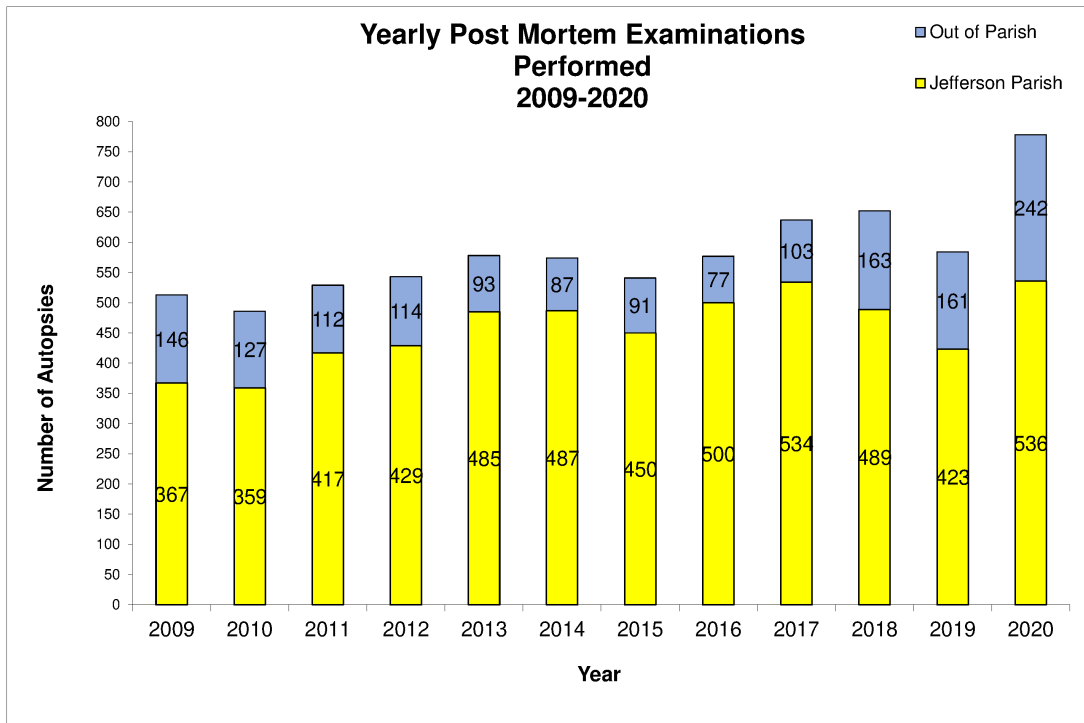
Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

As per Louisiana R.S. 13:5713 (A), the Coroner shall either view the body or make an investigation into the cause and manner of death in all cases involving the following:

- (1) Suspicious, unexpected, or unusual deaths.
- (2) Sudden or violent deaths.
- (3) Deaths due to unknown or obscure causes or in any unusual manner.
- (4) Bodies found dead.
- (5) Deaths due to suspected suicide or homicide.
- (6) Deaths in which poison is suspected.
- (7) Any death from natural causes occurring in a hospital under twenty-four hours of admission.
- (8) Deaths following an injury or accident either old or recent.
- (9) Deaths due to drowning, hanging, burns, electrocution, gunshot wounds, stabs or cutting, lightning, starvation, radiation, exposure, alcoholism, addiction, tetanus, strangulation, suffocation, or smothering.
- (10) Deaths due to trauma from whatever cause.
- (11) Deaths due to criminal means or by casualty.
- (12) Deaths in prison or while serving a sentence.
- (13) Deaths due to virulent contagious disease that might be caused by or cause a public hazard, including AIDS.

As per Louisiana R.S. 13:5713 (B,C), there are two circumstances in Louisiana when an autopsy must be performed: 1) In the case of any death where there is a reasonable probability that the violation of a criminal statute has contributed to the death, 2) Any infant under the age of one year dies unexpectedly, without explanation, with no underlying disease process.

Post Mortem Exams (Autopsies) Performed from 2009-2020

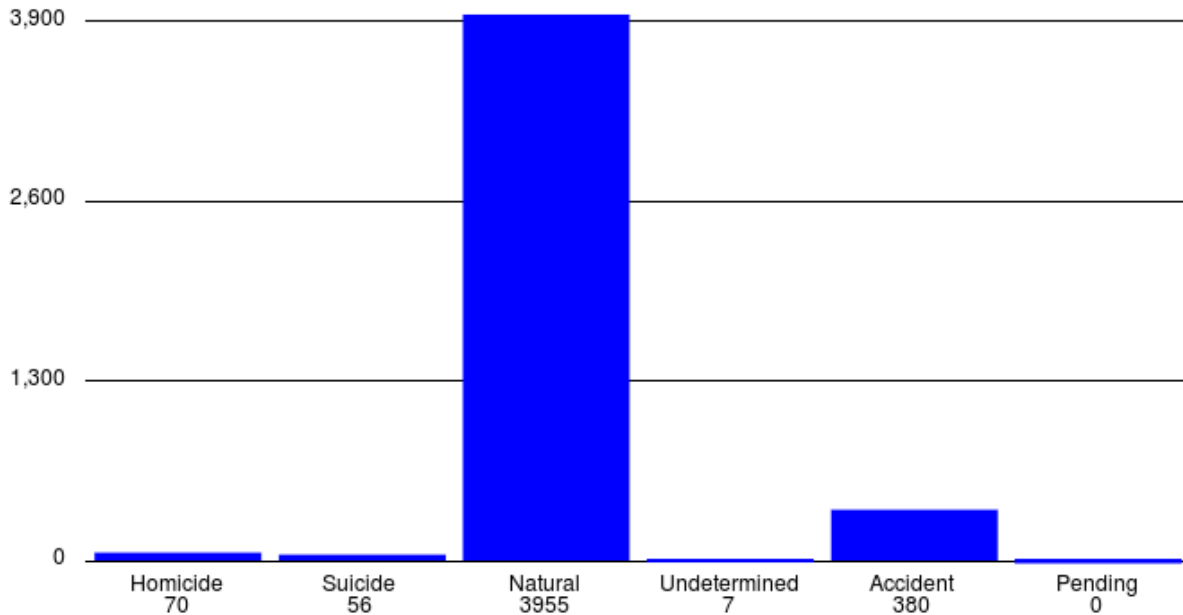


In 2020, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office accepted jurisdiction in 4464 cases, of those, 536 were autopsied. This graph depicts the number of post mortem exams performed over the past 12 years. The office also performed 242 autopsies for 12 other Coroner agencies in the state.

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent with toxicological analysis.

External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent with toxicological analysis.

Manner of Death following an Autopsy and/or Death Investigation



The **Manner of Death** is a classification of the way in which the cause of death came about, whether by force of natural events, accidental means, self-inflicted wounds, or other external forces. Manner of Death is determined largely by means of the investigation. There are only five (5) manners of death, listed below. The Coroner is the only one authorized to utilize all five manners of death on the death certificate.

Natural: Death caused solely by disease. If a natural death is hastened by injury or any other non-natural event (e.g. fall,), the manner of death will not be considered natural. If the terminal process is caused by a non-natural event (e.g. pneumonia due to long-term bed confinement as a result of a motor vehicle crash), the manner of death will not be considered natural.

Suicide: Death due to injury that occurred with the intent to cause one's own death.

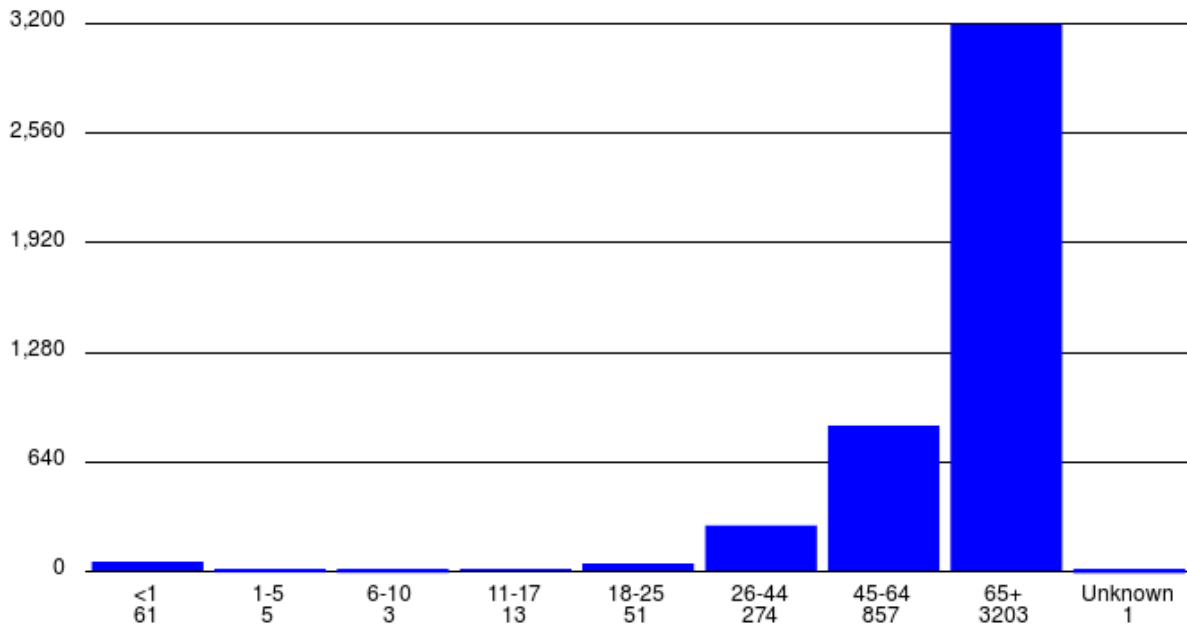
Accident: Death other than natural where there is no evidence of intent: i.e. an unintentional event of chain of events. This category includes motor vehicle crashes, falls, drowning, accidental drug overdoses, etc.

Homicide: Death resulting from injuries caused by the actions of another person.

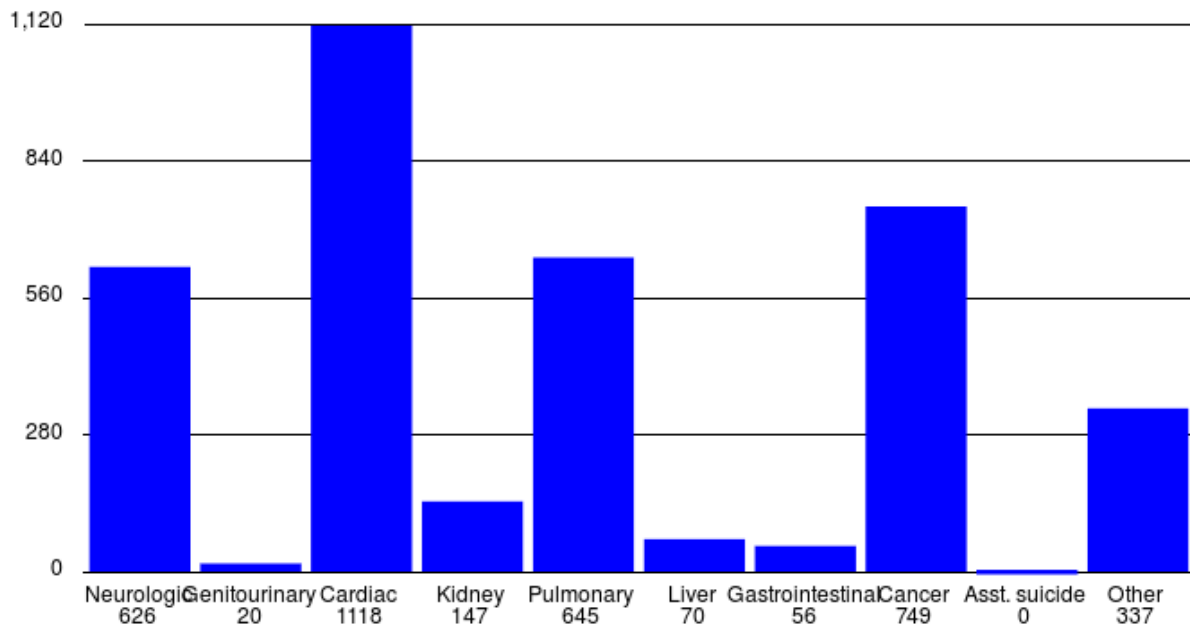
- Homicidal manner does not indicate a *criminal* homicide, which is determined by the legal process and not the certifier of the death.

Undetermined: Manner assigned when there is insufficient evidence, or conflicting information (especially about intent), to assign a specific manner of death.

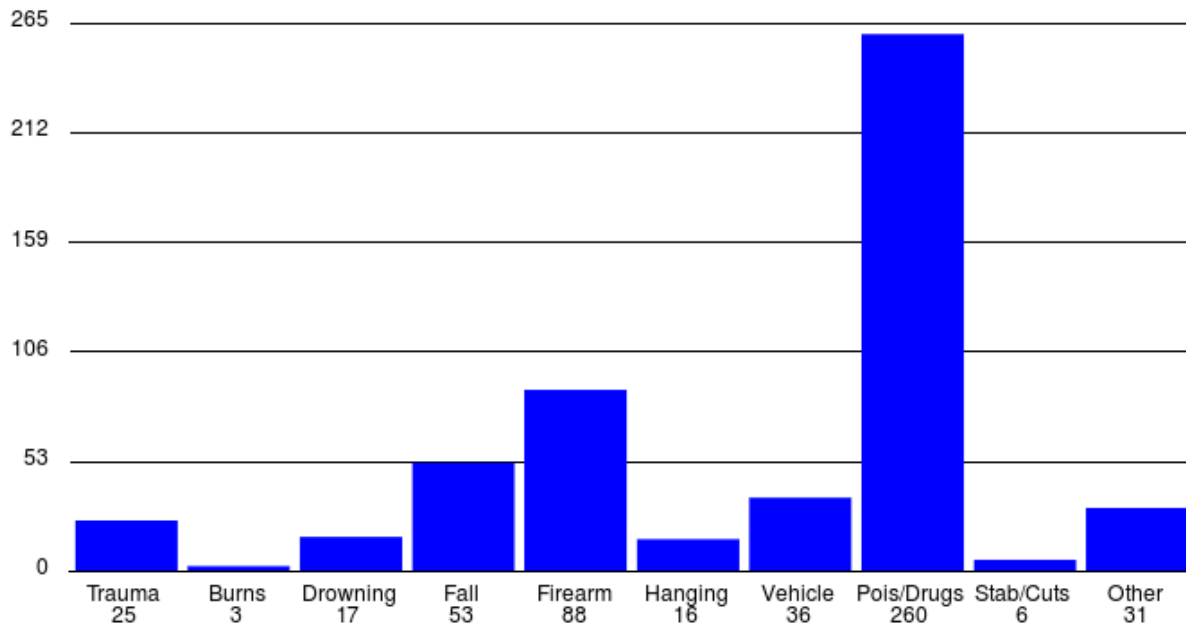
Deaths by Age Group



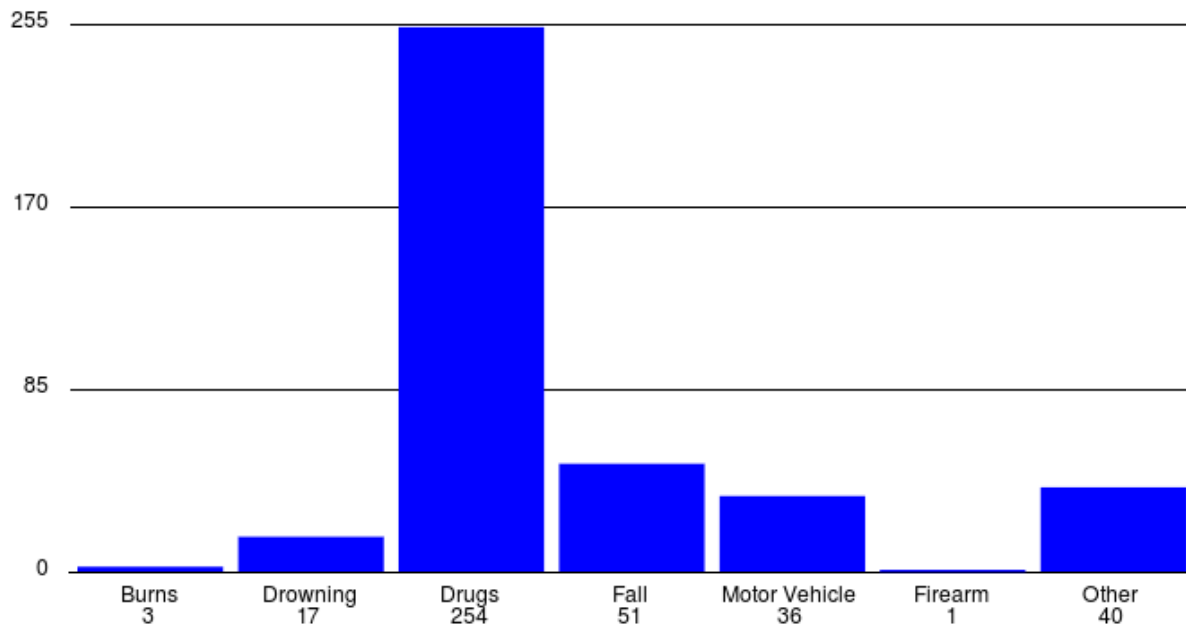
Deaths by Natural Causes



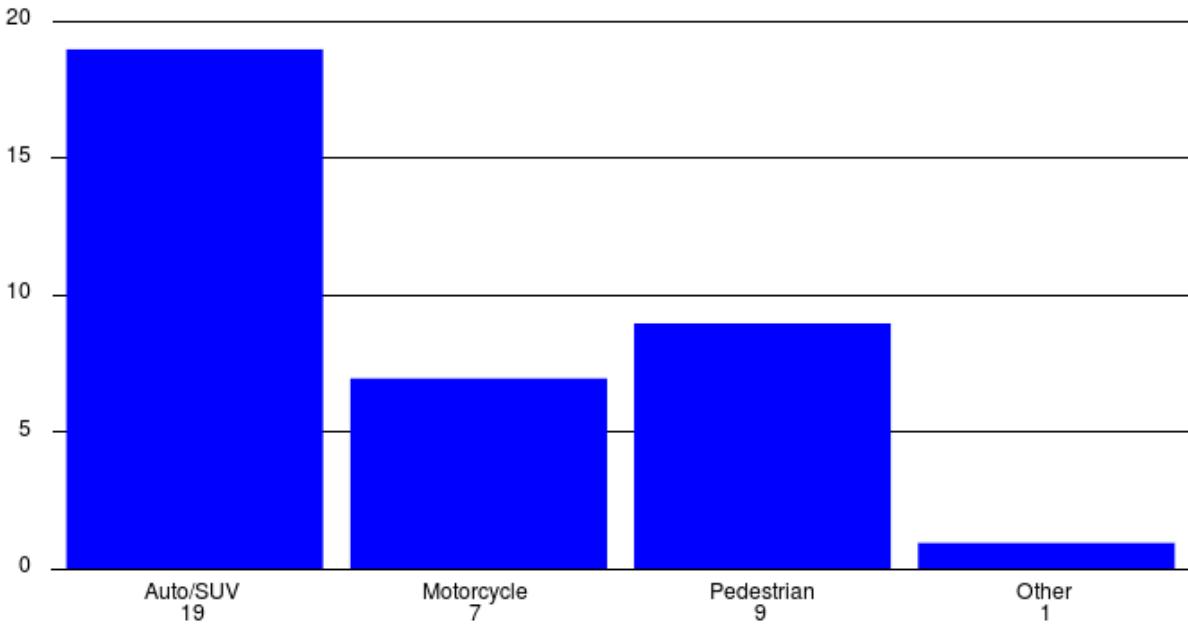
Deaths by Unnatural Causes



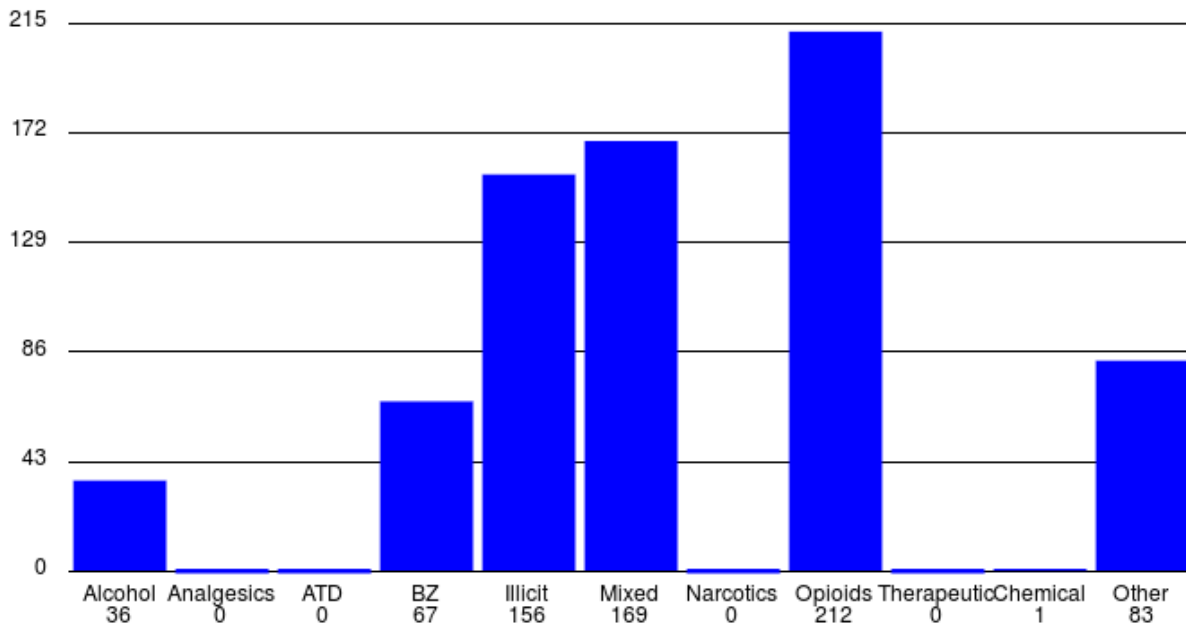
Accidental Deaths by Type



Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes

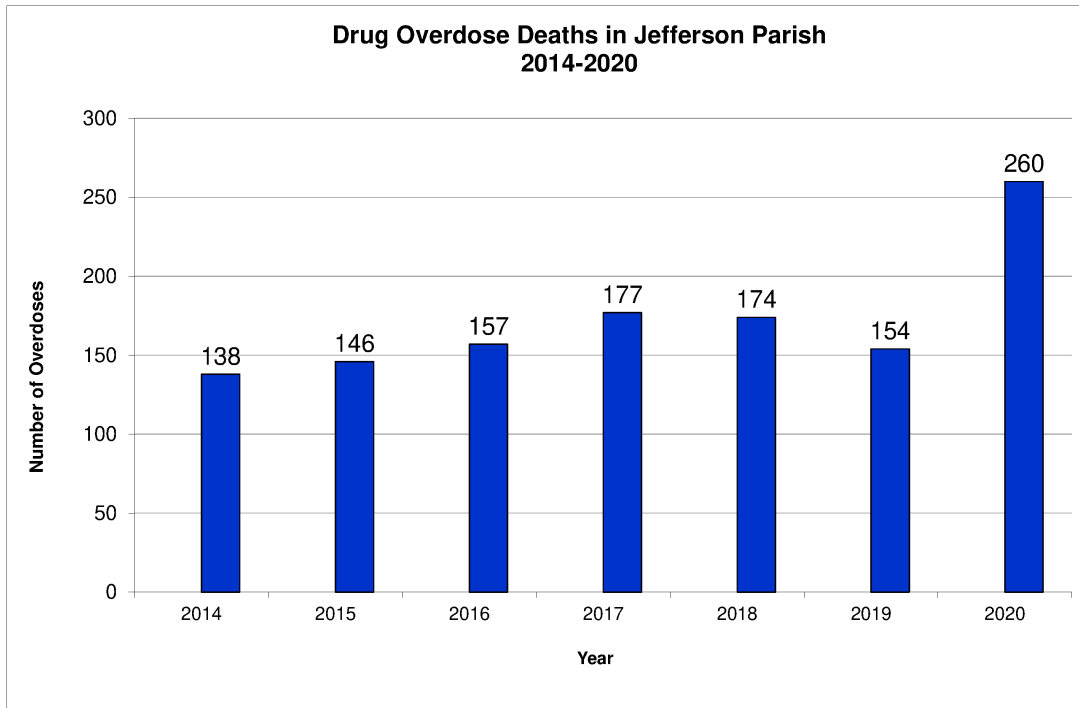


Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



Analgesics, Antidepressants (ATD), Narcotics, Therapeutics: These drug categories were not used to classify any drug deaths in Jefferson Parish

Drug Overdose Deaths 2014-2020



Fentanyl Related Deaths

2014: 8
2015: 15
2016: 25
2017: 66
2018: 78
2019: 75
2020: 179

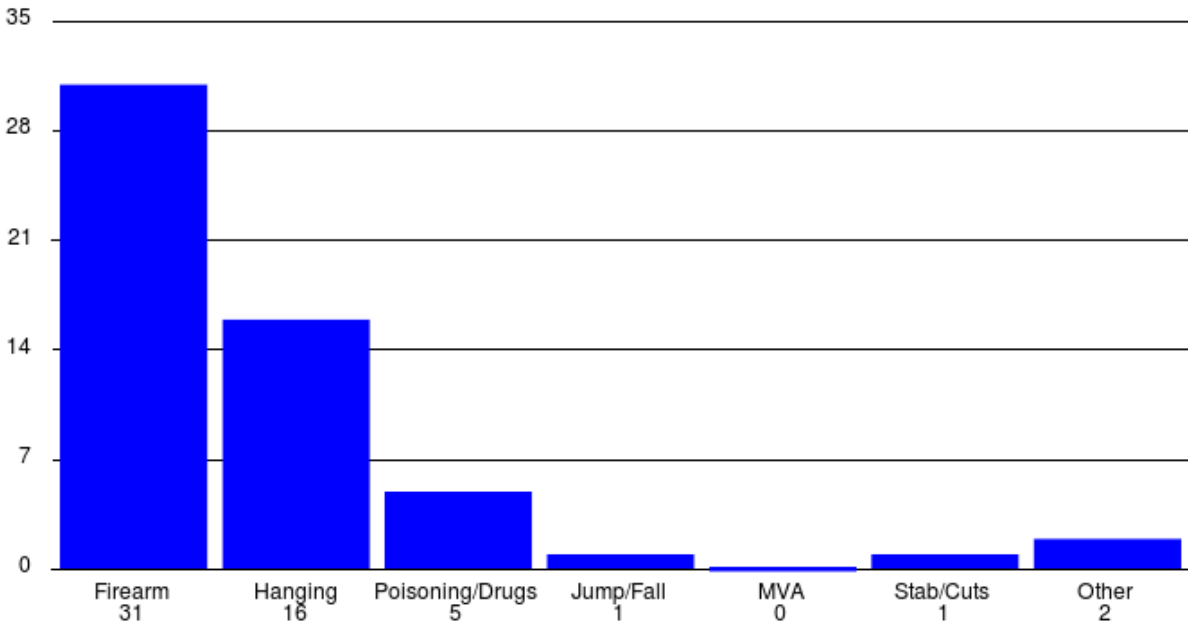
Methamphetamine Related

2014: 5
2015: 12
2016: 17
2017: 21
2018: 30
2019: 24
2020: 49

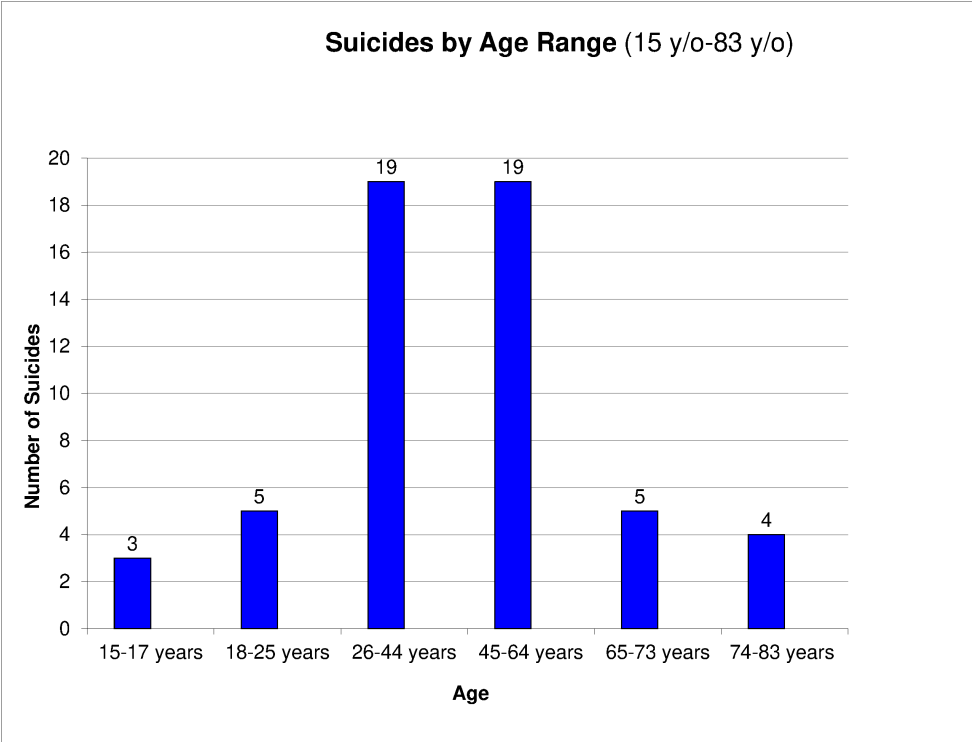
Heroin Related Deaths

2014: 66
2015: 65
2016: 64
2017: 63
2018: 54
2019: 61
2020: 76

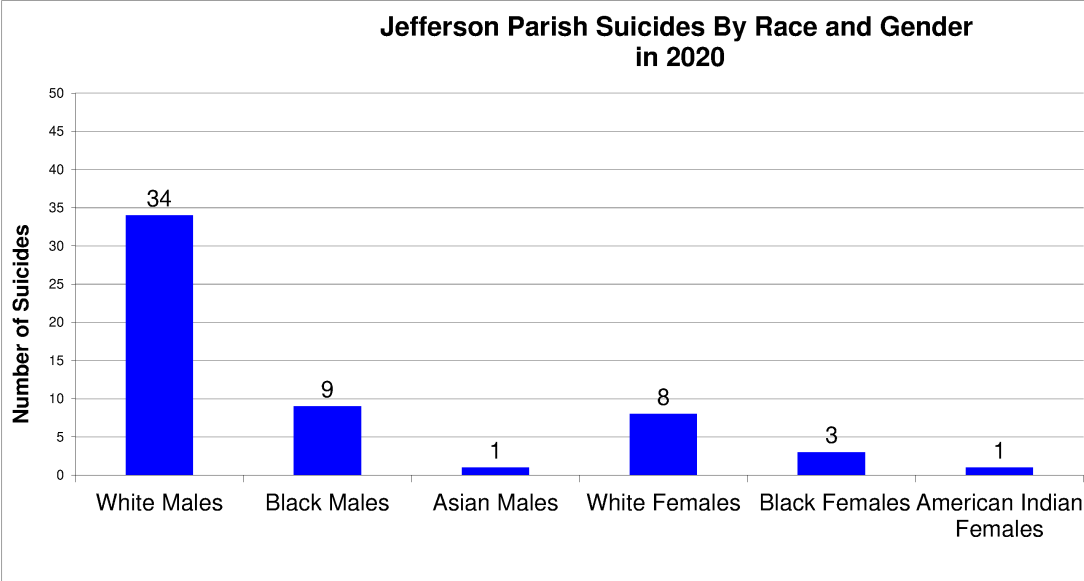
Suicide by Means



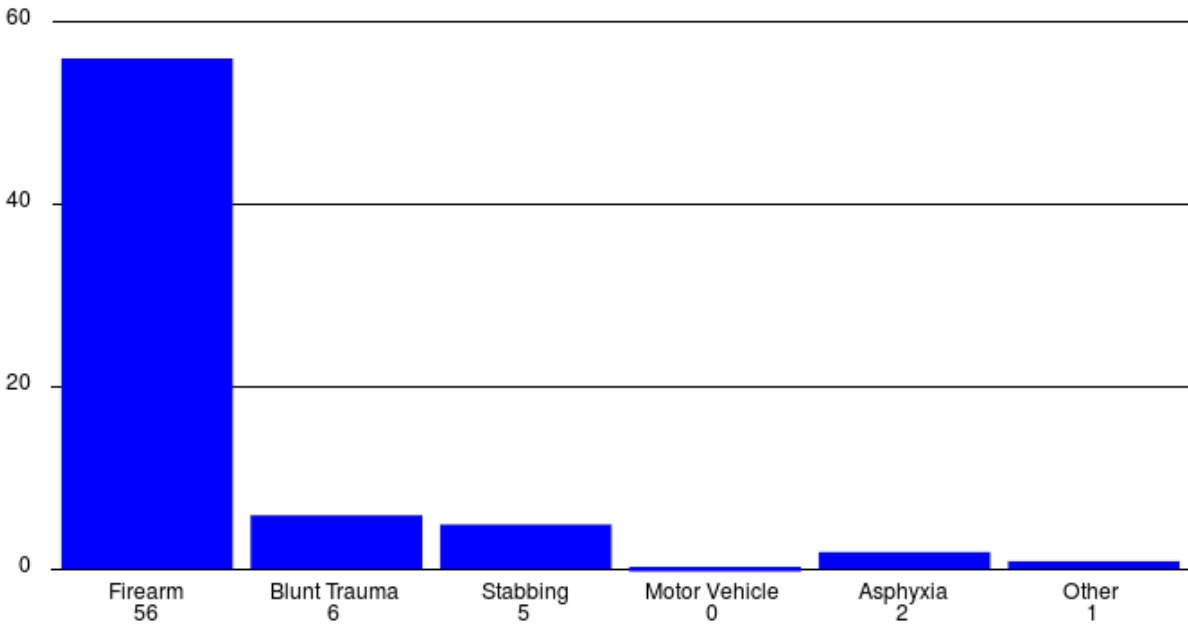
Number of Suicides by Age Range



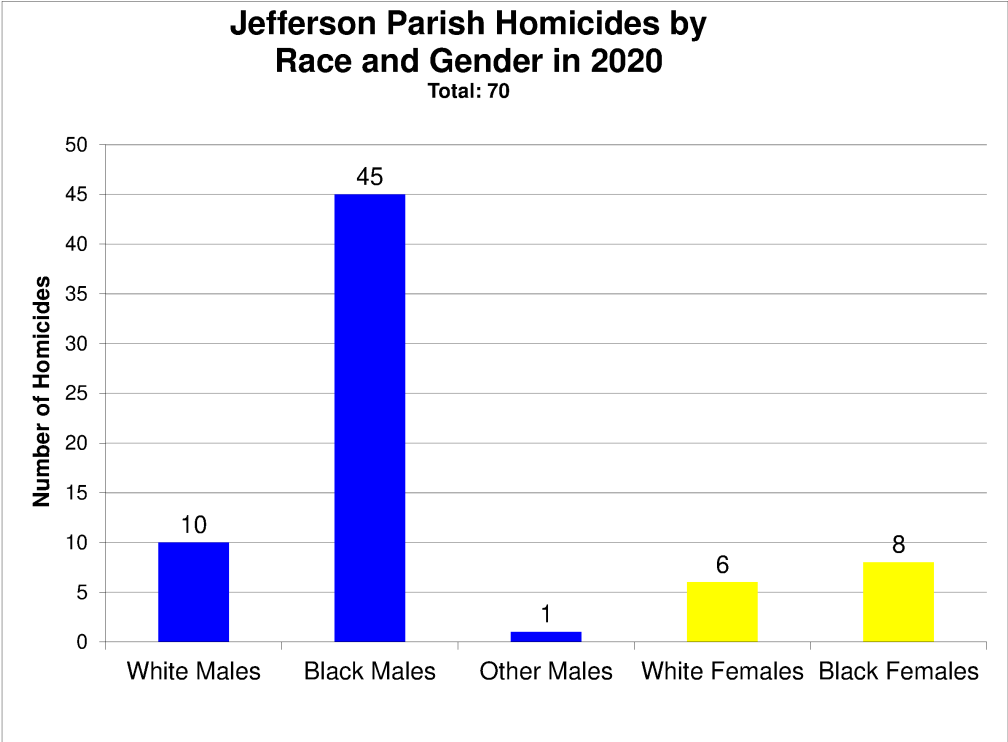
Suicides by Race and Gender



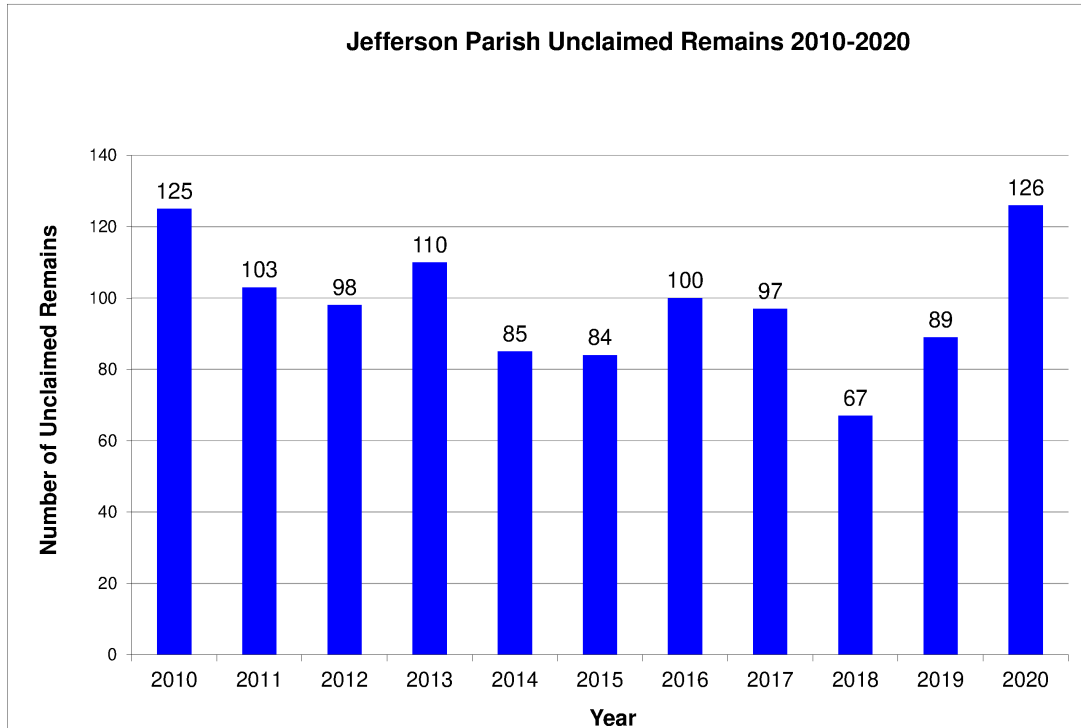
Homicide Deaths



Homicides by Gender and Race

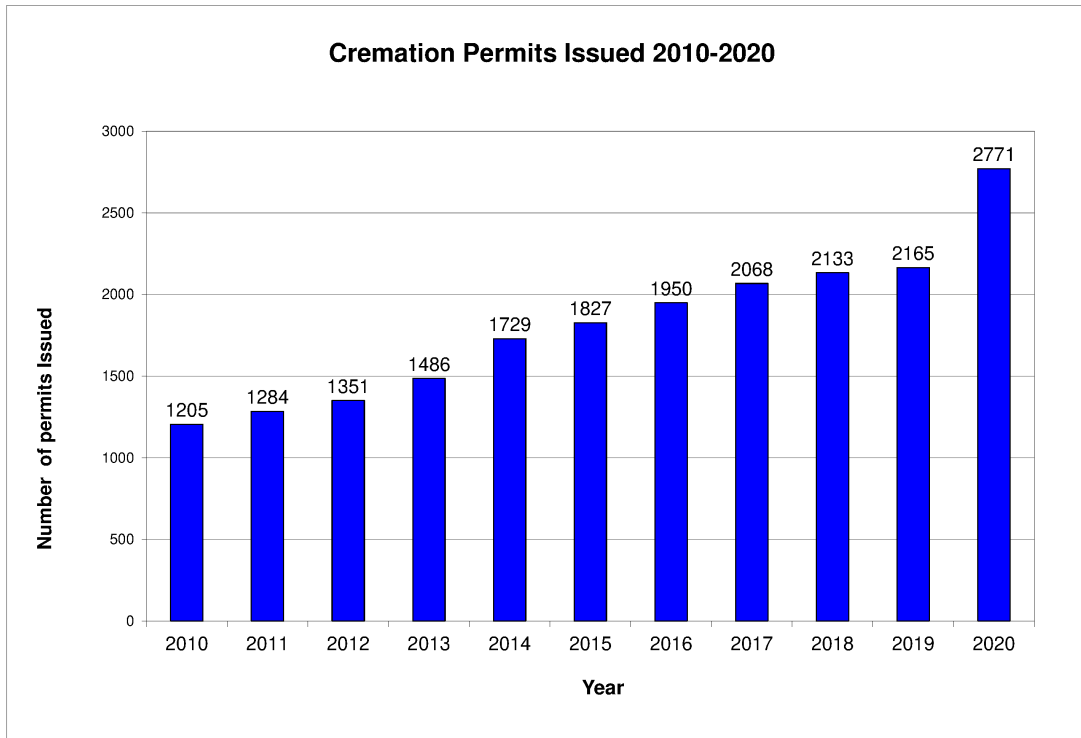


Pauper/Unclaimed remains 2010-2020



The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) is required by law to provide final disposition of all unclaimed dead bodies in Jefferson Parish. In accordance with the law, a procedure has been established by the JPCO to facilitate the necessary arrangements of the remains. When a body is unclaimed or abandoned in Jefferson Parish, it becomes the responsibility of the JPCO to initiate a diligent search for a family member or concerned party willing to claim the body for final disposition. If after 30 days of death and the body is still unclaimed, the JPCO may dispose of the body in accordance with the law. In 2020, 100 adults and 26 infants were cremated as unclaimed/abandoned costing \$40,950. The graph above depicts the unclaimed bodies cremated from 2010-2020.

Cremation Permits Issued 2010-2020



In the State of Louisiana, as per LA R.S. 13:5716, the Coroner is charged with the investigation in all deaths if the body is to be cremated. If, after the necessary investigation, the Coroner is satisfied that there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death, he shall issue a permit for cremation. The investigation involves the confirmation that the death certificate is appropriately executed and no further circumstances exist which may have contributed to the death. If the investigation reveals suspicious circumstances or the reasonable probability of the commission of a crime, the Coroner shall deny the permit. If the cause of death is unclear or falls under the jurisdiction of the Coroner, a postmortem exam and issuance of a revised death certificate may be required.

Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency/Southern Eye Bank Statistics For Coroner Cases

Since not all deaths fall under the Coroner's Office jurisdiction, our office is not involved with all donation requests. Although the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office does not approach families for donation of organs and tissue from decedents, we recognize the tremendous need for this life-saving activity and cooperate fully with organ and tissue procurement agencies. It is the philosophy of the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office that all requests for organ and/or tissue donation be given high priority for approval. In practice, the procurement agency contacts the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office with information regarding a potential donor and the specific organs or tissue requested. The Coroner and his pathologist's evaluates the request to determine if the donation would significantly affect the postmortem examination. In the great majority of cases, examinations can be conducted so that donations do not interfere with certification of death or collection of evidence. In this way, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office works to maximize the donation of organs and tissue that go directly to save lives. In 2020, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office approved the release of 12 organ donors for transplant saving 24 lives. There were 58 tissue donors approved for skin, bone, cartilage, heart valves and other tissues through the tissue procurement agency enhancing many lives. In 2020, Southern Eye Bank received eighty-three (83) Jefferson Parish residents who shared the gift of sight and your office facilitated donation for and additional fifty-seven (57) non-residents. One hundred fifty eight (158) people received corneal transplants because of the generosity of these donors and eighty-three (83) donations were made for research.

Other Coroner Responsibilities

Louisiana Coroners are also mandated by Louisiana law to perform the following duties:

1) MENTAL HEALTH/INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

THE OPC/PEC/ CEC PROCESS

Any Parish Coroner or judge of a court of competent jurisdiction may order a person to be taken into protective custody and transported to a treatment facility or the office of the Coroner for immediate examination when a peace officer or other credible person executes a statement under private signature specifying that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the person has a mental illness or is suffering from a substance-related or addictive disorder and is in need of immediate treatment to protect the person or others from physical harm. The mental status examination following any transport under an Order for Protective Custody (OPC) is called a Physician's Emergency Certificate (PEC). If a patient is found to meet the criteria of being a danger to self or others or gravely disabled, a second mental status exam must be performed by the Coroner within 72 hours of the first exam. That exam is called a Coroner's Emergency Certificate (CEC). If a person is found to still be a danger to self, danger to others or gravely disabled at the Coroner's exam, the person can be held up to 15 days against their will. Patients are usually held until they are no longer a danger to self, danger to others or gravely disabled.

2) PETITION FOR CONTINUING OR PERMANENT TUTORSHIP

When a person above the age of fifteen possesses less than two-thirds of the intellectual functioning of a person of the same age with average intellectual functioning, evidenced by standard testing procedures administered by competent persons or other relevant evidence acceptable to the court, the parents of such person, or the person entitled to custody or tutorship if one or both parents are dead, incapacitated, or an absent person, or if the parents are judicially separated or divorced, may, with the concurrence of the Coroner of the Parish of the intellectually disabled person's domicile, petition the court of that district to place such person under a continuing tutorship which shall not automatically end at any age but shall continue until revoked by the court of domicile. The petitioner shall not bear the Coroner's costs or fees associated with securing the Coroner's concurrence.

3) PETITION FOR OUTPATIENT TREATMENT

Under LSA R.S. 28:66, A patient may be ordered to obtain civil involuntary outpatient treatment if the court finds that all of the following conditions apply:

- (1) The patient is eighteen years of age or older.
- (2) The patient is suffering from a mental illness.
- (3) The patient is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision, based on a clinical determination.
- (4) The patient has a history of lack of compliance with treatment for mental illness that has resulted in either of the following:

(a) At least twice within the last thirty-six months, the lack of compliance with treatment for mental illness has been a significant factor resulting in an emergency certificate for hospitalization, or receipt of services in a forensic or other mental health unit of a correctional facility or a local correctional facility, not including any period during which the person was hospitalized or incarcerated immediately preceding the filing of the petition.

(b) One or more acts of serious violent behavior toward self or others or threats of, or attempts of, serious physical harm to self or others within the last thirty-six months as a result of mental illness, not including any period in which the person was hospitalized or incarcerated immediately preceding the filing of the petition.

(5) The patient is, as a result of his mental illness, unlikely to voluntarily participate in the recommended treatment pursuant to the treatment plan.

(6) In view of the treatment history and current behavior of the patient, the patient is in need of involuntary outpatient treatment to prevent a relapse or deterioration which would be likely to result in the patient becoming dangerous to self or others or gravely disabled as defined in R.S.28:2.

(7) It is likely that the patient will benefit from involuntary outpatient treatment.

Under LSA R.S. 28:67 (4), any interested party through counsel with written concurrence of the Coroner in the jurisdiction in which the person is found, may file such a Petition for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT).

4) SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

The Coroner or his designee shall examine all alleged victims of a sexually-oriented criminal offense. The Coroner may select the hospital or healthcare provider named as the lead entity for sexual assault examinations in the regional plan required by R.S. 40:1216.1 as his designee to perform the forensic medical examination.

The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office is located in Region 1 of the Louisiana Department Health system and has designated the following hospitals for Forensic Medical Examinations:

- 18 years of age and older - Tulane Lakeside Hospital, as the lead entity for Forensic Medical Examinations of Adults 18 years old and above.
- 17 years of age and younger - Children's Hospital New Orleans and the Audrey Hepburn Care Center

Sexual Assault Statistics

Sexual Assault Stats 2020

2020 JUVENILES (17 years & younger)	Sexual Assault Exams	Medical Advocacy
Female	69	69
Male	16	16
Trans	1	1
2020 TOTAL JUVENILES	86	86

ADULTS (18 years & older)		Sexual Assault Exams & Medical Advocacy		
2020 ADULTS	KITS COLLECTED	Reported to Law Enforcement	Un-Reported to Law Enforcement	Total
Female	43*	30	20	50
Male	0	0	1	1
Trans	1	1	0	1
2020 TOTAL ADULTS	44	31	21	52

* The JPCO Sexual Assault Department collaborated with the JPCO Pathology Department and completed two post-mortem Physical Evidence Recovery Kits (PERKs) during 2020.

Mental Health Statistics

Mental Health Department 2020

	Jefferson Parish	Out of Parish	Total All Parishes
OPC - Order for Protective Custody	490	2	492
PEC - Request for Coroner's Examination	4,137	3,960	8,097
CEC - Coroner's Emergency Certificate	1,702	2,312	4,014
TOTAL OPC/PEC/CEC	6,329	6,274	12,603

Service Call Total – 21,188*

*This number includes the above plus the phone logs and basic resource phone calls.

Community Outreach Statistics

Community Outreach Programs Stats 2020

<i>Teen, Sex & the Law</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2020 Statistics	2,413	753	14	6

<i>Relationship Violence Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In-Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2020 Statistics	1,142	75	5	1

<i>Bullying Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In-Person	Classes Virtual
2020 Statistics	1,810	1,780	17	11

<i>Suicide Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2020 Statistics	1,413	394	10	4

<i>Roles of the Coroner</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2020 Statistics	100	0	2	0

	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In-Person	Classes Virtual
2020 English	6,839	2,982	47	20
2020 ESL	39	20	1	2
2020 TOTALS	6,878	3,002	48	22

BUDGET NOTES

Budget Code 010 Salaries and Wages-Regular includes:

1. Salary of Coroner	\$78,109.00
2. Salary of Deputies	123,150.00
3. Salaries of Other Employees	\$2,293,741.00

2020 Expenses

010 Salaries and Wages-Regular	\$2,495,000.00
011 Salaries and Wages-Other	10,000.00
012 Salaries and Wages-PT	5,000.00
424 Retirement	350,000.00
425 Medicare	35,000.00
430 Fee for Payroll	1,500.00
400.11 Contract Quality Management	0.00
410 Utilities-Electric	55,000.00
410.01 Utilities-Gas	500.00
410.02 Utilities-Water	2,000.00
410.03 Utilities-Cable/Internet	16,000.00
411 Office Supplies	35,000.00
411.01 Printing-Stationary and Forms	3,500.00
412 Telephone	3,000.00
412.01 Telephone-Answer Phone	21,000.00
412.02 Telephone- Mobile and Beeper	22,000.00
413 Dues and Subscriptions	5,000.00
413.01 Advertising	2,500.00
414 Travel and Lodging	20,000.00
414.01 Name Accreditation	3,500.00
415 Insurance-Hospitalization	510,000.00
417 Workmen's Compensation Insurance	15,000.00
418 Equipment Lease	11,500.00
419 Legal Fees-Retainer	105,000.00
420 Accounting	40,000.00
421 Assessor/Sheriff	18,000.00
429 Interest Expense	500.00
432.01 Millage Renewal Expense	0.00
433 Bank Charges	1,000.00
435 Professional Fees	70,000.00
436 Seminar/Meeting Expenses	12,500.00
437 Continuing Education	5,000.00
438 Uniforms	7,500.00
510 Auto-Repairs/Maintenance	7,500.00
510.01 Gas/Oil Expense	20,000.00
510.03 Auto Lease Payments	25,000.00
510.05 Auto Mileage	250.00
510.07 Car Allowance	47,000.00
510.08 Veh. Parts and Supplies	5,000.00
511 Building Repairs/Maintenance	90,000.00
511.01 Disposal- Repairs/Maintenance	27,500.00
511.02 Grass- Repairs/Maintenance	30,000.00
511.03 Janitorial-Repairs/Maintenance	52,000.00

511.07 Emergency Preparations	5,000.00
511.11 Purchase Auto	0.00
512 Office Computer Charges	55,000.00
512.02 Computer Software Design	2,000.00
512.03 Computer Equipment	30,000.00
513 Security System Charges	7,500.00
514 Auditorium Expense	0.00
515 Furniture and Fixtures	0.00
517 General Liability Ins.	12,000.00
517.01 Excess Liability Ins.	10,500.00
517.02 Professional Liability Ins.	38,000.00
517.03 Auto Ins.	65,000.00
517.04 Employment Practice Ins.	7,000.00
517.06 Comm. Property and Equipment Ins.	27,500.00
517.08 Flood Ins.	4,000.00
600.03 SAS Supplies	2,500.00
617 SANE Grant	268,647.00
618 Advocate Grant	235,126.00
702 Psychiatric Evaluation Contract	495,000.00
704 Out of Parish Psych Evaluations	125,000.00
707 Mental Health Meeting	2,500.00
810 Forensic Dental Exams	2,000.00
811 X-Ray Services	1,000.00
811.01 X-Ray Equipment-Maintenance	25,000.00
811.02 X-Ray Supplies	2,000.00
813 Morgue Supplies	40,000.00
813.01 Body Bags	28,000.00
813.02 Investigator's Equip/Supplies	7,500.00
814 Morgue Repairs/Maintenance	10,000.00
818 Pauper Burials	25,000.00
819 Transport Bodies	45,000.00
901.01 Pathology Consultations	15,000.00
901.02 LSU Heart Study	0.00
902 Lab Tests	125,000.00
903 Lab Supplies	35,000.00
905 Service Contract Lab	30,000.00
908 Lab Equipment	110,000.00
950 Capital Outlay	150,000.00

Total Expenses \$6,228,523.00