

Jefferson Parish Coroner



2023 Annual Report

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



Accredited by the
National Association
of
Medical Examiners

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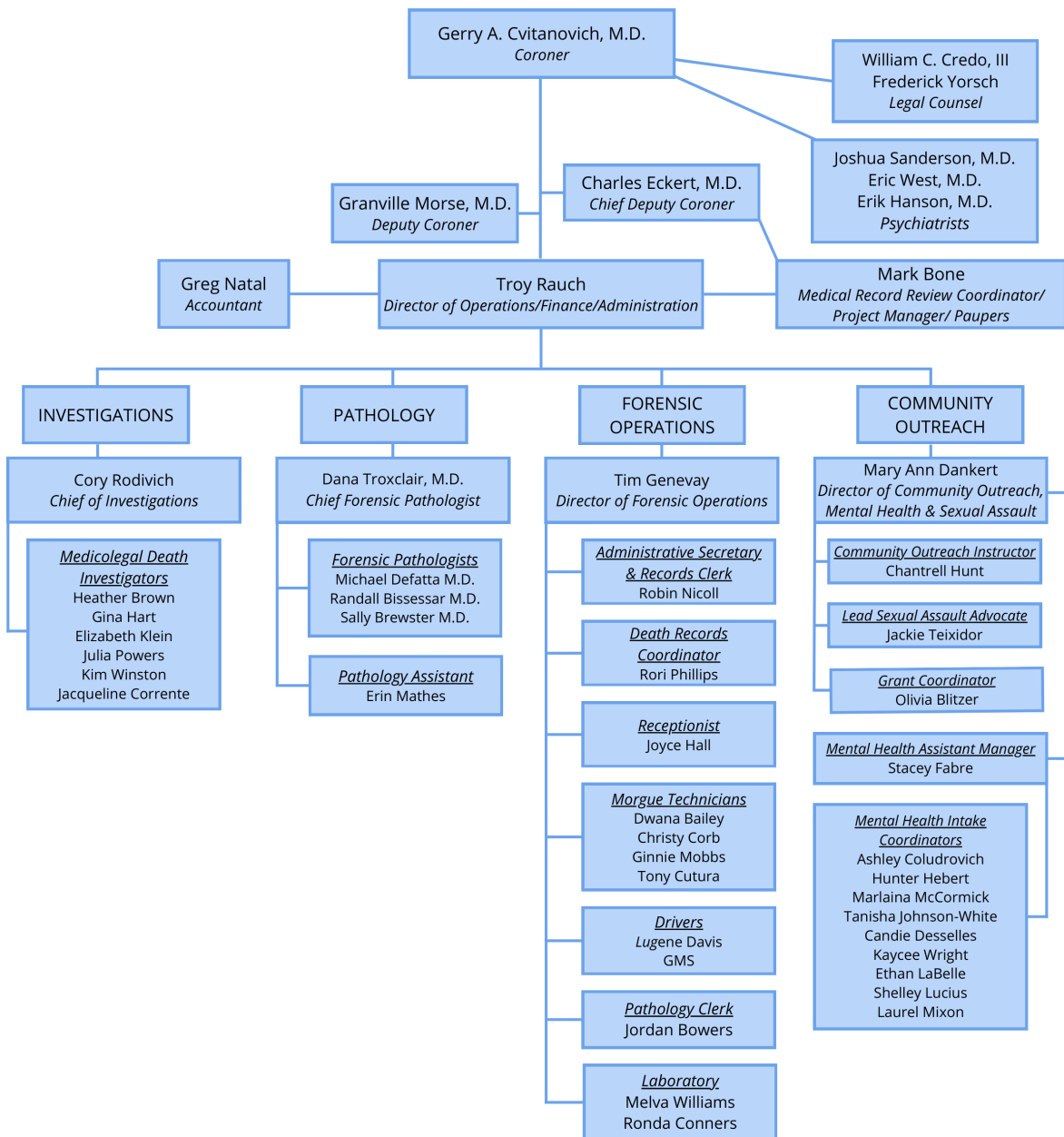
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Organizational Chart

Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office Organizational Chart 2023



Summary of Coroner's Duties

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 Pathology Division of the JPCO is composed of highly trained professionals, including Forensic Pathologists, Medicolegal Death Investigators, Morgue Technicians and Toxicology Lab Technologists, whose primary function is to determine the cause and manner of death on cases deemed to fall under the jurisdiction of the JPCO, as per LA R.S. 13:5713 (A), which include: deaths resulting from violent, traumatic or unnatural means; and deaths of younger individuals deemed unexplainable due to lack of established medical history or working hospital diagnosis. Such is accomplished through the performance of death scene investigations, post-mortem examinations, laboratory testing of recovered specimens, and/or the review of medical records. Death investigations can be complex in nature, and frequently require collaboration between JPCO staff, law enforcement agencies, and other investigatory entities. The JPCO is an autonomous and independent agency. Evidence discovered, documented and collected during the performance of death scene investigations and post-mortem examinations can be used to both convict and exonerate. Upon investigation, the vast majority of deaths legally reportable to the JPCO, either by law enforcement agencies or healthcare facilities, are determined to be of natural causes, and do not require the performance of a post-mortem examination.

In addition, also per state statute, the JPCO is mandated to provide mental health evaluations and forensic examinations of victims of sexually-oriented criminal offenses.

The Mental Health Services Division of the JPCO is staffed by Mental Health Intake Coordinators, who, pursuant to LA R.S. 28:53.2, may issue an Order for Protective Custody (OPC) upon request of a credible person who appears at the JPCO and executes a statement under private signature, specifying that he or she has witnessed the subject's behavior indicating that the subject is a danger to themselves or others, or is gravely disabled as a result of mental illness or substance abuse, and is unwilling to seek treatment. The OPC then authorizes law enforcement personnel to transport the subject to a treatment facility (commonly a hospital emergency room) for a mental status evaluation by a medical professional. Should the subject be found to meet the above legal criteria during this initial examination, a Physician's Emergency Certificate (PEC) is then issued, which authorizes the detainment or admission of the subject against their will for up to 72-hours. A JPCO-contracted psychiatrist then conducts the mandated second examination, which, should the same criteria be confirmed, may result in the issuance of a Coroner's Emergency Certificate (CEC), which then authorizes the subject

to be held against their will for up to 15-days at the treatment facility, or until discharged by the facility because they no longer meet the criteria.

Pursuant to LA R.S. 13:5713 (F), as amended by Act 229 of the 2015 Louisiana Legislature, the Coroner or his/her designee shall examine all alleged victims of sexually-oriented criminal offenses. 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/her designee to perform the forensic medical examination. The JPCO has designated Tulane Lakeside Hospital as Jefferson Parish's first and only Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, specifically dedicated to providing compassionate, comprehensive care to all people 15-years of age and older, regardless of gender, incident location, parish of domicile, or police involvement. The JPCO and Tulane Lakeside Hospital offer a dedicated, safe suite where specially trained SANEs use the latest technology to treat victims of sexual assault in a private, confidential setting. Sexual abuse cases involving children, from birth to 17-years of age, are treated at Children's Hospital of New Orleans' Care Center, with victims examined by pediatric physicians trained in forensic medicine. The JPCO also offers a juvenile and adult sexual assault medical advocacy program. When a victim reports to one of the designated hospitals, an advocate is notified. Once the victim arrives, the advocate will explain the procedures to be performed. Sexual assault victims and/or their caregivers may be experiencing anxiety and/or traumatic turmoil. The advocate is there as a neutral supporter to assist with this traumatic occurrence.

JPCO staff members within the Pathology, Mental Health and Sexual Assault Divisions are available 24-hours a day, 365-days a year to provide such services.

Pursuant to LA Civil Code Annotated Article 355, the JPCO is also mandated to authorize Continuing or Permanent Tutorships. When a person above the age of 15 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 absent persons, or if the parents are judicially separated or divorced or have never been married to each other, may, with the written 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. To begin this process, a parent or guardian normally selects an attorney familiar with this part of the law. The attorney must meet with the family or guardians to

determine who will assume the role of Curator and Under Curator and what standard testing shows the intellectual functioning of the person to be put under the Tutorship. Once satisfied, the attorney must draft and execute legal pleadings entitled a Petition for Continuing or Permanent Tutorship. Once the legal pleadings are finalized and signed, it is suggested that the attorney deliver to the JPCO a complete set of the written pleadings and attachments to be filed in Court with a properly drafted Coroner Concurrence containing the proper language. Once received, the attorney for the Coroner will review those pleadings and attachments for sufficiency under the law. Expert medical reports and testing results are preferred but may or may not require an update depending on the date of testing and the degree of disability. If the Coroner does not find that the pleadings and attached documentation complies with Louisiana law, he/she may refuse to sign the written Coroner Concurrence until said pleadings are in compliance with the law. Once satisfied, the attorney will recommend that the Coroner Concurrence be signed by the Coroner. Once signed, the requesting attorney will be notified that the pleadings are ready to be collected and filed with the Court. In 2023, a total of 14 tutorships were authorized.

In 2012, Dr. Cvitanovich also began a program of Community Outreach within Jefferson Parish middle and high schools, employing one Community Outreach Instructor. Courses offered to students include: *Roles of the Coroner, Bullying Prevention, Suicide Prevention, Relationship Violence Prevention* and *Teens, Sex and the Law*. The program continues to be well received by educators, students and parents.

The JPCO extends its sincere gratitude to the Jefferson Parish Council for their support of our staff and the services we provide to the citizens of the Jefferson Parish.

Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

As per LA 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 LA R.S. 13:5713 (B,C), there are two circumstances in which an autopsy must be performed :

- (1) 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 who dies unexpectedly, without explanation, with no underlying disease process.

Summary of Death Investigations

Jefferson Parish population (est. 2023)	432,614
Death cases reported to JPCO	3,500
A. Deaths certified after post-mortem examination	475
1. Cases with full autopsy*	361
2. Cases with external examination*	106
3. Cases with limited autopsy*	7
4. Hospital autopsies*	1
B. Unnatural deaths certified through MRR*	100
C. Natural deaths certified through MRR*	17
D. Natural deaths certified due to PCP refusal or pauper status	500
E. Death scene investigations	381

*Definitions

Full autopsy: a complete external and internal examination, with all toxicology/ancillary testing deemed warranted.

External examination: an external-only examination, with all toxicology/ancillary testing deemed warranted.

Limited autopsy: an examination focused on a specific organ or region of the body, with all toxicology/ancillary testing deemed warranted.

Hospital autopsy: a reportable JPCO case, particularly that involving apparent natural death during a hospital admission with no working diagnosis, or that involving a child in which a pediatric specialist is determined by JPCO staff to be better suited, in which an autopsy can be performed by a hospital pathologist, with the death certificate then completed by a JPCO physician based upon the results thereof; when deemed warranted, toxicology/ancillary testing may still be performed by the JPCO.

Medical record review (MRR): a case involving obvious, suspected or possible unnatural death of a non-homicidal nature requiring JPCO certification, in which a decedent has been admitted to a hospital or healthcare facility for sufficient time and an assigned JPCO physician can complete the death certificate following a review of applicable medical records; when deemed warranted, toxicology/ancillary testing may still be performed by the JPCO.

Manners of Death Following Investigation and/or Autopsy

Manner of Death is a classification of the circumstances by which the cause of death came about, and is largely determined by means of the investigation. There are five (5) manners of death, as listed below. The Coroner and his/her designee are the only physicians authorized to utilize all five manners of death on a death certificate.

Homicide: Death from a volitional act committed by another person to cause fear, harm, or death. Intent to cause death is a common element but is not required for classification as Homicide. The classification of Homicide for the purposes of death certification is a “neutral” term and neither indicates nor implies criminal intent, which remains a determination within the province of legal processes.

2023 Homicide Cases: 42

Suicide: Death from an injury resulting from an intentional, self-inflicted act committed to do self harm or cause the death of one’s self.

2023 Suicide Cases: 65

Accident: Death from an injury with little or no evidence that the injury occurred with intent to harm or cause death. In essence, the fatal outcome was unintentional. This can include: motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and drug overdoses.

2023 Accidental Death Cases: 357

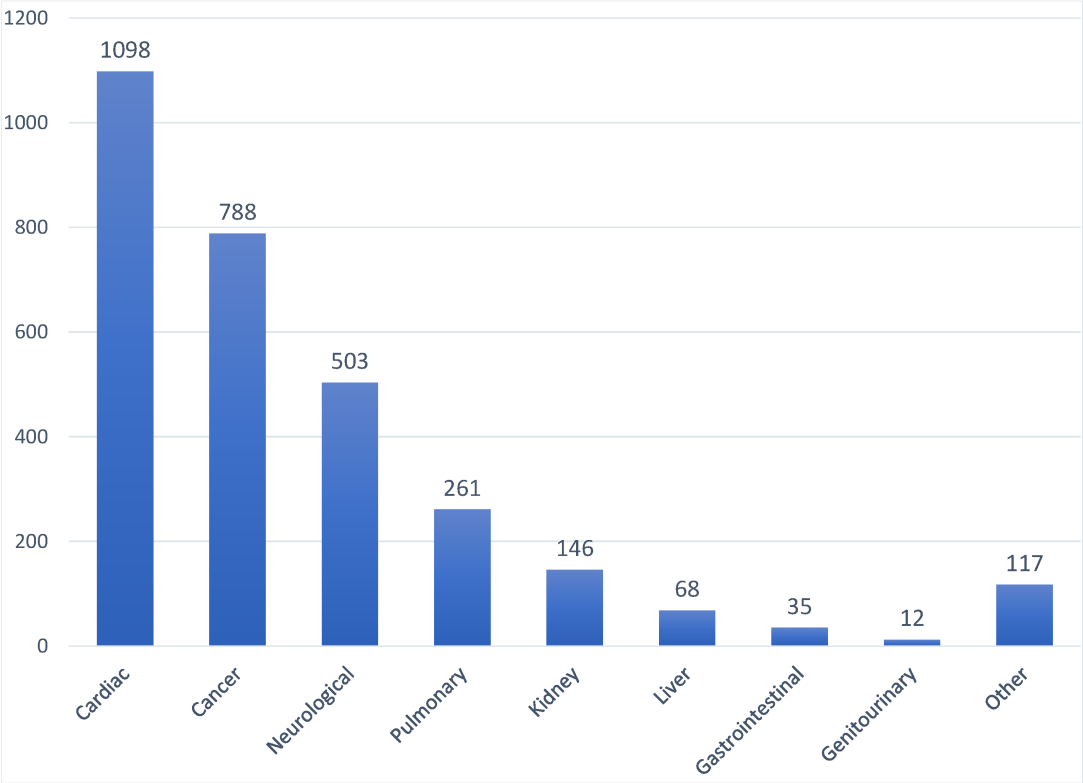
Natural: Death from disease or the aging process. If a natural death is hastened by injury or any other non-natural event, such as a fall, or the terminal process is caused by a non-natural event, such as pneumonia due to long-term bed confinement as a result of a motor vehicle crash, preference is given to the non-natural manner of death.

2023 Natural Death Cases: 3028

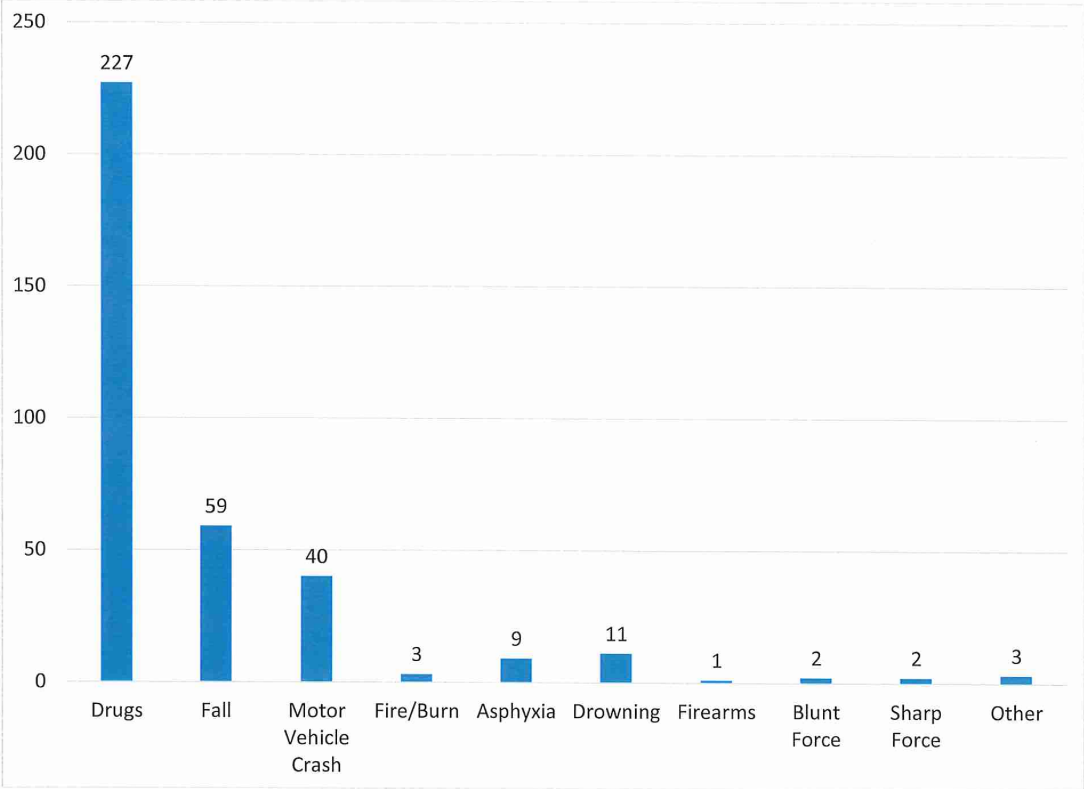
Undetermined: Information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death in thorough consideration of all available information.

2023 Undetermined Cases: 8

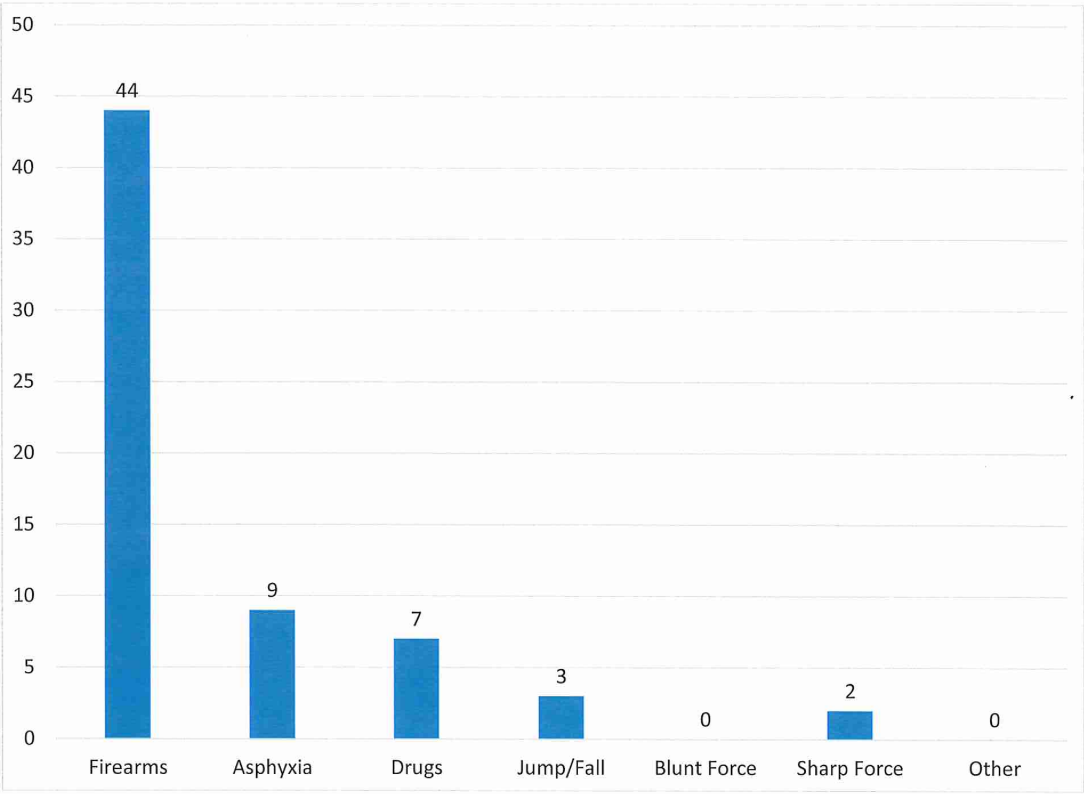
Natural Death Cases by Cause



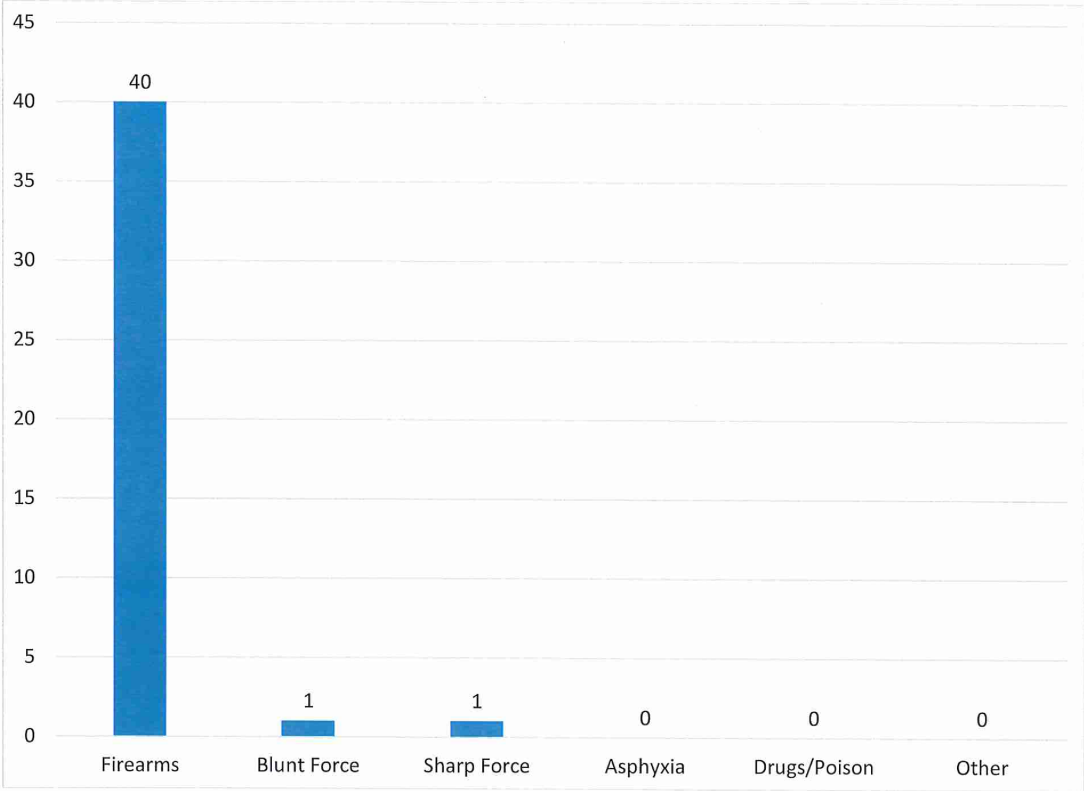
Accidental Death Cases by Cause



Suicide Cases by Cause



Homicide Cases by Cause



Accidental Drug Overdose Cases

Accidental Drug Overdose Cases											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Overdoses	144	131	145	155	175	175	155	260	335	274	227
Acute Fentanyl Toxicity	6	6	10	12	34	40	38	76	108	87	69
Acute Methamphetamine	4	0	1	5	1	5	8	9	12	10	7
Acute Cocaine	17	20	17	27	18	10	11	19	13	17	22
Acute Heroin	50	54	48	36	30	24	14	9	2	1	0
Fentanyl + Meth.	0	0	1	1	3	7	1	13	53	43	31
Fentanyl + Cocaine	1	1	2	3	8	12	4	24	52	59	47
Fentanyl + Heroin	0	1	1	5	15	14	19	31	25	4	7
Meth. + Heroin	1	0	0	0	1	6	3	2	0	0	0
Cocaine + Heroin	12	10	13	10	9	7	7	2	1	0	0
Cocaine + Meth.	1	0	2	2	3	0	2	2	1	2	1
Fentanyl + Meth. + Cocaine	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	6	19	25	14
Fentanyl + Cocaine + Heroin	1	0	0	3	4	4	7	15	2	4	5
Fentanyl + Meth. + Heroin	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	10	12	1	3
Cocaine + Heroin + Meth.	0	0	2	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	1
Fentanyl + Meth. + Cocaine + Heroin	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	6	3	0	1
Prescription Meds. +/- Alcohol & Other	51	39	48	50	46	43	31	35	32	21	19

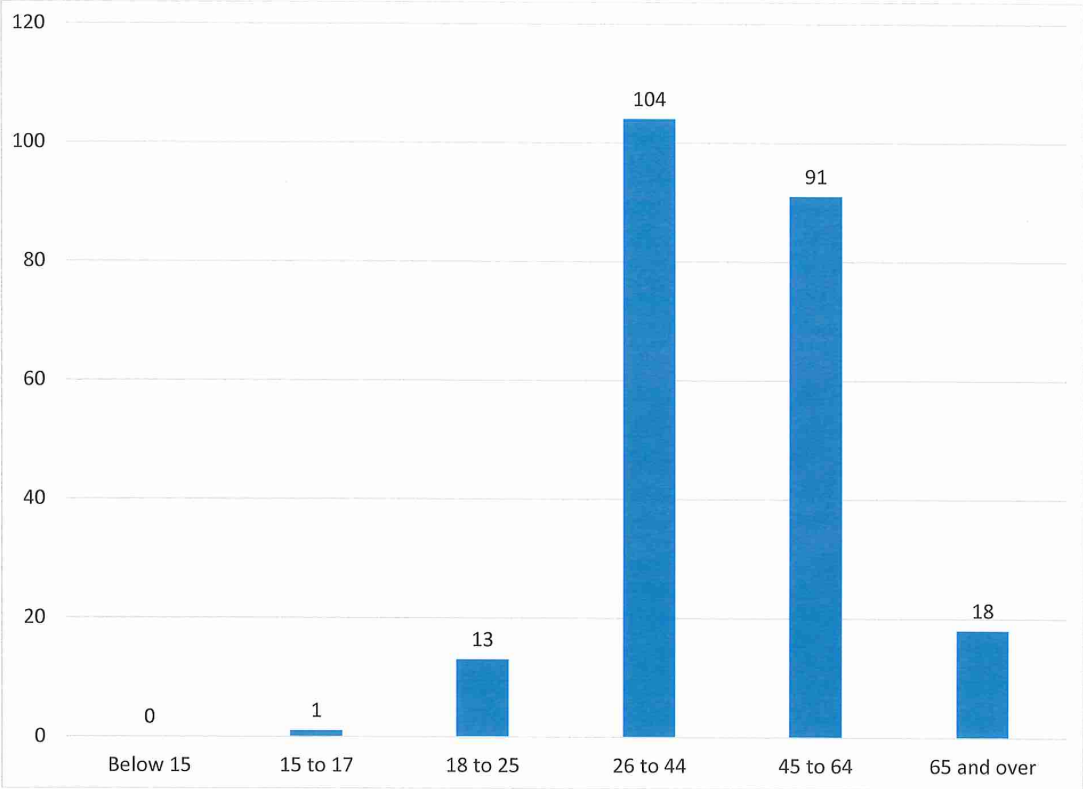
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases Involving Fentanyl

Accidental Drug Overdose Cases Involving Fentanyl											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Overdoses	144	131	145	155	175	175	155	260	335	274	227
Total Overdoses Involving Fentanyl	8	8	14	25	66	79	75	181	274	223	177
Acute Fentanyl	6	6	10	12	34	40	38	76	108	87	69
Fentanyl + Meth.	0	0	1	1	3	7	1	13	53	43	31
Fentanyl + Cocaine	1	1	2	3	8	12	4	24	52	59	47
Fentanyl + Heroin	0	1	1	5	15	14	19	31	25	4	7
Fentanyl + Meth. + Cocaine	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	6	19	25	14
Fentanyl + Cocaine + Heroin	1	0	0	3	4	4	7	15	2	4	5
Fentanyl + Meth. + Heroin	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	10	12	1	3
Fentanyl + Meth. + Cocaine + Heroin	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	6	3	0	1

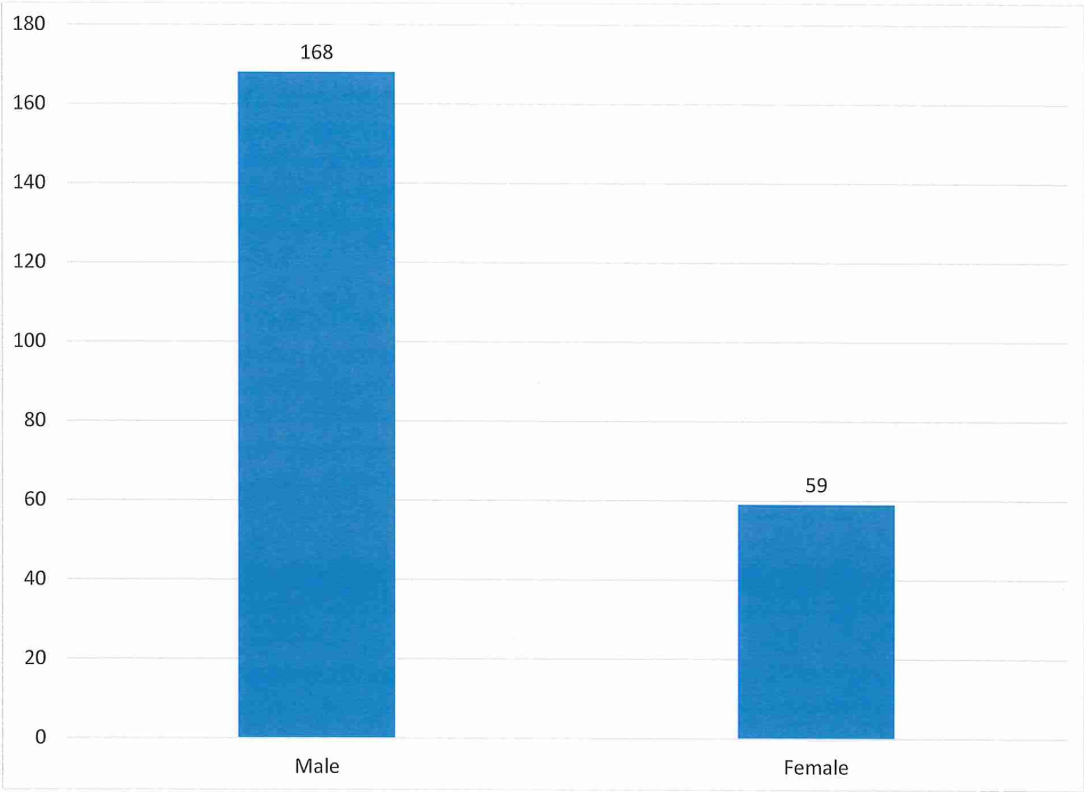
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases Involving Fentanyl

Accidental Drug Overdose Cases Involving Fentanyl By Zip Code											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Overdoses	144	131	145	155	175	175	155	260	335	274	227
Total Overdoses Involving Fentanyl	8	8	14	25	66	79	75	181	274	223	177
70001 (Metairie)	2	0	1	5	7	12	9	17	24	27	20
70002 (Metairie)	1	1	0	0	6	2	0	6	8	10	6
70003 (Metairie)	1	1	0	4	7	12	10	15	29	27	15
70005 (Metairie)	2	1	0	4	4	1	5	6	12	13	7
70006 (Metairie)	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	10	8	6	4
70036 (Barataria)	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
70053 (Gretna)	0	1	2	0	4	3	3	12	15	16	12
70056 (Gretna, Terrytown)	1	1	2	0	7	4	9	13	14	11	11
70058 (Harvey)	0	0	0	2	6	9	3	22	42	21	17
70062 (Kenner)	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	8	12	13	6
70065 (Kenner)	0	0	5	4	0	5	6	15	17	13	15
70067 (Lafitte)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	1	1
70072 (Marrero)	0	0	2	1	13	16	11	22	49	29	22
70094 (Westwego, Avondale, Bridge City, Waggaman)	0	0	0	1	3	7	5	11	18	16	20
70121 (Old Jefferson)	1	2	0	0	2	5	5	11	9	13	9
70123 (Harahan, River Ridge)	0	0	0	2	4	1	4	9	11	6	11
70358 (Grand Isle)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1

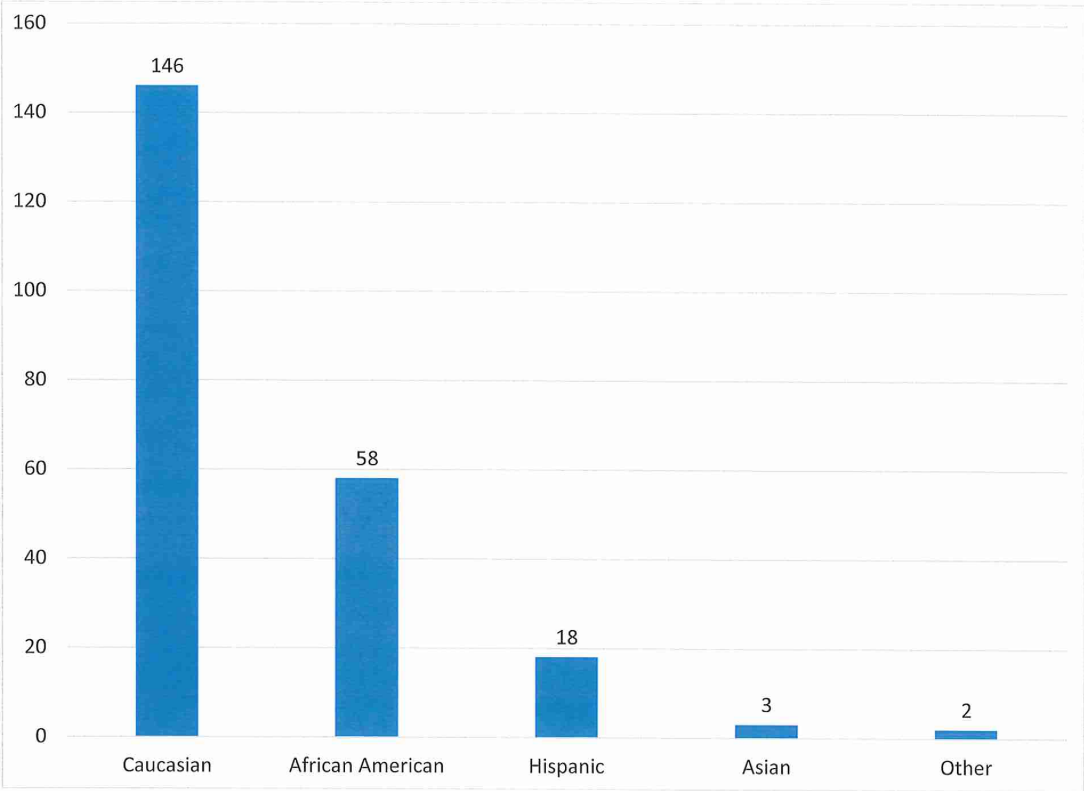
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases by Age



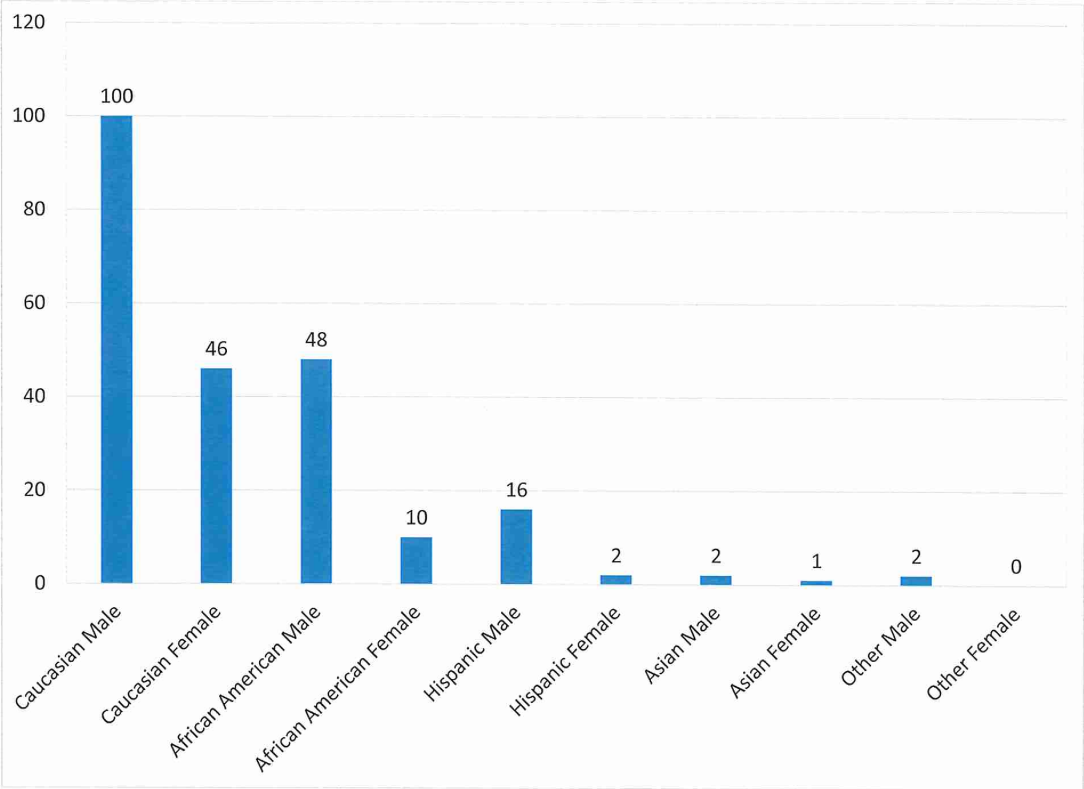
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases by Sex



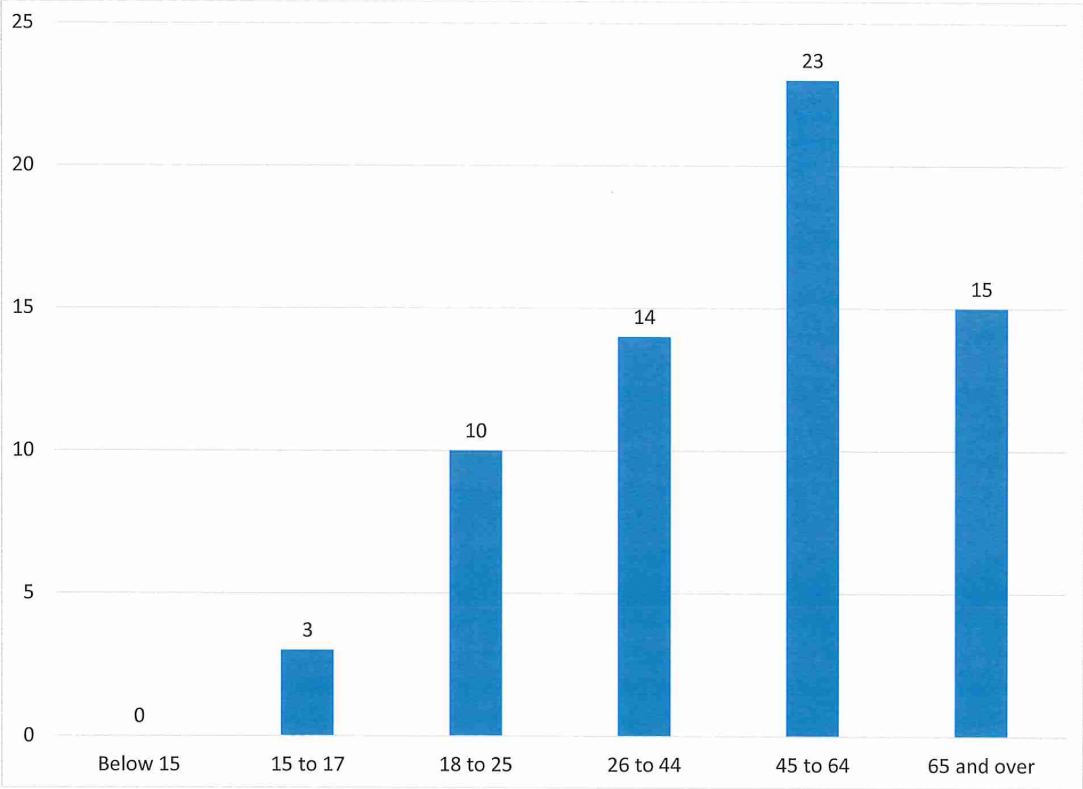
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases by Race



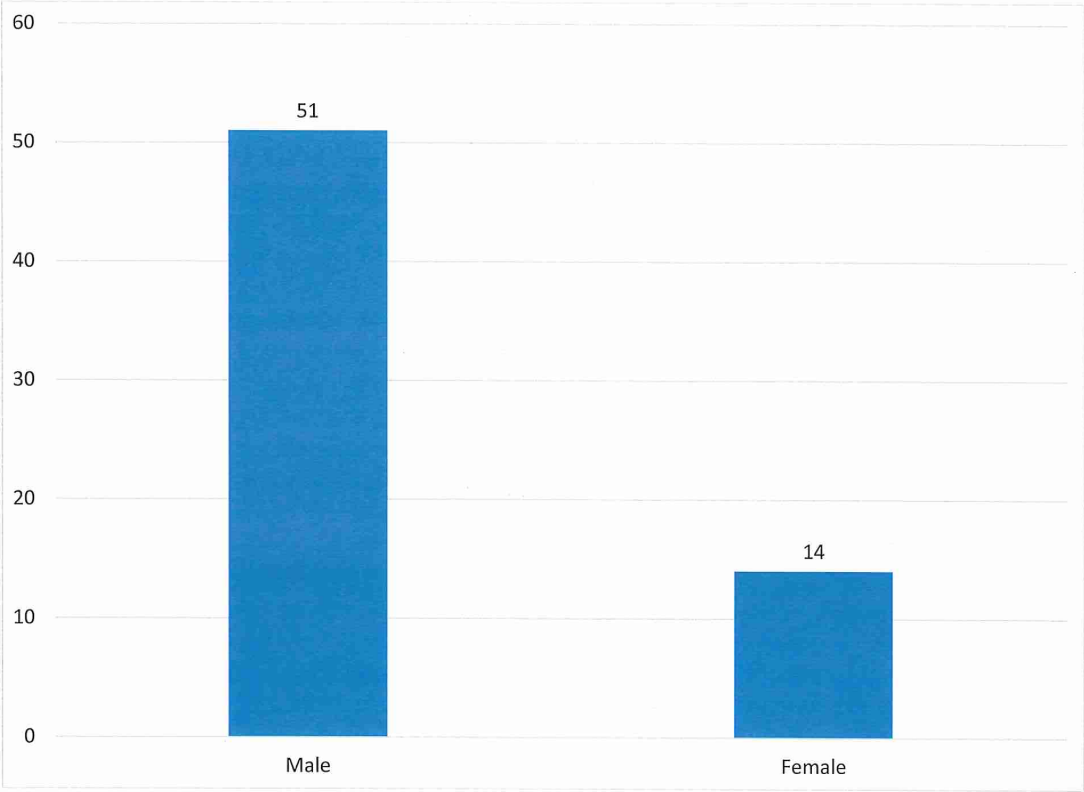
Accidental Drug Overdose Cases by Race and Sex



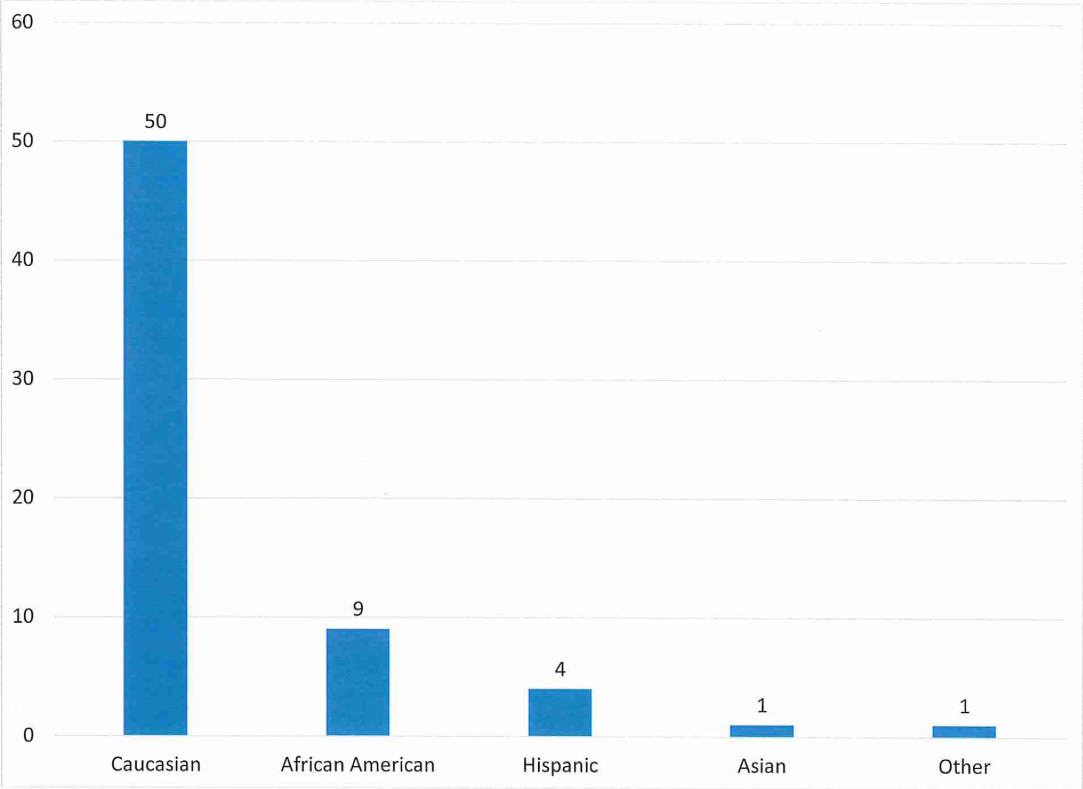
Suicide Cases by Age



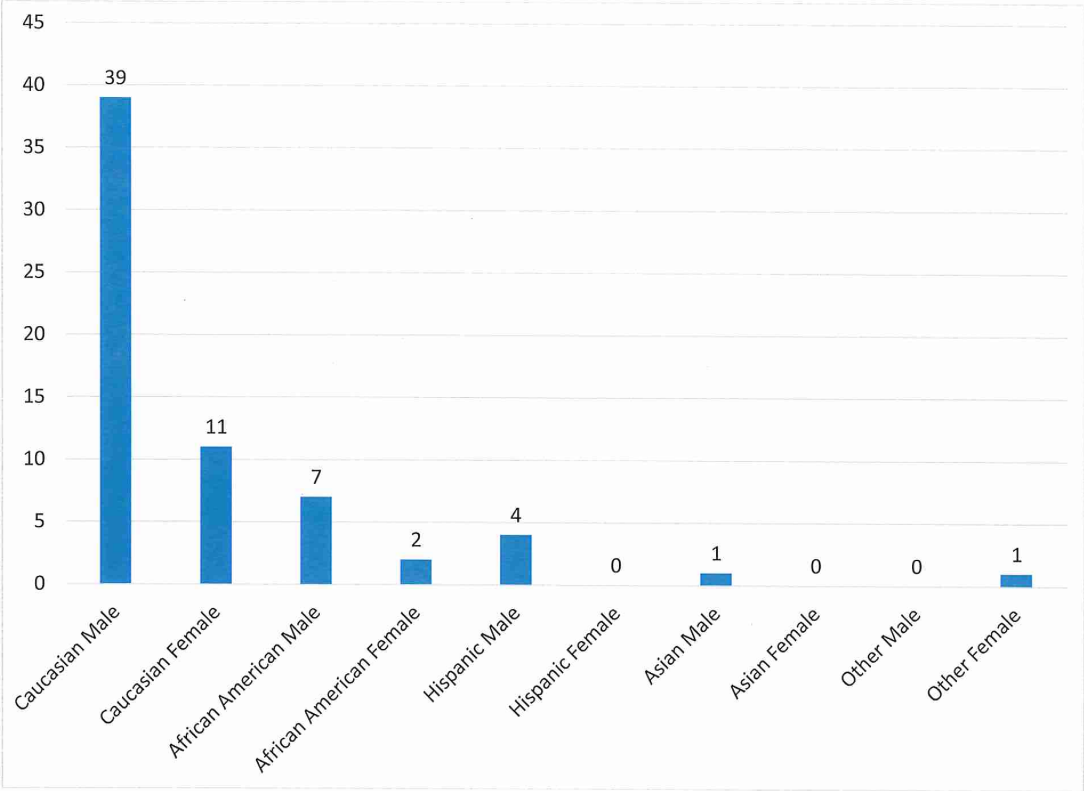
Suicide Cases by Sex



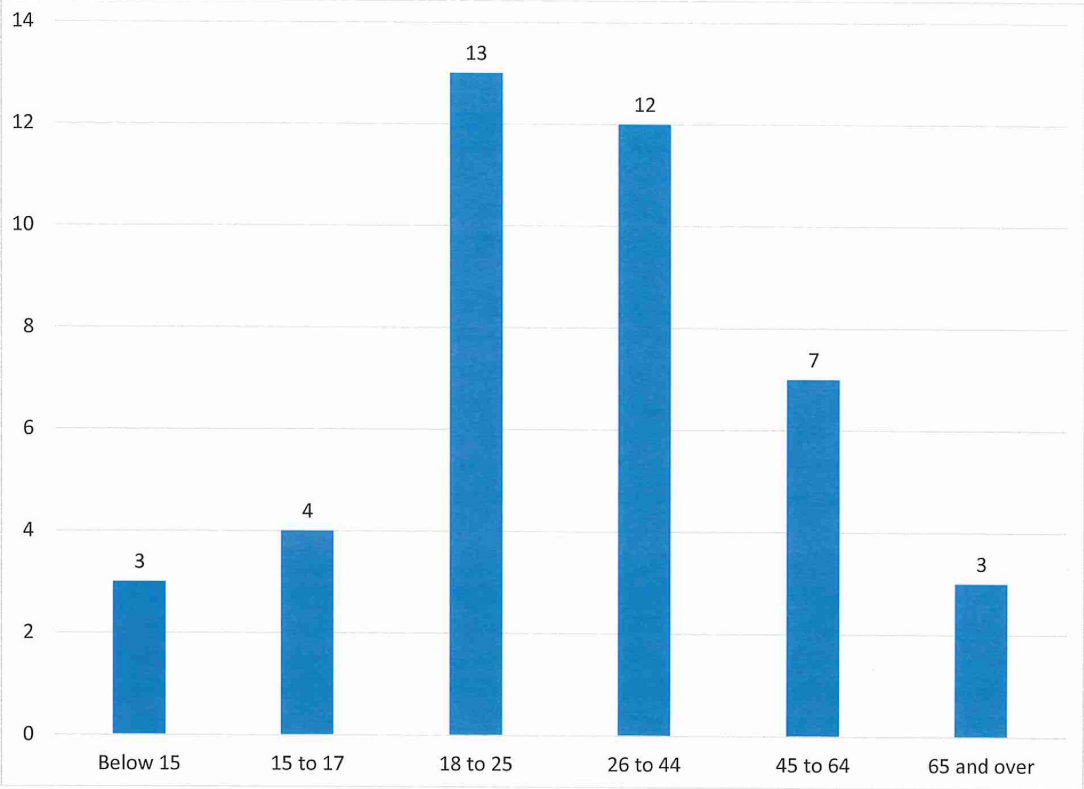
Suicide Cases by Race



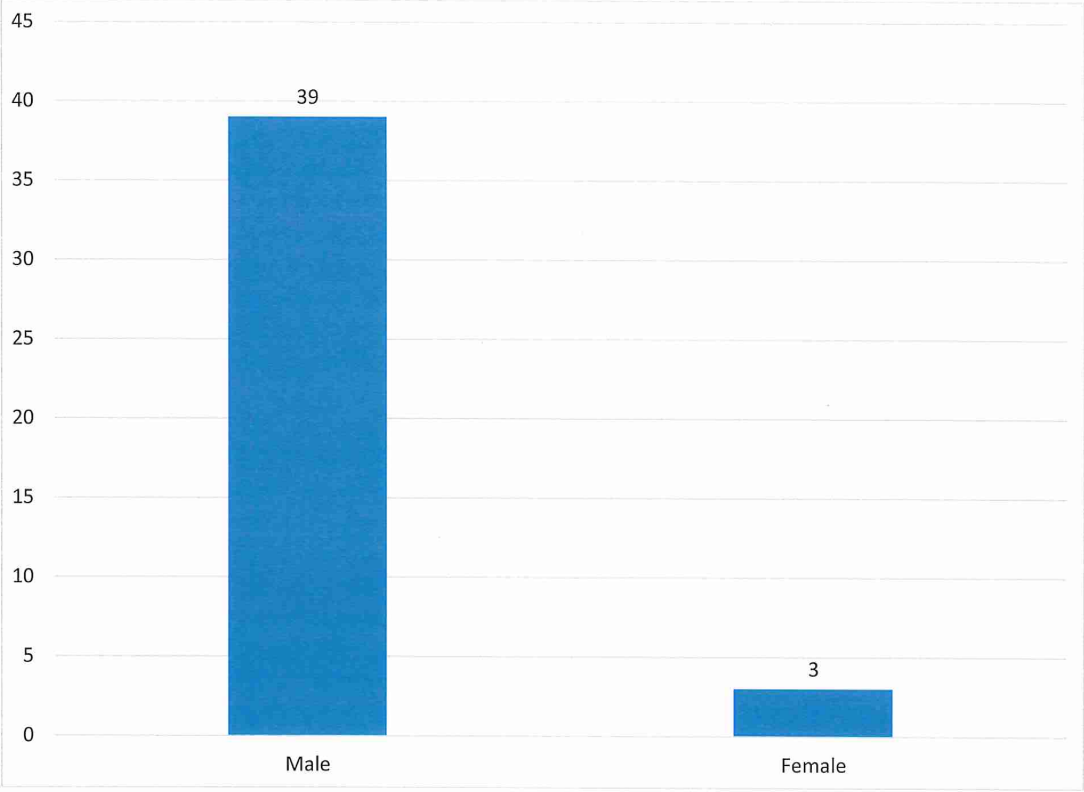
Suicide Cases by Race and Sex



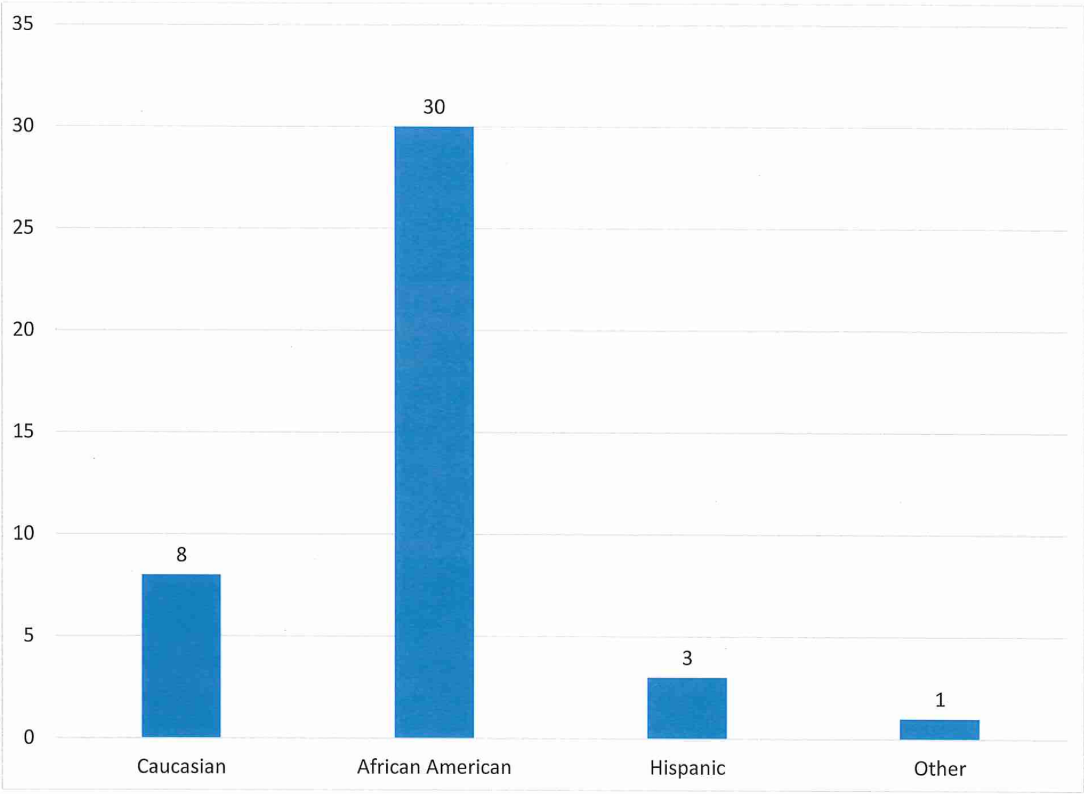
Homicide Cases by Age



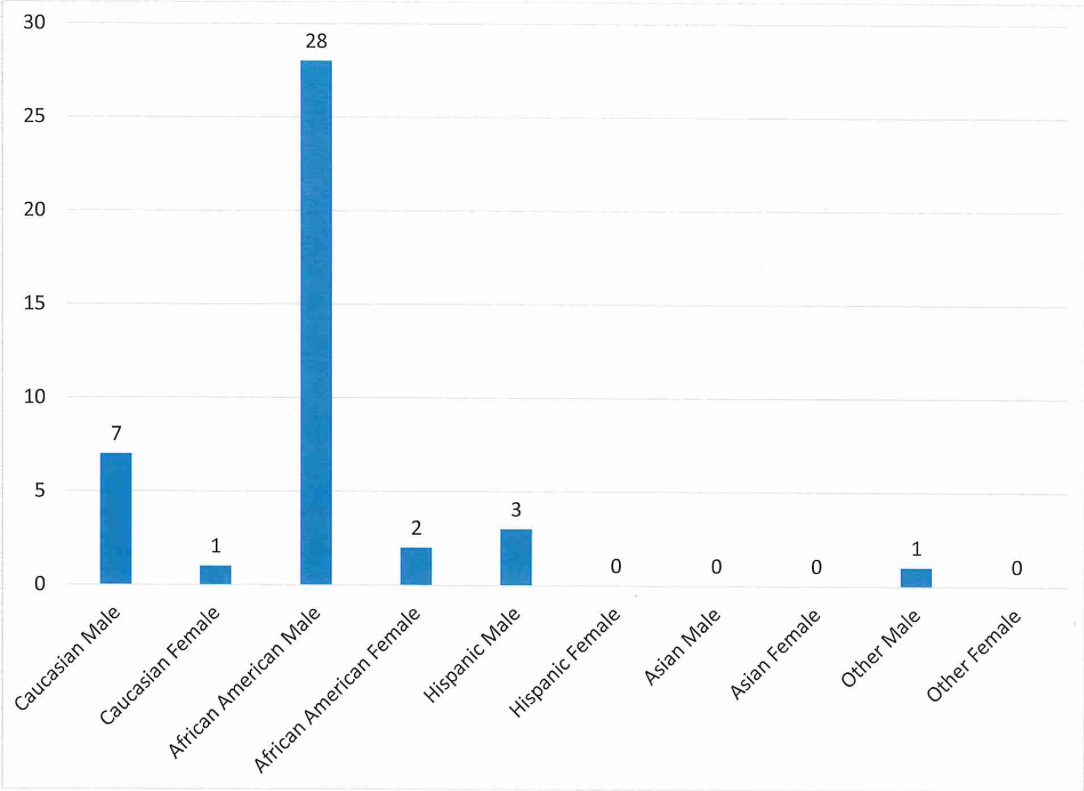
Homicide Cases by Sex



Homicide Cases by Race



Homicide Cases by Race and Sex



Pauper / Unclaimed Remains

As per LA R.S. 9:1551, the JPCO is mandated to provide final disposition for all unclaimed or abandoned decedents' remains in Jefferson Parish. In accordance with such, when a decedent is unclaimed or abandoned in Jefferson Parish, JPCO staff initiates a diligent search for family member(s) or concerned party(s) willing to claim the decedent and provide for his/her final disposition. If the decedent remains unclaimed after 30-days following the date of death, the JPCO may dispose of the remains via cremation through a contracted funeral home or provider. The cremains are then returned to the JPCO for long-term storage. In 2023, 62 adults were cremated as unclaimed/abandoned, resulting in an expenditure of \$24,490.00. Final disposition for the remains of 18 unclaimed/abandoned infants was graciously provided by the local charity, Compassionate Burials for Indigent Babies (CBIB).

Cremation Permits

As per LA R.S. 13:5716, the JPCO is tasked with the investigation of all deaths, in which cremation of the decedent is subsequently requested. If, after the necessary investigation, the JPCO determines that there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death, a permit for cremation shall be issued. For death cases either non-reportable to the JPCO or released by the JPCO without post-mortem examination, given the circumstances provided at the time of the death report, the investigation involves the confirmation that the death certificate has been appropriately executed by the certifying physician and that no further circumstances, possibly contributing to the death, exist. If the investigation reveals suspicious circumstances or the reasonable probability of the commission of a crime, the JPCO shall deny the permit request. If the cause of death listed on the death certificate is unclear or falls under the jurisdiction of the JPCO, a post-mortem examination and issuance of a revised death certificate may be required. In 2023, a total 3,953 cremation permits were processed and issued to requesting funeral homes or providers.

Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) and Southern Eye Bank (SEB) Statistics

As not all deaths fall under its jurisdiction, the JPCO is not involved with all donation requests. Although the JPCO does not approach decedents' families for organ and tissue donation, we recognize the tremendous need for this life-saving activity and diligently cooperate with procurement agencies. It is the philosophy of the JPCO that all donation requests be given high priority for approval. In practice, the procurement agency contacts the JPCO with information regarding a potential donor and the specific organs or tissue requested. JPCO investigations and pathology staff then evaluate the request to determine if the donation would significantly impact the post-mortem examination. In a majority of cases, examinations can be conducted so that donations do not interfere with certification of death or collection of evidence. In this manner, the JPCO works to maximize the donation of organs and tissue that directly contribute to saving and enhancing lives. In 2023, the JPCO approved the release of 34 organ donors for transplant, saving a reported 66 lives, and 79 tissue donors for implantation of heart valves, blood vessels, bone, skin, cartilage and other soft tissue, enhancing a reported 5,530 lives. In addition, the JPCO approved the release of 98 corneal donors, resulting in the gift of sight being restored to numerous transplant recipients.

Mental Health Services Statistics

2023 Mental Health Services Statistics

	Jefferson Parish	Out of Parish	Total All Parishes
OPC – Order for Protective Custody	612	4	616
PEC – Request for Coroner’s Examination	3,513	3,935	7,448
CEC – Coroner’s Emergency Certificate	2,084	3,496	5,580
Total OPC/PEC/CEC	6,209	7,435	13,644

Service Calls Total – 22,865*

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

Sexual Assault Services Statistics

2023 Sexual Assault Services Statistics

2023 JUVENILES Forensic Medical Exams & Medical Advocacy		
	Forensic Medical Exams	Medical Advocacy
Female	148	148
Male	51	51
Transgender	1	1
2023 TOTALS JUVENILES	200	200

2023 ADULTS Sexual Assault Exams & Medical Advocacy								
	KITS COLLECTED	Reported to Law Enforcement	Age 15-17	Age 18-24	Age 25-40	Age 41-59	Age 60 & above	Total
Female	49	34	1	17	24	13	1	56
Male	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Transgender	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	2
2023 TOTALS ADULTS	52	36	2	17	26	13	1	59

2023 POSTMORTEM Physical Evidence Recovery Kits (PERK)								
	KITS COLLECTED	Age 0-12	Age 13-17	Age 18-24	Age 25-40	Age 41-59	Age 60 & above	Total
Female	9	1	1	3	2	2	0	9
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2023 TOTALS POSTMORTEM	9	1	1	3	2	2	0	9

Community Outreach Program Statistics

2023 Community Outreach Programs Statistics

<i>Teen, Sex & the Law</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Statistics	1,802	0	16	0

<i>Relationship Violence Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In-Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Statistics	901	40	9	1

<i>Bullying Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In-Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Statistics	9,526	512	45	1

<i>Suicide Prevention</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Statistics	2,124	156	13	1

<i>Roles of the Coroner</i> Middle & High School Students	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In- Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Statistics	132	0	2	0

	Students In- Person	Students Virtual	Classes In-Person	Classes Virtual
2023 Totals	14,485	708	85	3