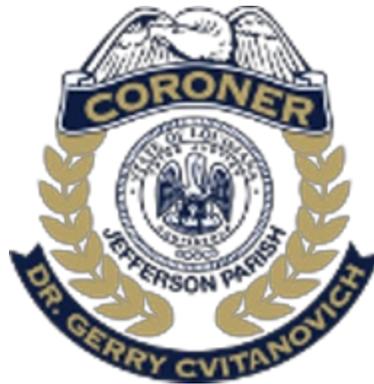


# Jefferson Parish



## 2017 Annual Report

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



Accredited by the  
National Association  
of  
Medical Examiners

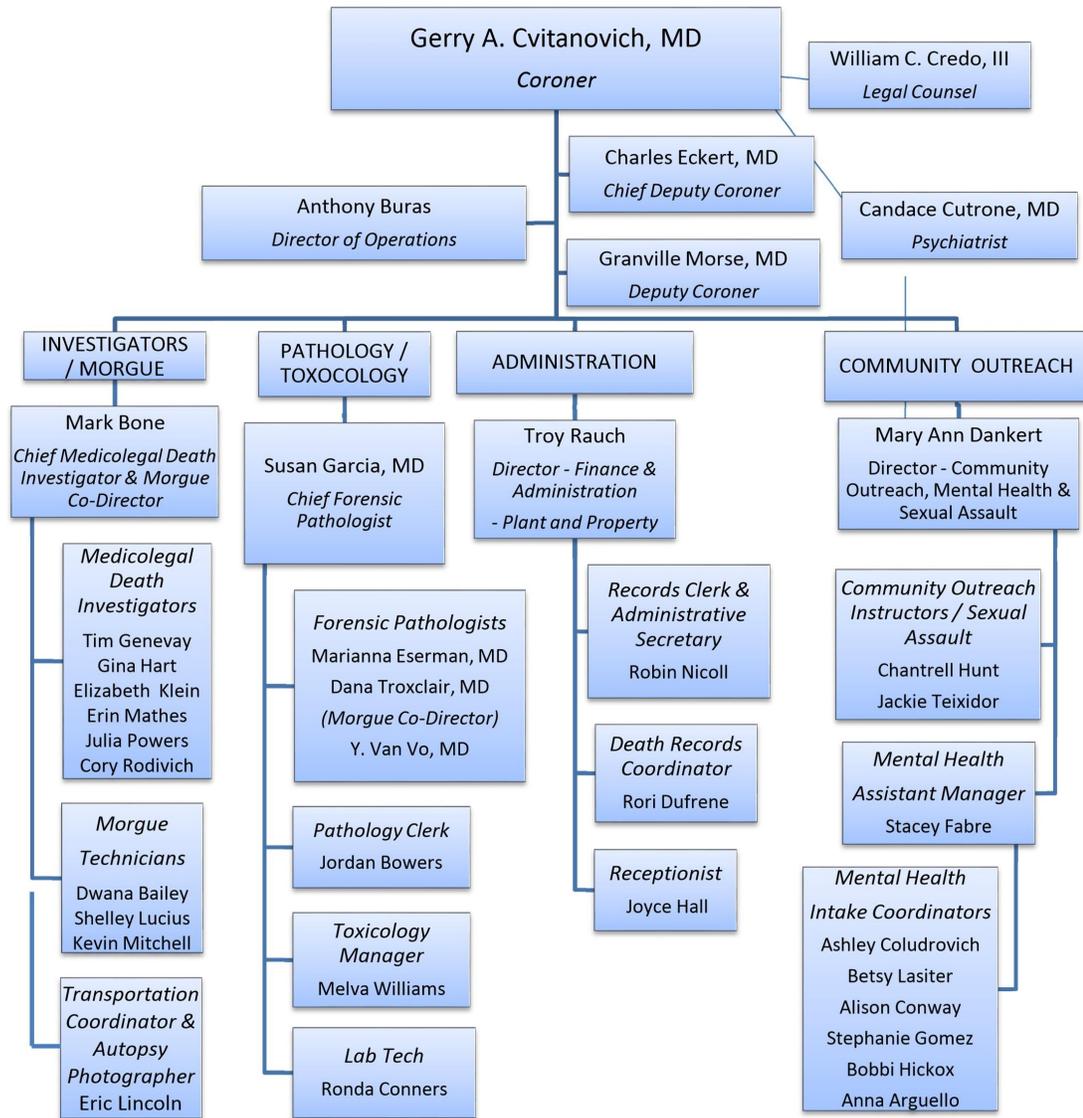
Last Revised: June 21, 2018

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# Organizational Chart

## JEFFERSON PARISH CORONER'S OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2017



## Brief Summary

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Population (est. 2017)	439,036
Cases Reported to the Coroner's Office	3,483
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	534
1. Number of Coroner Cases with Complete Autopsy	497
2. Number of Coroner Cases with External Examination	37
3. Number of Coroner Cases with Limited Examination	0
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	383
C. Number of death scene investigations	457

Under the direction of Dr. Gerry Cvitanovich since March 26, 2012, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) serves the residents of Jefferson Parish by incorporating the fields of medicine and forensic science to investigate sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Jefferson Parish. Louisiana Revised Statutes mandate the Coroner investigate several types of deaths which occur in Jefferson Parish and when necessary determine the cause and manner of death. The Coroner may order an autopsy as he deems necessary to help certify the death. Other expanded duties performed by the Coroner include the examination of all alleged victims of a sexually-oriented criminal offense and the examination of involuntary mental health commitments.

The main function of the JPCO is to determine the cause and manner of death, and certify certain deaths that are reported to the Coroner. Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the forensic pathologists to aid in determining the cause and manner of death following the post mortem examination (autopsy). With the skill and experience of the certified death investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Jefferson Parish are among the best in the state.

Our pathologists and investigators also extend their duties to the decedent's family, law enforcement agencies, insurance agencies, the judicial system and the LA Department of Health, by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the Parish. The death investigators frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death, autopsy results and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2009 our office became the only Parish in Louisiana to be accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiner's and continues to maintain that status of excellence through annual self inspections. The JPCO was re-accredited in 2014 after a vigorous and demanding office inspection. The JPCO is also a member of the Louisiana Coroner's Association where Dr. Cvitanovich serves as 1st Vice President. The office works whenever possible with organizations such Southern Eye Bank and the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency to facilitate wishes regarding organ donations.

The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office will continue to serve the 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.

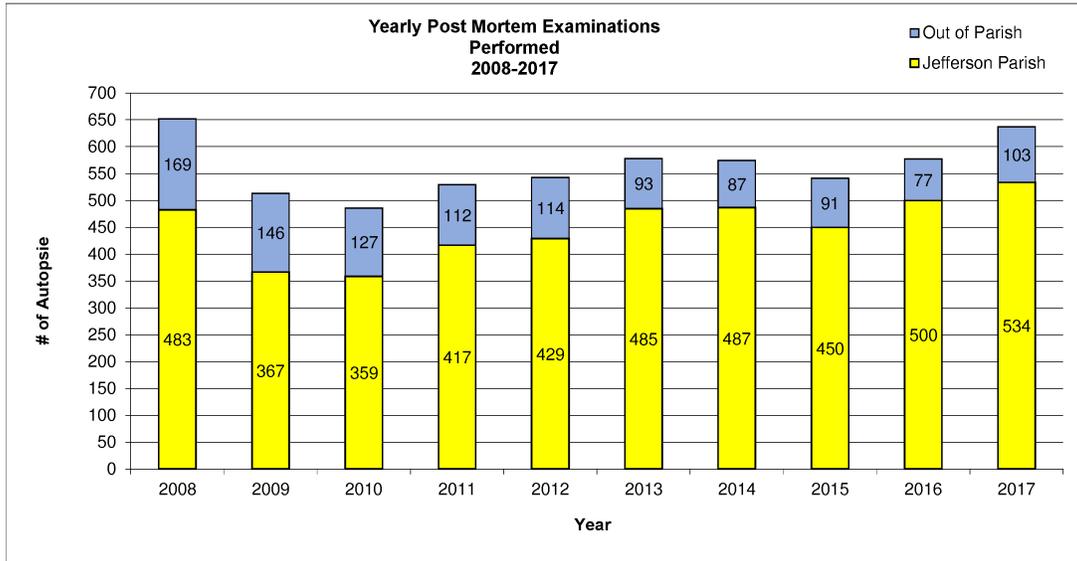
## **Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office**

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 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 acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

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 Performed from 2008-2017



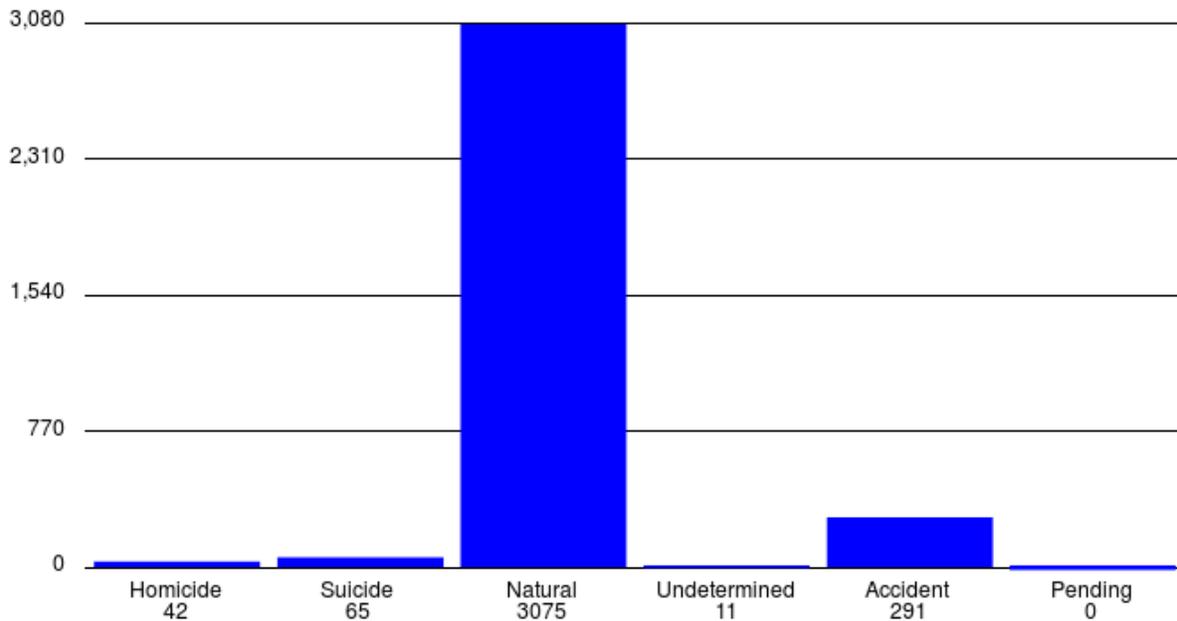
In 2017, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office accepted jurisdiction in 3,483 cases, of those, 534 were autopsied. This graph depicts the number of post mortem exams performed over the past 11 years. The office also performed 103 autopsies for 10 other Coroner agencies in the state.

**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

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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.

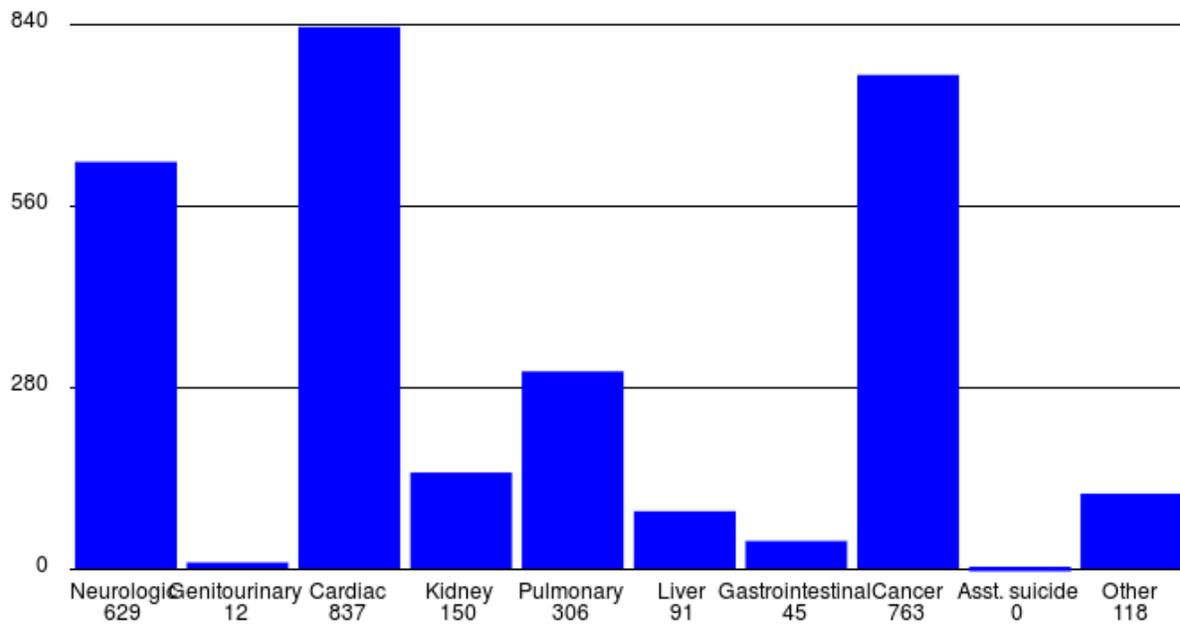
**Homicide:** Death resulting from injuries caused by the actions of another person.

- 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.

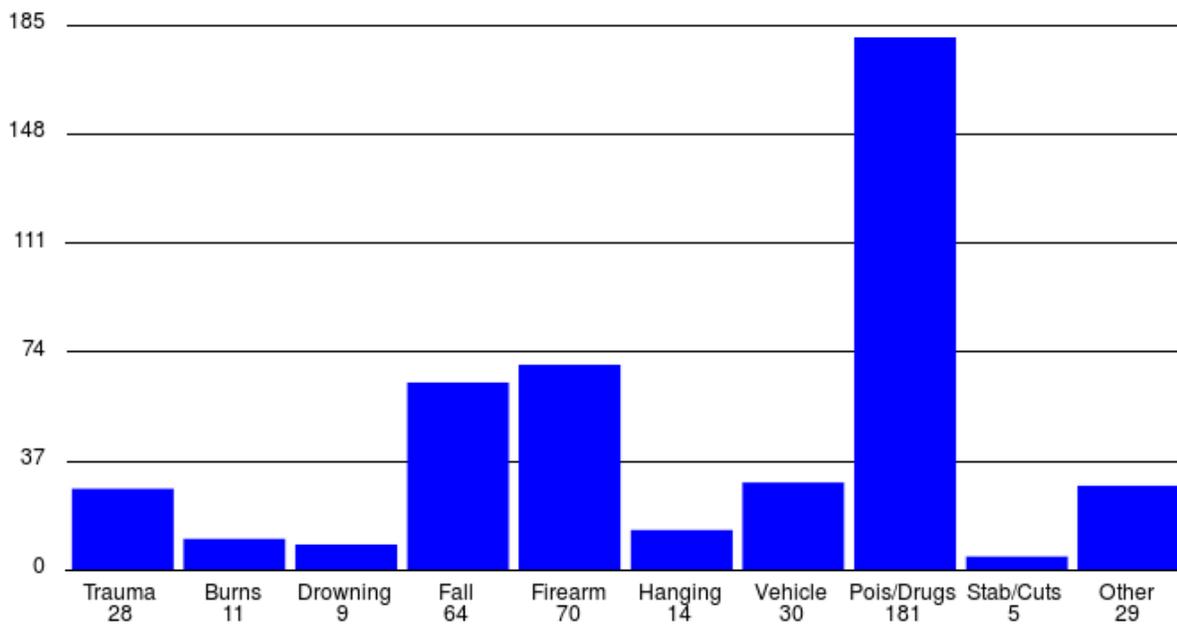
## Deaths by Natural Causes

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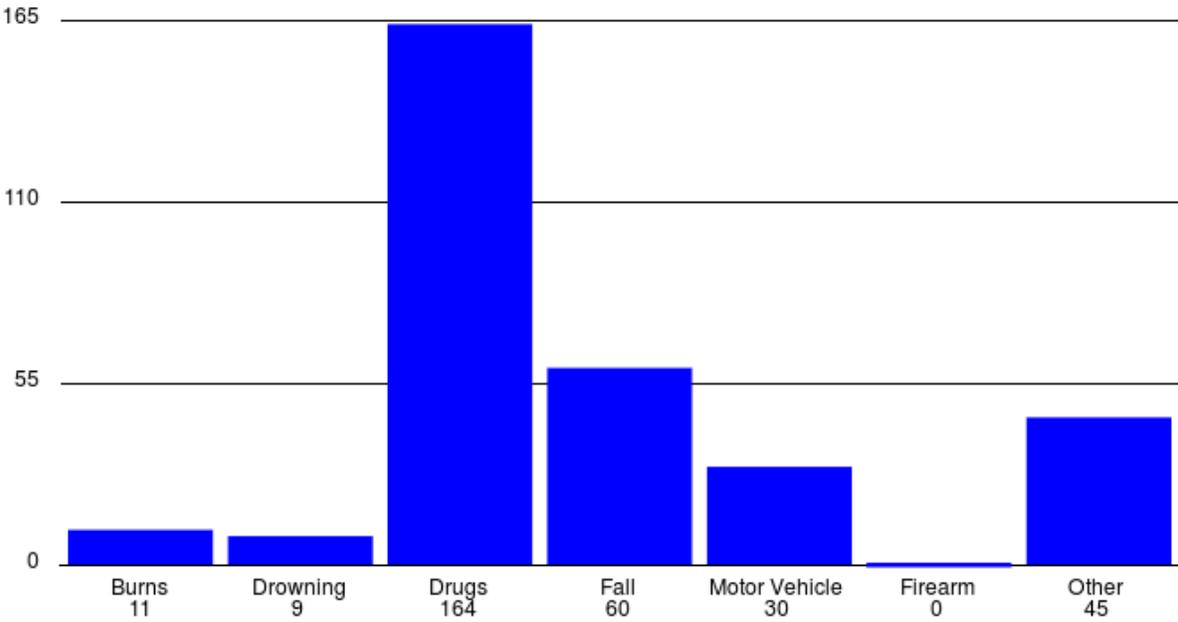
## Deaths by Unnatural Causes

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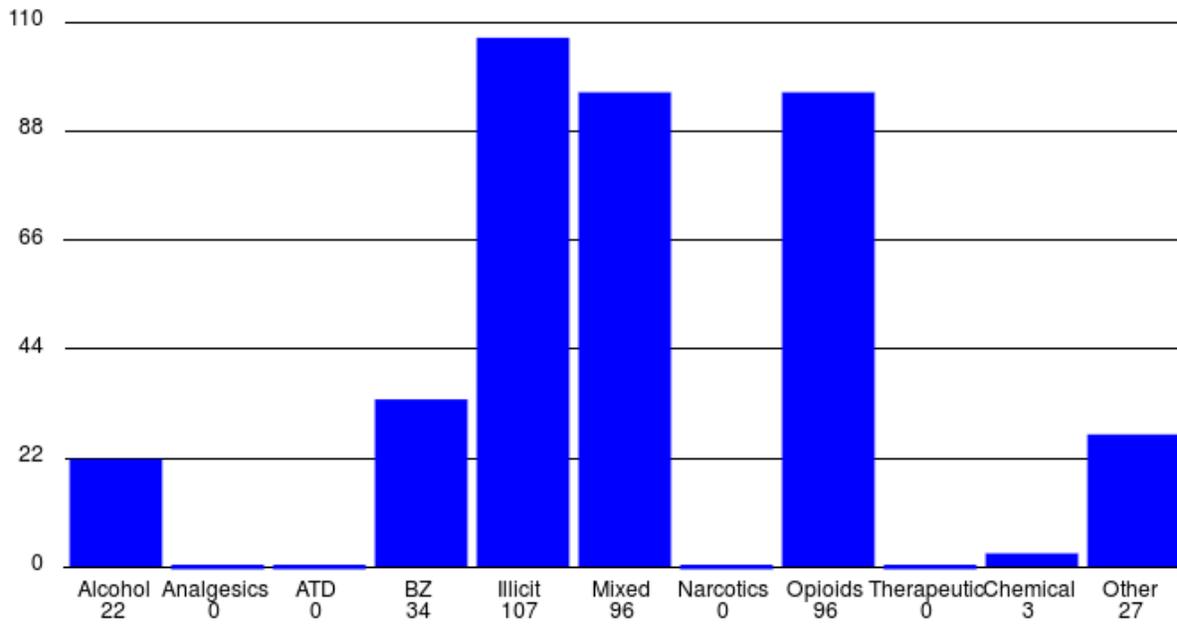
# Accidental Deaths by Type

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## Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death

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\*The drug categories below were not used to classify any drug related deaths in Jefferson Parish:

Analgesics

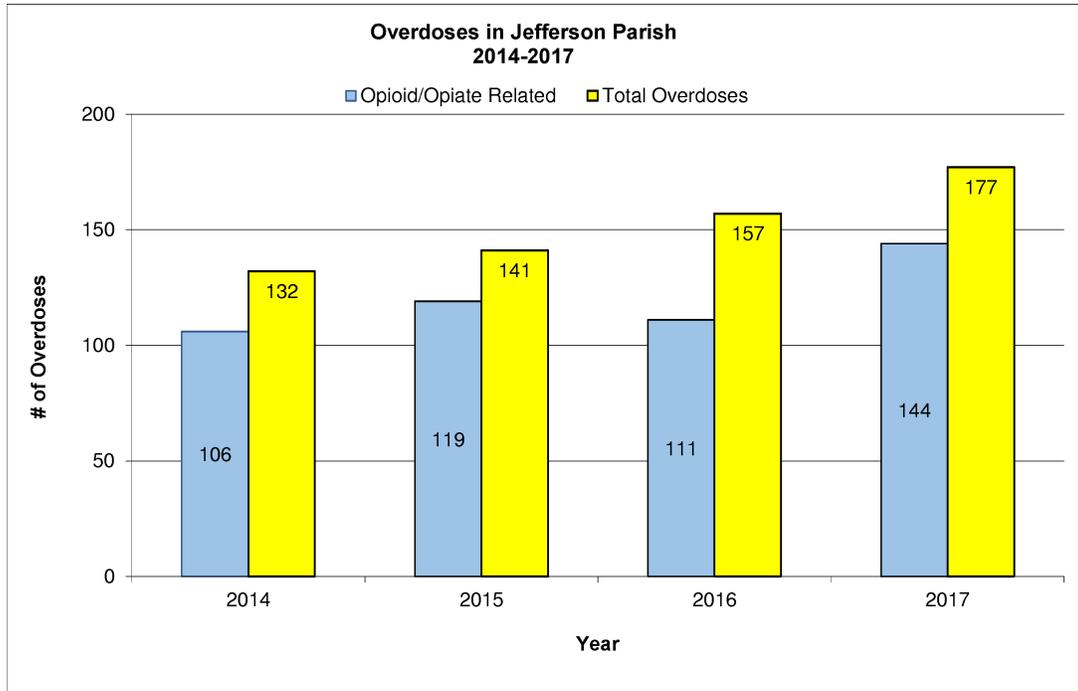
Antidepressants (ATD)

Narcotics

Therapeutics

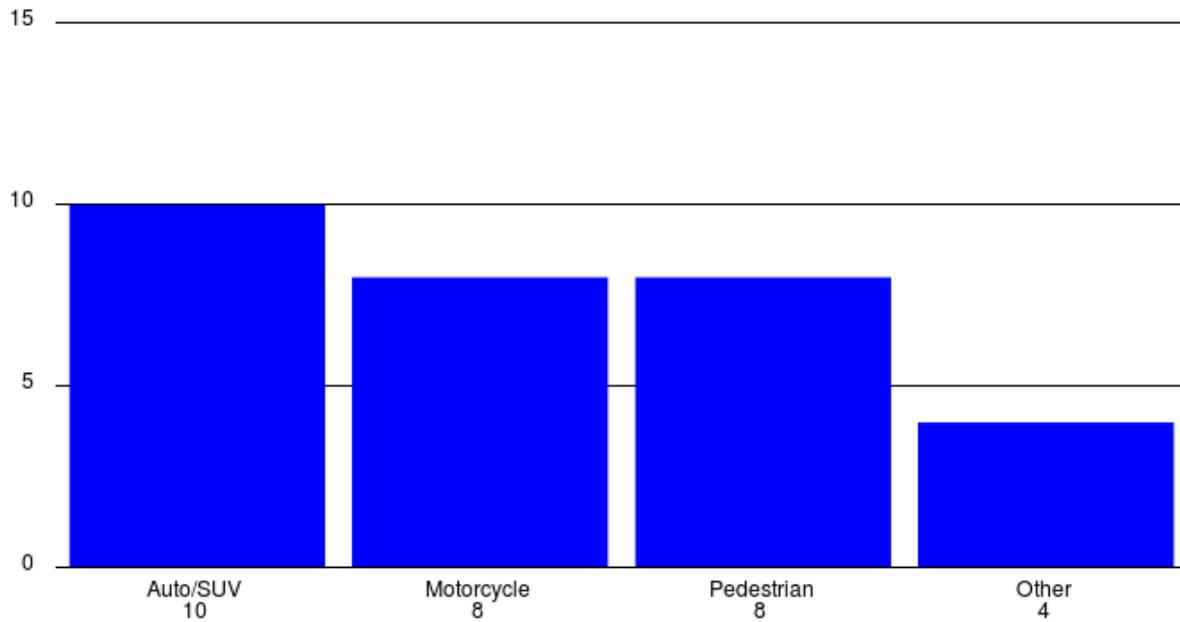
# Drug Overdoses in Jefferson Parish 2014-2017

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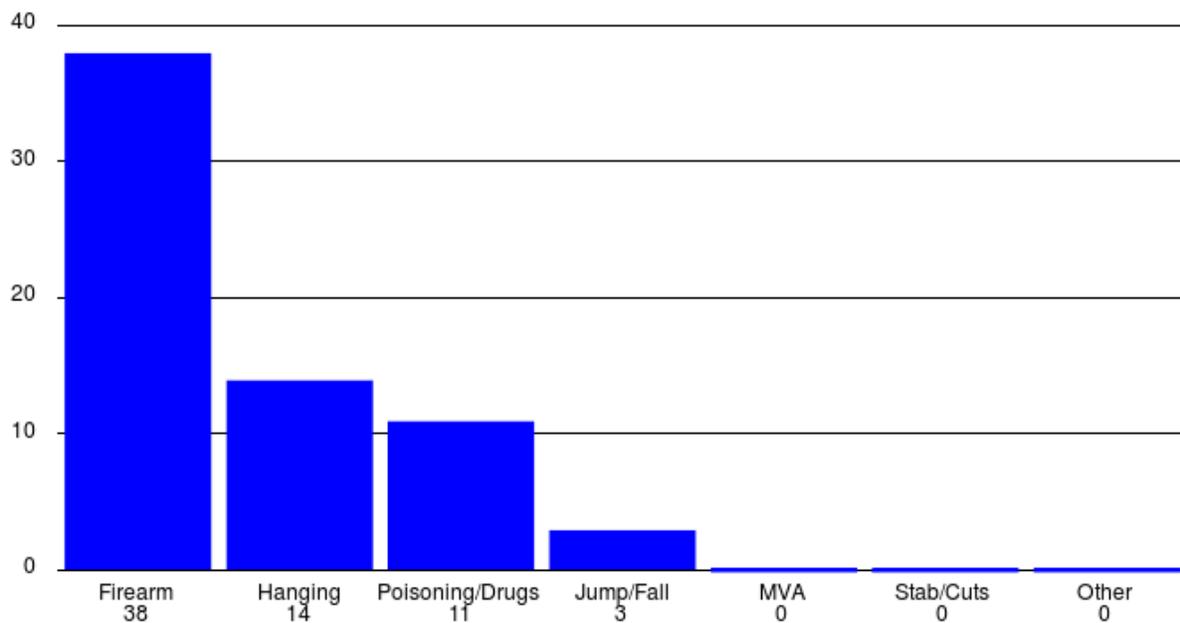
## Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes

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## Suicide by Means

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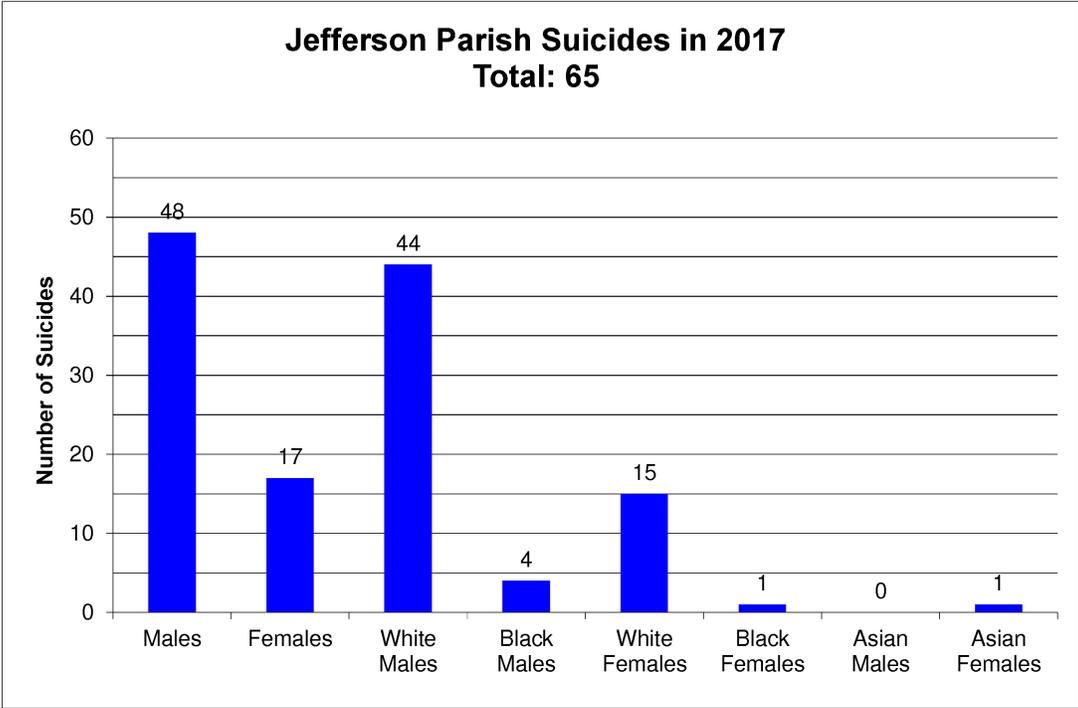


# Number of Suicides By Age Range



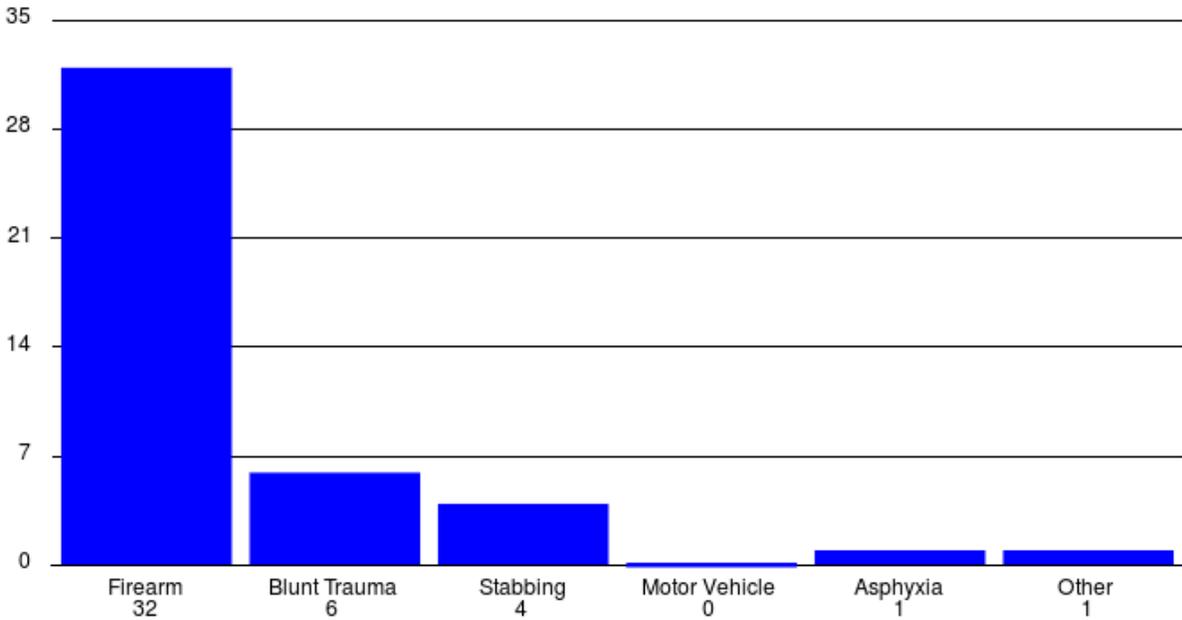
# Suicide By Race and Gender

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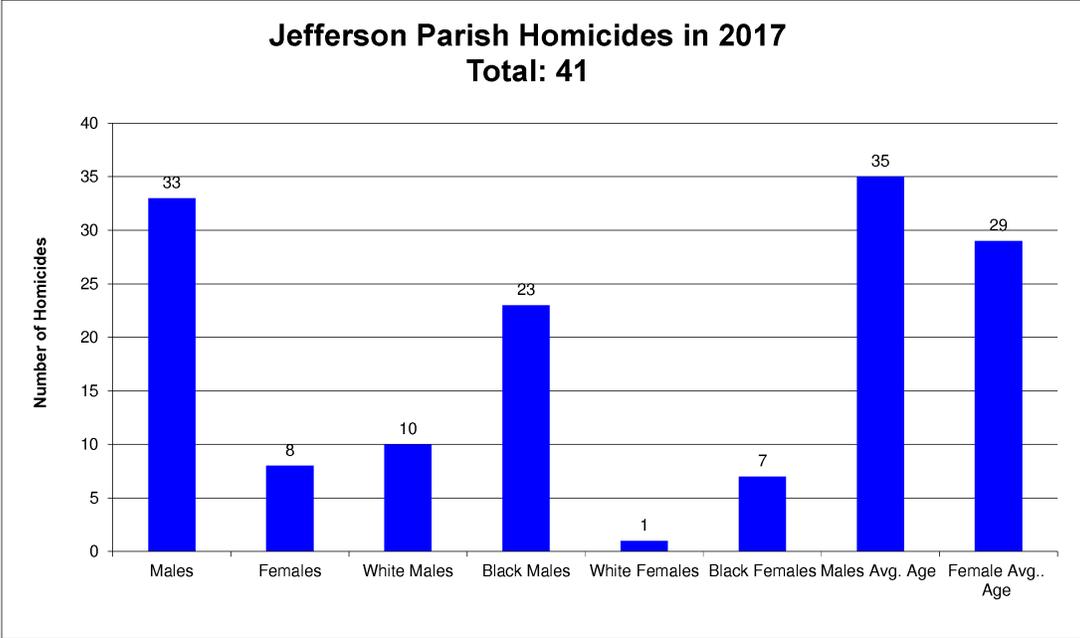
# Homicide Deaths

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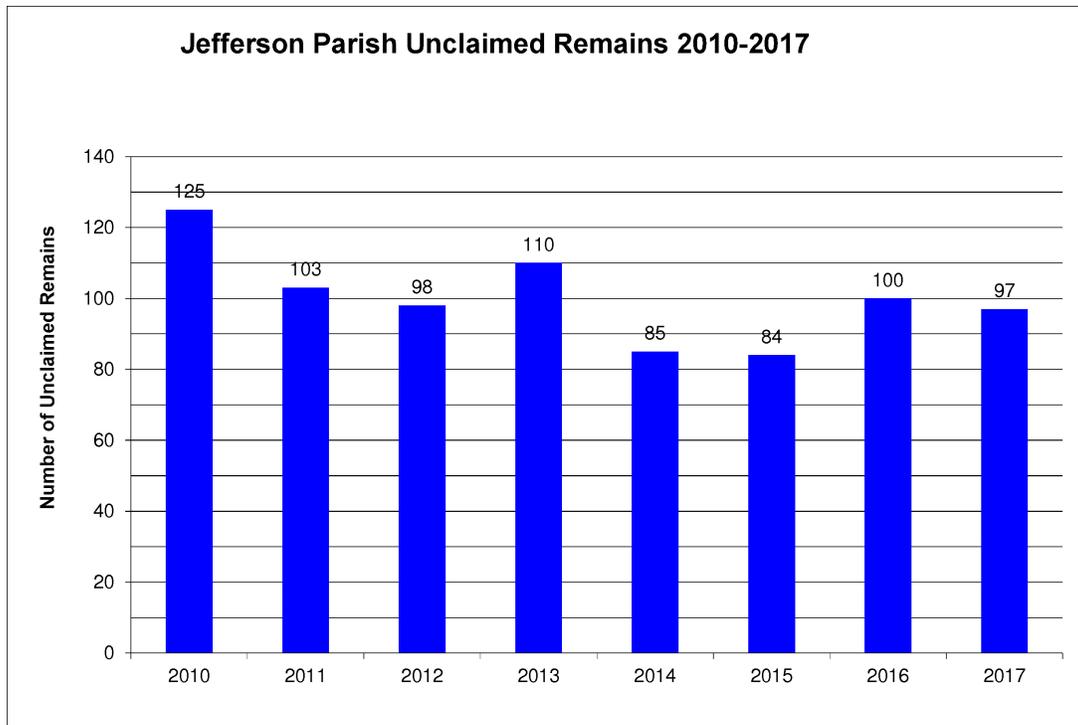
# Homicide By Gender, Race and Average Age

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## Pauper/Unclaimed Remains 2010-2017

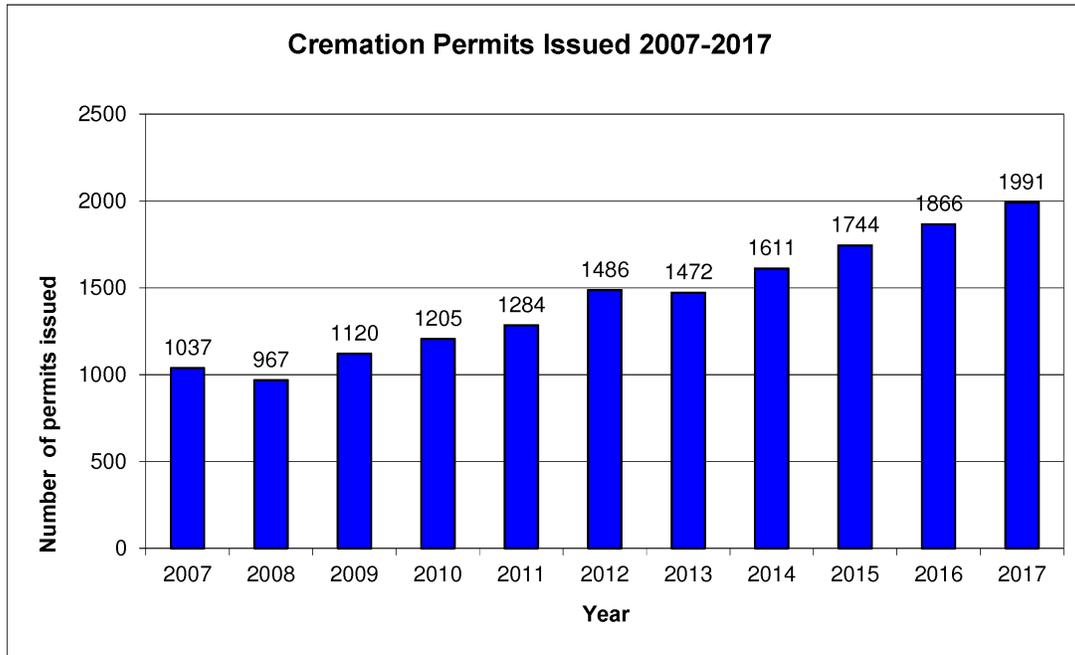
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The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) is required by law to dispose of all unclaimed dead bodies in Jefferson Parish. In accordance with the law, a procedure has been established by the JPCO to facilitate the necessary arrangements for final disposition 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 2017, 97 bodies were cremated as unclaimed/abandoned costing the tax payers \$39,195. The graph above depicts the unclaimed bodies cremated from 2010-2017.

## Cremation Permits Issued: 2007-2017

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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. The above graph illustrates the steady increase over the past 11 years.

## **Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency/Southern Eye Bank Statistics for Coroner Cases**

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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 2017 , the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office gave release on 67 deaths that came under the office's jurisdiction. Altogether, there were 21 organ donors for transplant from the 67 cases referred to the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office saving 75 lives. There were 46 tissue donors approved for skin, bone, cartilage, heart valves and other tissues through the tissue procurement agency enhancing 3,220 lives. Southern Eye Bank received 24 eye donors released from the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office in 2017. One donor can provide the gift of sight to two people and enhance vision for an additional four people.

# Other Coroner Responsibilities

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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 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).

## 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) 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.

# Mental Health Statistics

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## Mental Health Department 2017

	<b>Jefferson Parish</b>	<b>Out of Parish</b>	<b>Total All Parishes</b>
<b>OPC</b> - Order for Protective Custody	376	2	378
<b>PEC</b> - Request for Coroner's Examination	4,482	2,956	7,438
<b>CEC</b> - Coroner's Emergency Certificate	1,960	1,529	3,489

# Sexual Assault Statistics

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## Sexual Assault Department 2017

<b>JUVENILES (18 years &amp; younger)</b>	<b>Sexual Assaults</b>
Male	32
Female	68

<b>ADULTS (17 years &amp; older)</b>	<b>Sexual Assaults Reported to Law Enforcement</b>		<b>Sexual Assaults Un-Reported to Law Enforcement</b>		<b>Sexual Assaults TOTAL</b>
	IP*	OOP**	IP*	OOP**	
Male	0	4	0	0	4
Female	40	28	7	0	75

\*IP – In Jefferson Parish

\*\*OOP – Out of Parish (These were completed at University Medical Center in Orleans Parish.)

# Community Outreach Statistics

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## **Community Outreach Department 2017\***

\*Programs are taught in Jefferson Parish Public & Private Schools

### ***S.O.S. Signs of Suicide - Suicide Prevention Program***

<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
JAN – MAY 2017	346	16	29
AUG – DEC '17	406	22	39
<b>2017 H.S. TOTAL</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>68</b>

<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
JAN – MAY 2017	180	7	10
AUG – DEC 2017	1,668	37	30
<b>2017 M.S. TOTAL</b>	<b>1,848</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>

### ***Teens, Sex, and the Law***

<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Classes</b>
JAN – MAY 2017	608	15
AUG – DEC 2017	638	22
<b>2017 H.S. TOTAL</b>	<b>1,246</b>	<b>37</b>

<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Classes</b>
JAN – MAY 2017	294	2
AUG – DEC 2017	1,965	47
<b>2017 M.S. TOTAL</b>	<b>2,259</b>	<b>49</b>

<b>2017 GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
<b>Signs Of Suicide</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Teen, Sex, &amp; the Law</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>0</b>

