

**BERRIEN COUNTY
MEDICAL EXAMINER
2015
ANNUAL REPORT**

Office of the Medical Examiner

2149 E. Napier Avenue

Benton Harbor, MI. 49022

Number Two! Our second Annual Medical Examiner Report. Too soon for trend data, the report does provide a surveillance tool and information for use in our programs and other agencies, coalitions, etc.

Drug overdose and suicide deaths continue to be disheartening. Mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment needs of our community remain significant.

Our percentage of Medical Examiner cases that result in an autopsy increase from 2014, but at 21% remains significantly below the national average. Our cost to the residents of Berrien County at \$1.66 per capita is less than half of the national average.

The continued diligent work of Mary Baker, the Medical Examiner Investigators, and the administrative staff is central to excellent Medical Examiner service for Berrien County!



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Berrien County Medical Examiner**

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Medical Examiner Personnel

**Frederick A. Johansen, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Examiner**

**Larry Wile, MD
Deputy Medical Examiner**

**Mary Baker
Chief Administrative Medical Examiner
Investigator**

**DeWayne Hellenga, MSP(ret.)
Medical Examiner Investigator**

**Lori Hellenga, RN
Medical Examiner Investigator**

**Josh kay, CCEMTP I/C
Medical Examiner Investigator**

**Joan LaLonde, HT (ASCP)
Medical Examiner Investigator**

**Cris Rieli, HTL (ASCP)
Medical Examiner Investigator**

Medical Examiner Reportable Deaths and Autopsy

The Michigan County Medical Examiners Law, P.A. 181 of 1953, as amended, and the Michigan Public Health Code, P.A. 368 of 1978, as amended, mandates that specific types of deaths (listed below, left) be referred to the Medical examiner for investigation. Medical examiner investigation of a death may also be ordered by the county's prosecuting attorney, the Michigan Attorney General or, upon the filing of a petition, signed by six (6) electors of a county. Not all deaths referred to the medical examiner for investigation necessarily result in an autopsy; however, an autopsy is generally ordered in certain circumstances (listed below, right), to determine more accurately the cause and manner of death.

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Medical Examiner, P.A. 368 of 1978:

1. Sudden deaths and unexpected deaths (all deaths occurring in operating room, in recovery room, anesthesia related, natural death but not expected, occupational related deaths, subdural hematoma, intracerebral hemorrhage, etc.)
2. Accidental deaths (motor vehicle, burns, drowning, Falls, broken bones, drug overdose, drug toxicity, Subdural hematoma, recent or past trauma, etc.)
3. Violent deaths (homicide, gunshot, stabbing, suicide, Subdural hematoma, etc.)*
4. Suspicious circumstances surrounding a death.*
5. Deaths occurring as a result of an abortion.
6. Upon written order of the prosecuting attorney or the attorney general or upon the filing of a petition signed by six (6) electors of a county.
7. Death of a prisoner in any county or city jail who dies while so imprisoned.
8. If a fetal death occurs without medical attendance at or after the delivery.

In terms of a physician attendance: for the purposes of The medical examiner program, we consider that an Investigation is required when:

- A. The deceased was last seen by a physician more than ** ten (10) days before his or her death, if the cause of death Appears to be other than the illness or condition for which the Deceased was being treated.
- B. The attending physician cannot accurately determine the Cause of death.
- C. When the deceased has not received any medical attention during the ***48 hours prior to the hour of death unless the attending physician, if any, is able to accurately determine the cause of death.

*All trauma related deaths no matter when the trauma occurred
** The ten (10) day requirement relates solely to physician attendance.*** The 48 hour requirement triggers an investigation when there has been no medical attendance of any kind (i.e., nursing care, etc.)

Types of Medical Examiner Cases for which Autopsy is Generally Ordered:

1. Sudden deaths and unexpected deaths only when in the medical examiner's judgment, sufficient medical history is not available to determine cause and manner of death.
2. Accidental deaths such as motor vehicle, burns, drowning, etc. If an individual has been hospitalized for a length of time, it is the medical examiner's decision to order an autopsy.
3. Violent deaths such as homicide, suicide, gunshot, stabbing, etc.
4. Suspicious circumstances surrounding death, including unidentified bodies.
5. Death related to an abortion.
6. Sudden infant deaths (SIDS) and deaths of children 18 and under without significant medical history.
7. Death of a prisoner imprisoned at any county or city jail.
8. In a fetal death occurring without medical attendance at or after delivery.
9. An autopsy may be ordered at the discretion of the medical examiner if the cause of death appears to be other than the illness or condition for which the deceased was being treated, or if the attending physician cannot accurately determine the cause of death.
10. Anesthesia-related and unexpected deaths of patient in health care institutions.
11. Partial autopsies are not done because it is not best practice.
12. Views are performed in cases in which there is adequate History to explain the death, but there are external findings, Such as injuries, that require direct examination to Determine whether they maybe significant injuries that Mandate full autopsy.

-MEDICAL EXAMINER PROGRAM EXPENDITURES 2013 THROUGH 2015

	2013	%	2014	%	2015	%
Medical Examiner (Compensation)		0.00%	19,195.06	8.96%	41,630.95	16.10%
Autopsies	41,692.26	24.89%	74,186.85	34.62%	94,221.04	6.43%
Body Transport	44,201.50	26.39%	37,281.18	17.40%	49,185.25	19.02%
Office Supplies/Other	1,373.07	0.82%	1,645.25	0.77%	9,431.35	3.65%
Contractual Services	13,098.46	7.82%	18,291.85	8.54%	15,157.00	5.86%
Health Services	67,150.00	40.09%	63,670.00	29.71%	48,975.35	18.94%
Total	167,515.29	100.00%	213,270.19	100.00%	258,600.94	100.00%
Average Cost/Case Investigated	\$842.79		\$927.58		\$1,237.33	
Deaths in County	1558		1723		1699	
Referred to ME Office	199		231		209	
% of Deaths Referred		12.77%		13.40%		12.30%
ME Cases Autopsied	22		38		44	
% of ME Cases Autopsied		11.06%		16.45%		21.05%

Demographics of Medical Examiner Cases

Figure 1: Medical Examiner Cases by Race/Ethnicity

White	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Asian/Middle Eastern	Other *	Total
167	36	4	1	1	0	209

* Race/Ethnicity not specified in report.

Figure 2: Medical Examiner Cases by Age at Death

<1	1-5	6-16	17-25	26-44	45-64	65+
3	3	2	16	40	93	52

Manner of Death

Figure 3: Medical Examiner Cases by Manner of Death

Natural	Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Indeterminate
101	66	31	9	2

Figure 4: Manner of Death by Race/Ethnicity

	Natural	Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Indeterminate
White	81	51	28	3	2
Black	19	11	2	6	
Hispanic	1	3			
Native American			1		
Middle Eastern		1			
Other					
Totals	101	66	31	9	2

Figure 5: Homicides by Race

White	Black	Hispanic	Other
3	6		

Figure 6: Homicides by Age

0-19	20-44	45-64	65+
1	5	1	2

Manner of Death

Figure 7: Homicide Cases by Method Used

Gun	Asphyxia	Stabbed	Assault	Other
5	1	1	1	1 (Heroin Overdose)

Figure 8: Gun Homicides by Age

0-19	20-29	30-39	40+
1		2	2

Figure 9: Suicide Cases by Race

White	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Other
28	2		1	

Figure 10: Suicide Cases by Age

1-19	20-44	45-64	65+
2	12	15	2

Figure 11: Suicide Cases by Method Used

Gun	Hanging	Drug Overdose	Carbon Monoxide	Other
19	10	2		

Figure 14: Medical Examiner Cases by Cause of Death

Natural*	Vehicle*	Bike/Ped.*	Gun	Drug OD*	Poison*	Fire	SIDS	Fall	Asphyxia*	Other*	Indeterminate
100	11	7	25	31	1	0	1	10	17	4	2

*Natural: Acute & Chronic Alcoholism (included in Figure 12 & Drug Deaths)

* Vehicle: Snowmobile/Pick-up

* Bike/Pedestrian: Pedestrian-Train/Car/Truck

*Drug OD: Drug Overdose including Alcohol

*Poison: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

*Asphyxia: Hanging/Drowning/Inhalation/Aspiration

*Other: Cancer of Lung & Thermal Burns/Assault/Stabbed/Cold Water Drowning

Cause of Death

Figure 12: Drug Deaths by Age

<21	21-44	45-64	65+
1	15	15	1

Figure 13: Drug Deaths by Gender

	Female	Male
Accident	15	15
Natural With		
Drugs Mentioned	1	
Suicide		
Homicide		1