

**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH  
CORONER'S OFFICE**



**ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

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# A Letter from the Coroner



To the Citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish:

Enclosed you will find the Coroner's Annual Report for 2013. When I ran for Coroner in 2011, my platform was based on four fundamental goals for the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office:

- Dignity for the Deceased
- Compassion for the Family
- Service to Law Enforcement
- Integrity of the Office

I promised you that I would work on your behalf to make the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office an office of which we can all be proud. As our second year has come to a close, I am pleased to report that we have made great strides in accomplishing our goals.

The following are some of our accomplishments for 2013:

- We implemented and operated under the first ever Coroner's Business and Strategic Plan
- All seven death investigators graduated from the St. Louis School of Medicine Medicolegal Death Investigation Course, tested, and were certified by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigation
- Our Investigators were re-certified as Peace Officers through the Louisiana Peace Officers Standard of Training (P.O.S.T.)
- We refined the electronic processing of Death Certificates
- The Coroner's software data processing system was migrated from an Access system to an Oracle based system to enhance its functionality
- The Disaster Preparedness Plan was presented and accepted by East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Response partners
- We provided expert testimony in the Louisiana and Federal Criminal Court system
- In accordance with Louisiana Statutes, we maximized collection of revenue totaling \$351,463
- Our Regional Autopsy Program for the parishes surrounding East Baton Rouge Parish continued to grow- Ascension (88 cases), Pointe Coupee (6 cases), West Feliciana (12 cases)
- We donated 69,426 prescription drugs to the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy
- Physical plant improvements made included re-painting morgue and bay floors, installing security cameras, pruning landscape, and adding a wireless router to the squad room

- Purchases included new morgue tables for decedent transfers and two new computers for investigative purposes
- I was elected Second Vice President of the Louisiana State Coroner's Association
- I served on 14 boards and committees and identified 10 key business partnerships and six educational partnerships
- We continued our educational program with the rotation of three residents of the LSU Emergency Medicine Residency Program and 19 student interns, as well as partnerships with Central High School Sports Medicine Program, Baton Rouge Fire Department, East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services and LSU Fire Emergency Training Institute

While we accomplished much in 2013, there is more to be done in the coming years to make the Coroner's Office a model for other coroners' offices in the state, region and the nation. Our focus for the future will involve several areas:

- Infant mortality- we will work with community partners to better educate families on infant safe sleeping.
- Heroin deaths- we will work with the Louisiana Legislature to change laws governing the distribution of heroin and giving harder sentences for drug dealers, so that they will no longer consider Louisiana a safe place to sell heroin. Secondly, we will work with our Mental Health partners to assist individuals suffering from addictive disorders.
- Mental Health- we agree with the community that we have a mental health crisis and we pledge to work with the Department of Health and Hospitals to first determine the magnitude of the problem and then seek solutions for it.
- Sexual Assault- we plan to create a response program to collect forensic evidence and offer testimony in court to protect those individuals who have been victims of sexual assault.

I pledge to serve with continued tenacity to fulfill the promises I made when you saw fit to elect me. I understand that my staff and I are servants of this community and we pledge to be good stewards of your tax dollars.

Thank you for your support,

William "Beau" Clark, M.D.

East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner

# About the Coroner's Office

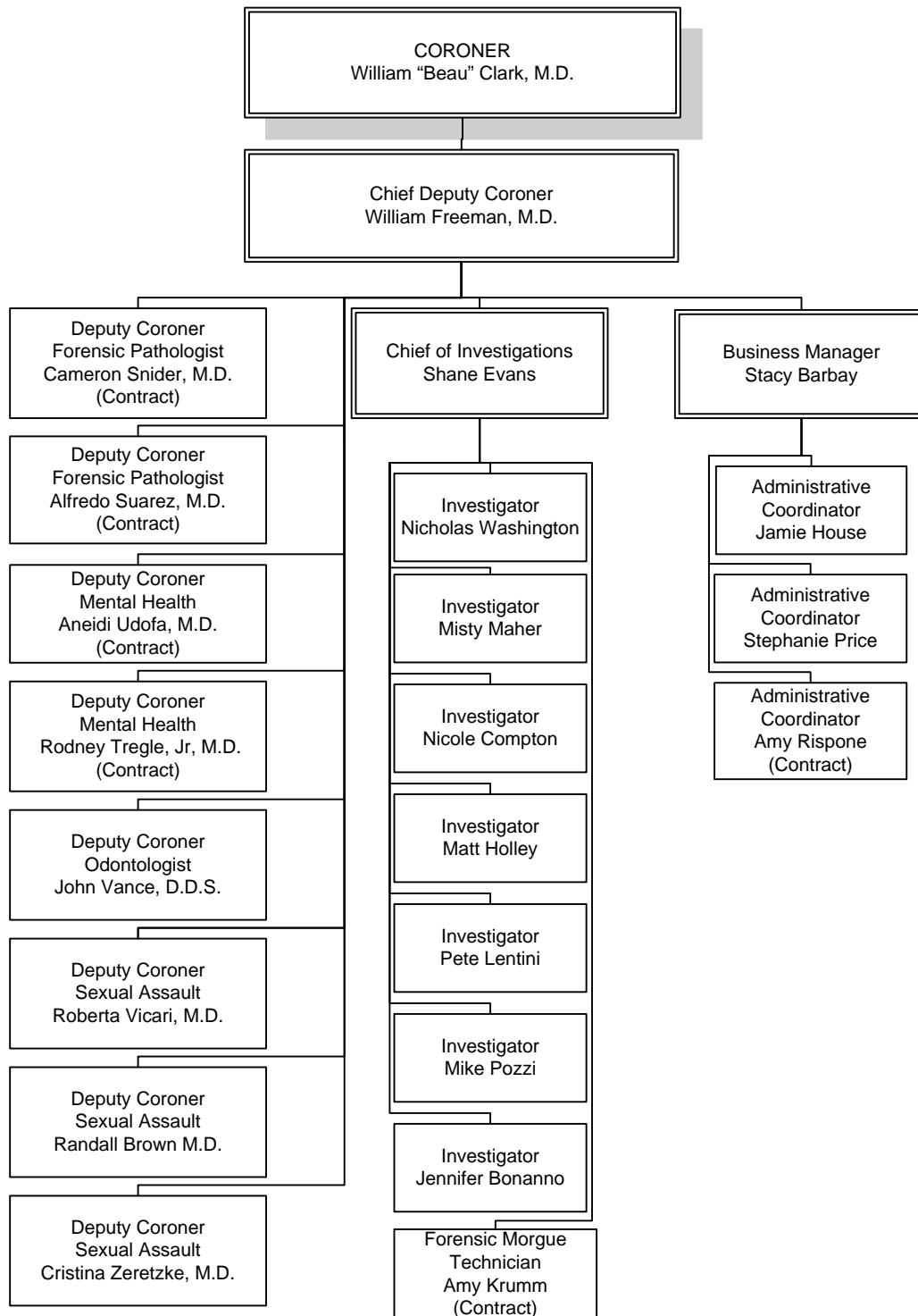
As of 2004, of the 2,342 death investigation offices in the United States, 1,590 are coroner's offices. Of those, only 82 serve jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people. Qualifications for coroners are set by individual states and counties/parishes in the U.S. and vary widely. In many jurisdictions, little or no training is required, even though a coroner may overrule a forensic pathologist in naming a cause of death. Because of the differences between jurisdictions, the terms "coroner" and "medical examiner" are defined differently from place to place. In some places, stringent rules require that the medical examiner be a forensic pathologist. In others, the medical examiner must be a physician, though not necessarily a forensic pathologist or even a pathologist. General practitioners, obstetricians, and other types of physicians with no experience in forensic medicine have become medical examiners. In the U.S., the terms "coroner" and "medical examiner" vary widely in meaning by jurisdiction, as do qualifications and duties for these offices. Local laws define the deaths a coroner must investigate, but most often include those that are sudden, unexpected, suspicious, violent, or have no attending physician. In some places in the United States, a coroner has other special powers, such as the ability to arrest the sheriff.

According to Louisiana Revised Statute 13:5701, in each parish, there shall be a coroner. Except for the parish of Orleans, he shall be elected at the gubernatorial election, shall serve for a term of four years, and shall take office and begin his term on the fourth Monday in March following election. The coroner shall be a conservator of the peace. Louisiana Revised Statute 13:5704 states that the coroner shall be a physician licensed by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners to practice medicine in the state of Louisiana. This requirement shall be waived in any parish in which no licensed physician qualifies to run for the office. The coroner shall be a resident of the parish. However, a licensed physician who is not a resident of the parish but who maintains a full-time medical practice at a principal medical office facility in the parish may qualify for and hold the office. Each coroner may appoint one or more deputy or assistant coroners to perform his duties, who need not be residents of the parish. However, any person appointed as a deputy or assistant coroner, who is not a resident of the parish, shall be a licensed physician. They shall possess the same qualifications as the coroner and be paid by the coroner appointing them or by arrangement with the parish governing authority if the coroner is on a salary basis. A person may serve as a deputy or assistant coroner on a part-time basis in more than one parish. The tenure of the appointment shall be determined by the appointing coroner but shall not be longer than the coroner's term of office. The coroner shall be responsible for the acts of his deputy or assistant coroners. The coroner may appoint any necessary secretaries, stenographers, clerks, technicians, investigators, official photographers, or other helpers. The salaries of these employees shall be paid by the coroner out of his fees or by arrangement with the parish governing authority if the coroner is on a salary basis.

The East Baton Rouge Coroner's Office is a governmental agency whose jurisdiction includes mental health investigation, medicolegal death investigation, forensic pathology services, and sexual assault investigation in collaboration with Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR) Center. The Coroner's Office is a state constitutional office and is funded by the East Baton Rouge City-Parish Government. William "Beau" Clark, M.D. was inaugurated as Coroner of East Baton Rouge Parish on March 26, 2012 and was elected to a four year term.



# Organizational Chart



# Accomplishments

## Organizational Improvements

### Human Resource Management

One of the most important improvements made to the organization was increasing the number of full-time employees who investigate death.

We implemented a random drug testing procedure in accordance with our Business and Strategic Plan.

We participated in the Exxon Mobil YMCA Fitness Challenge and was awarded first place.

All employees viewed the Harassment and Workplace Violence videos required by the policies and procedures of the Coroner's Office.

Electronic versions of enrollment materials were distributed to employees.

An Employee Performance Management and Evaluations process was developed and was implemented in January 2013.

By the end of December 2013, five employees had attended the St. Louis School of Medicine Medicolegal Death Investigation Course. The remaining investigative employees are scheduled to attend in 2014. In addition, all investigators received Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) training and are currently certified.

### Business Management

We had the Information Services department rebuild the Coroner's System, which changed the software from Microsoft Access to web-based Oracle which greatly enhanced our investigative process.

We implemented a web-based submission form for our Regional Autopsy Program to notify us when a participating parish requests this service.

We constructed and launched a website for the Coroner's Office ([www.ebrcoroner.com](http://www.ebrcoroner.com)).

Information technology, including computer hardware was inventoried and updated to provide the staff with the tools and resources needed to successfully perform their duties.

### Financial Management

We implemented a Financial Control Policy in order to ensure separation of duties for check approval and payment for all financial responsibilities.

The approved 2013 budget was \$1,849,450. The amended 2013 budget was \$2,009,450. This increase was due to increased revenue collected by optimizing all revenue sources. The final 2013 expenditures totaled \$1,984,915; therefore, the Office spent \$24,535 less than budgeted.

## Mental Health

In collaboration with acute care facilities, a rotation was developed to appropriately distribute the number of patients who were placed under an Order of Protective Custody and then transported to these facilities accordingly.

In accordance with Louisiana Civil Code Article 355, I signed tutorships for minor patients within the community.

## Sexual Assault

The Coroner's Office continued to enjoy a cooperative, invaluable relationship with the Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR) Center.

## Investigations

The Disaster Preparedness Plan was reviewed, revised, enhanced, presented, and accepted by the State of Louisiana Region 2 Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Coalition.

In 2013, the Coroner's Office investigated 34 deaths related to heroin in comparison to 5 deaths in 2012.

In 2013, the Coroner's Office investigated 8 infant deaths related to positional asphyxia in comparison to 9 deaths in 2012.

In June of 2013, a second pathologist was contracted to conduct regional autopsies at the East Baton Rouge Parish Medical Forensic Facility.

A transcription service was implemented to decrease the time from autopsy to completed report, meeting the National Association of Medical Examiner standards.

## Public Relations

Dr. Clark presented education and information to the following Community Partners in 2013, which was related to the Coroner's Office and its jurisdiction:

- o Rotary Club of Baton Rouge- "Keeper of the Crown".
- o Woman's Hospital Baby Grand – "Back to Sleep and the ABC's of Safe Sleeping".
- o Infant Death Public Service Announcement- "Anti-Co-Sleeping Campaign".



# Community Programs and Partnerships

## Board and Committee Participation

Dr. Clark actively participated in the following local, regional and statewide boards and committees:

- Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA), Coroner's Committee
- Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank
- Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center (STAR)
- State of Louisiana Child Death Review Panel
- State of Louisiana Regional Maternal and Child Health, Fetal Infant Mortality Review and Child Death Review Case Review Team
- Baton Rouge Crisis and Intervention, Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS)
- Capital Area Health and Human Services Collaborative and the Mental Health Court
- Louisiana Behavioral Health Coalition
- Baton Rouge Victims Crime Unit
- The East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness
- State of Louisiana Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Coalition for Region 2 Hospitals
- President of the Capital Area Medical Society
- Member of the Louisiana State Medical Society
- Louisiana Coroners Association 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

## Key Business Partnerships

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office partners with the following entities to initiate and improve relationships to better serve the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish:

- Local, regional and statewide law enforcement agencies
- Local, regional and statewide public safety agencies
- Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Vital Statistics
- Capital Area and surrounding parish funeral homes
- East Baton Rouge Parish acute care hospitals
- East Baton Rouge Parish hospice agencies
- East Baton Rouge Parish nursing homes
- East Baton Rouge Parish Mental Health Advocate
- Accidental Death Support Group
- Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE)

## Educational Partnerships

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office partners with the following institutions to educate students in the area of death investigation and forensic science:

- Louisiana State University Emergency Medicine Residency Program
- Central High School Sports Medicine Program
- East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services Program
- Baton Rouge Community College
- East Baton Rouge Parish Fire Department Recruitment Trainees
- St. Michael the Archangel High School Forensic Science Program

## Capital Improvements

Building improvements included completion of a private family conference room to conduct mental health assessments, transfer personal property, and host meetings of a sensitive nature.

The investigative squad room was enlarged to accommodate the increased investigative staff and requisite equipment. This enabled the office to have a private waiting area outside of the administrative offices to host family conferences or related meetings.

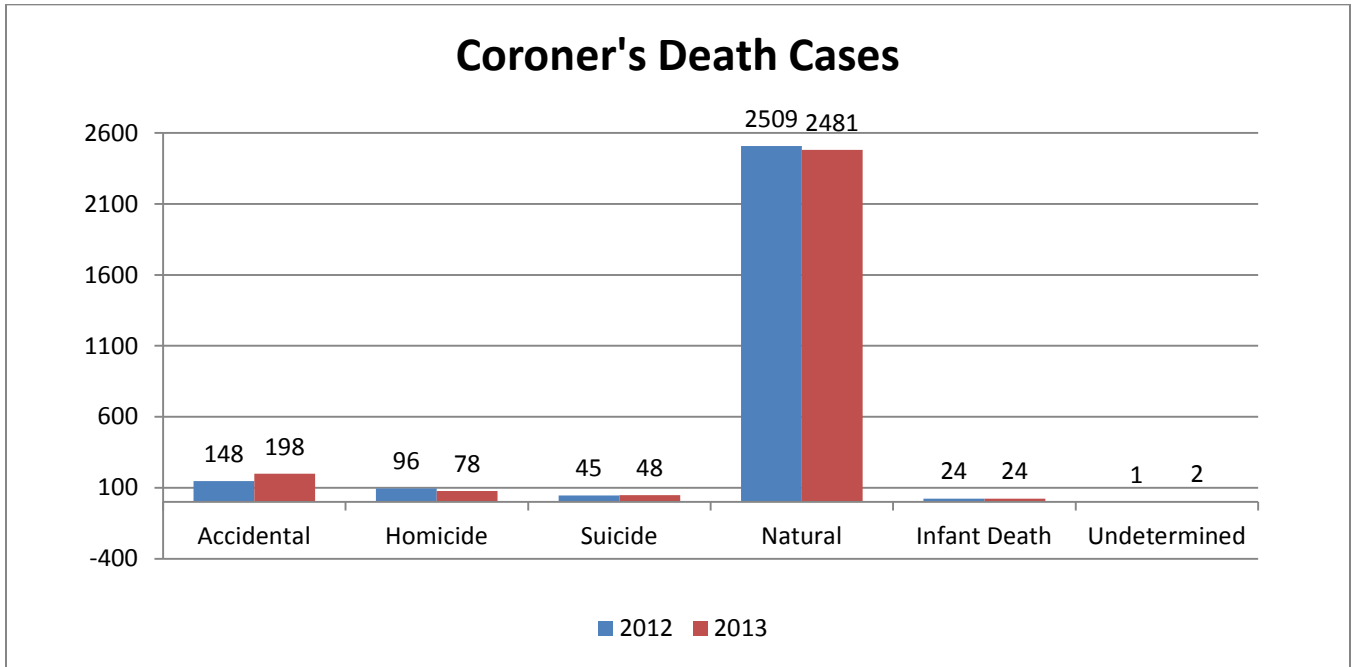
The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office received three automatic Stryker stretchers donated by East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services which allow the Coroner's Investigators to quickly and easily transport decedents, particularly when an investigator is working alone.

# Statistical Information

## Death Investigations

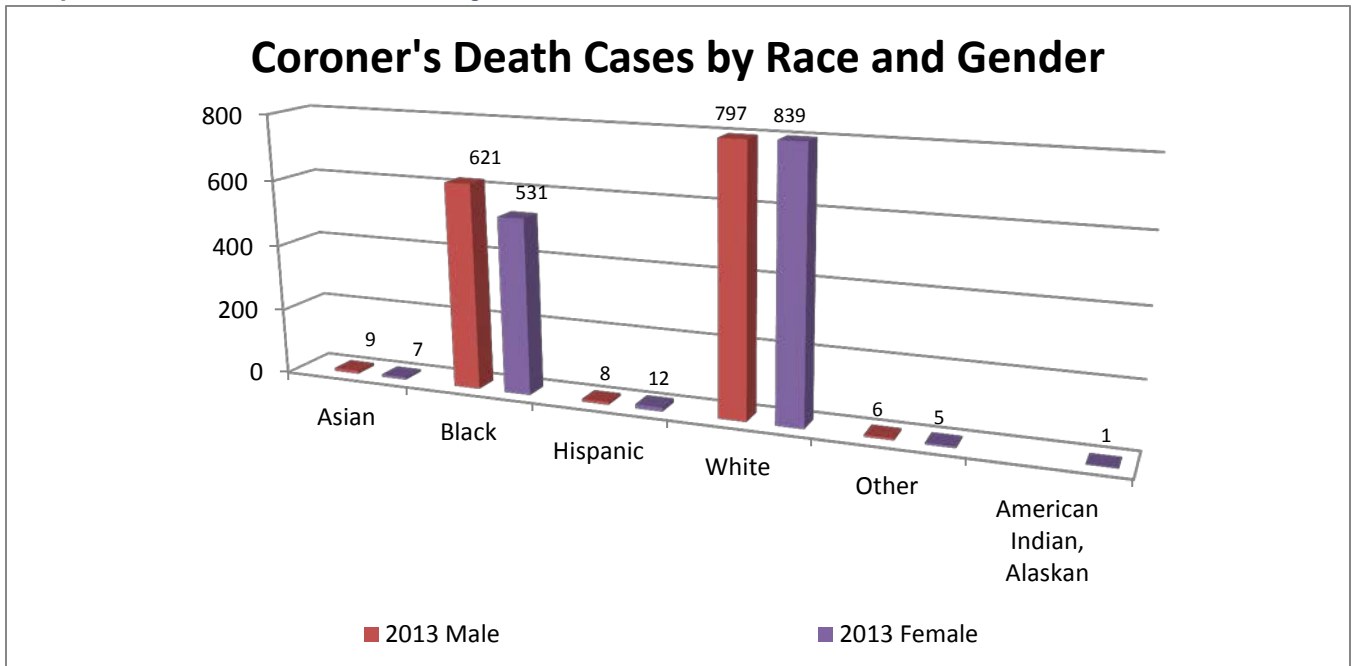
	<b>2012 Total</b>	<b>2013 Total</b>
<i>Number of Coroner's Death Cases</i>	2824	<b>2837</b>
<i>Number of Bodies Transported</i>	279	<b>369</b>
<i>Number of Scene Responses</i>	598	<b>745</b>
<i>Number of Toxicology Analysis Performed</i>	248	<b>330</b>
<i>Number of Histology Analysis Performed</i>	440	<b>498</b>
<i>Number of Cremation Permits Issued</i>	655	<b>880</b>
<i>Number of Pauper Cremations Facilitated</i>	77	<b>57</b>
<i>Number of Unidentified Bodies</i>	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Number of East Baton Rouge Parish Autopsies</i>	186	<b>215</b>
<i>Number of Regional Autopsy Program Autopsies</i>	24	<b>106</b>
<i>Number of Exhumations</i>	1	<b>0</b>
<i>Total Organ and Tissue Donations</i>	145	<b>97</b>
<i>Total of Enhanced Lives from Organ/Tissue</i>	2440	<b>2730</b>
<i>Total Cornea Donations</i>	8	<b>15</b>
<i>Total Prescriptions Donated</i>	45,904	<b>69,426</b>

Graph 1: 2013 Coroner's Death Cases

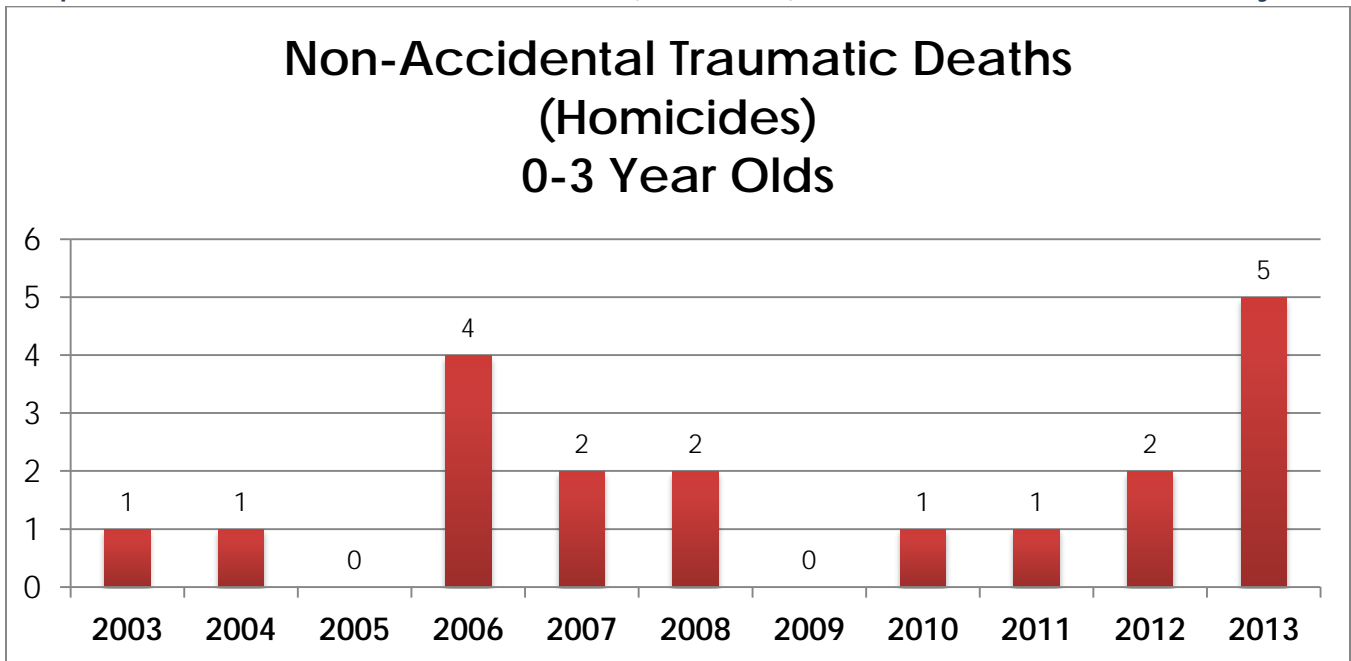


Compared to 2012 data, there were 50 more accidental deaths investigated in 2013. Suicides increased in 2013 by 3, whereas natural deaths and homicides decreased, by 28 and 18 cases respectively. The number of undetermined cases increased by 1. Overall, the Coroner's Office investigated 13 more deaths in 2013.

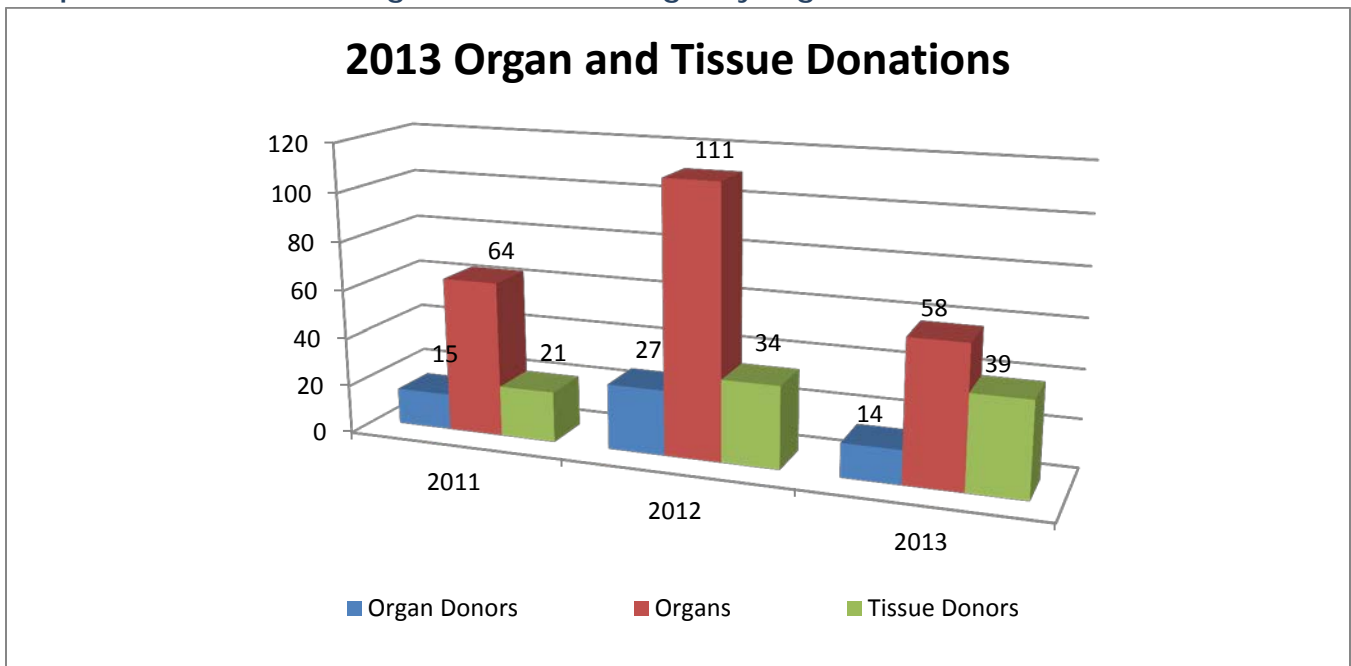
Graph 2: 2013 Coroner's Cases by Gender and Race



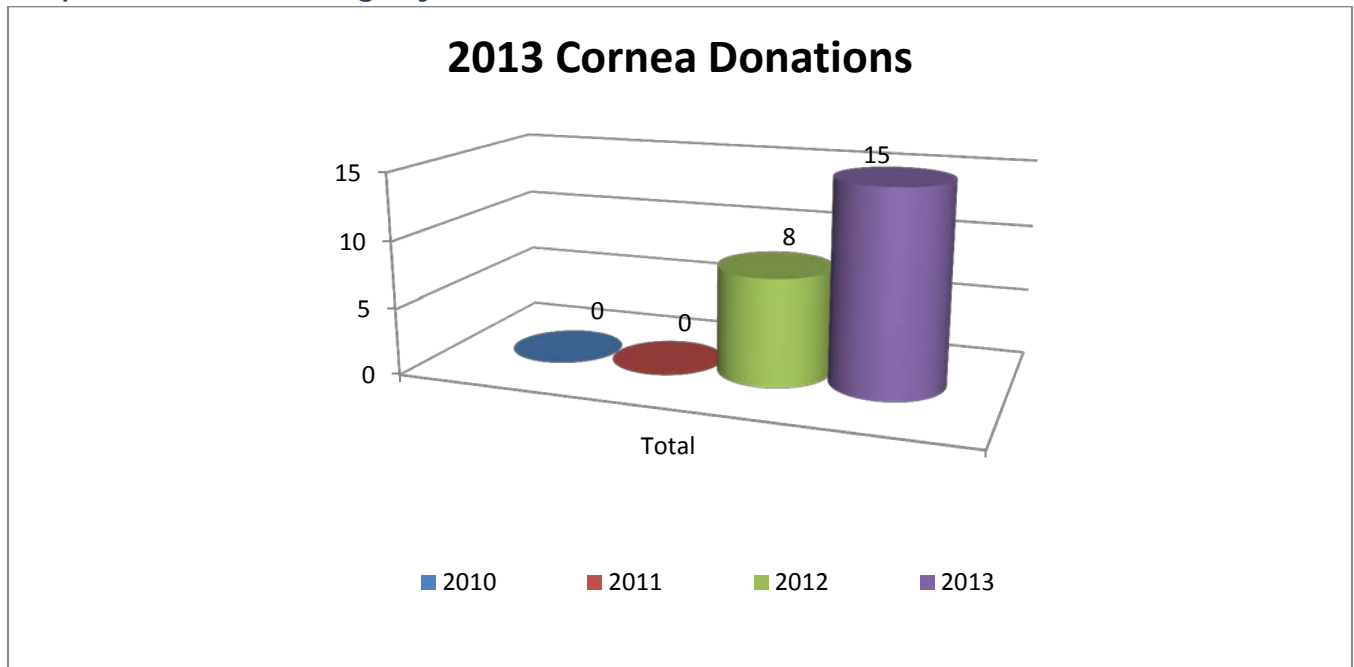
Graph 3: Non-Accidental Traumatic Deaths (Homicides) 0-3 Year Olds – A Ten Year Analysis



Graph 4: 2013 Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency Organ and Tissue Donations

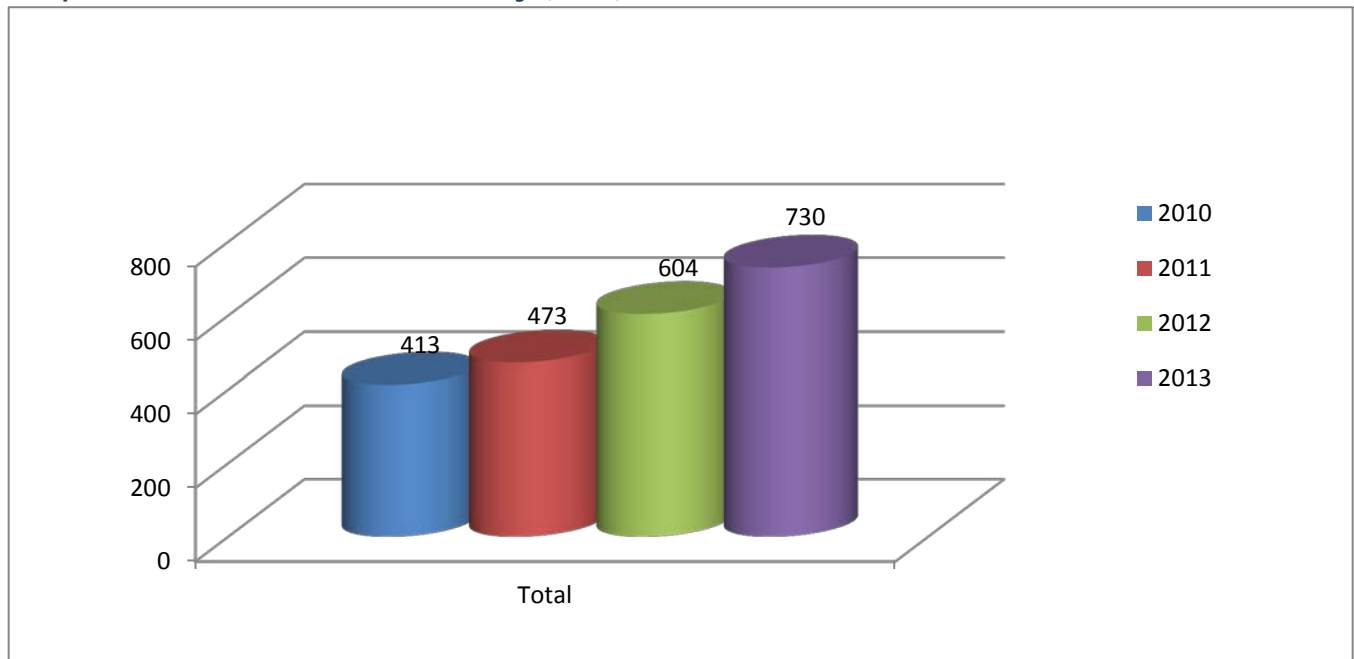


Graph 5: 2013 Baton Rouge Eye Bank Cornea Donations

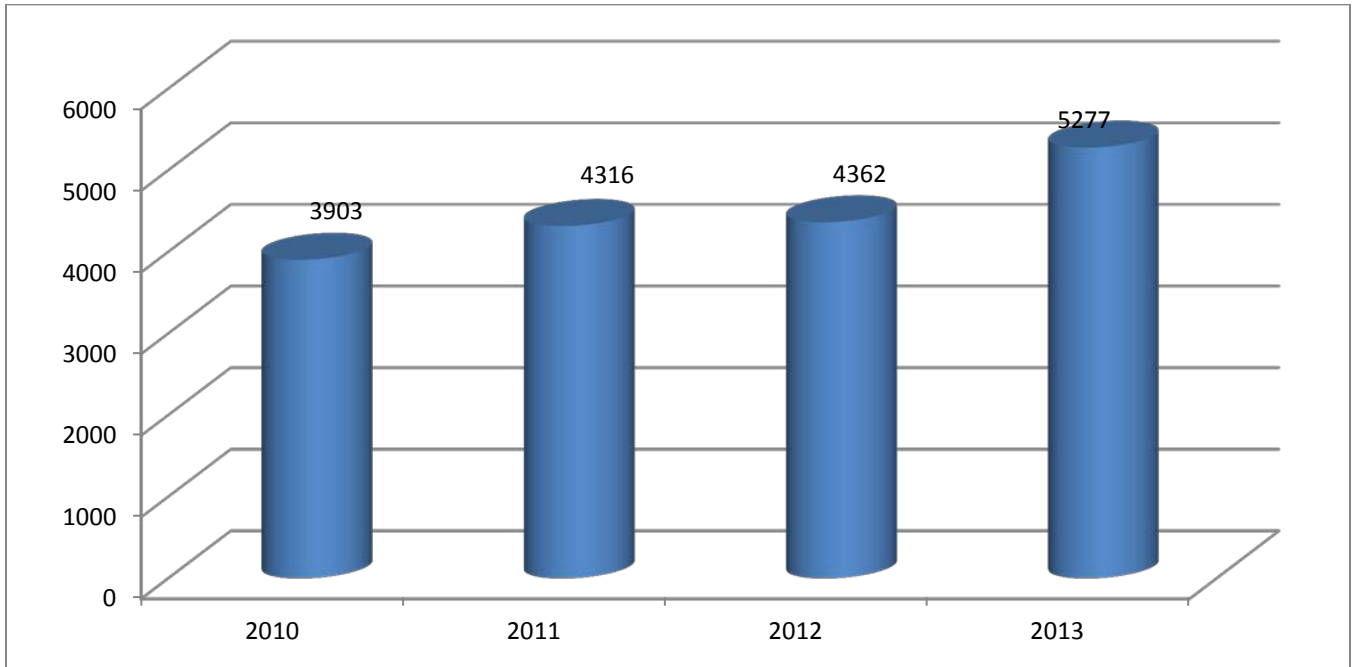


## Mental Health

Graph 6: Order of Protective Custody (OPC)

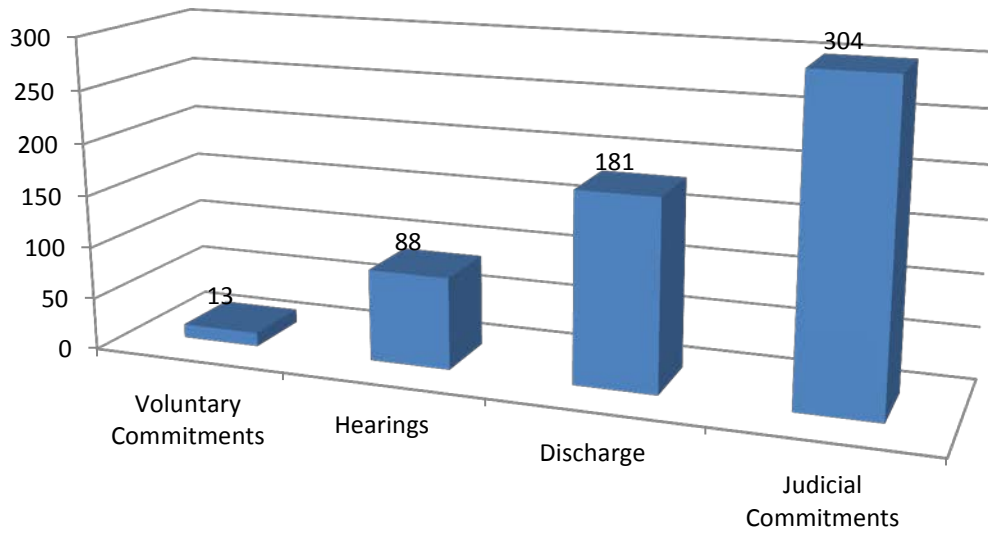


Graph 7: Coroner Emergency Certificate (CEC)



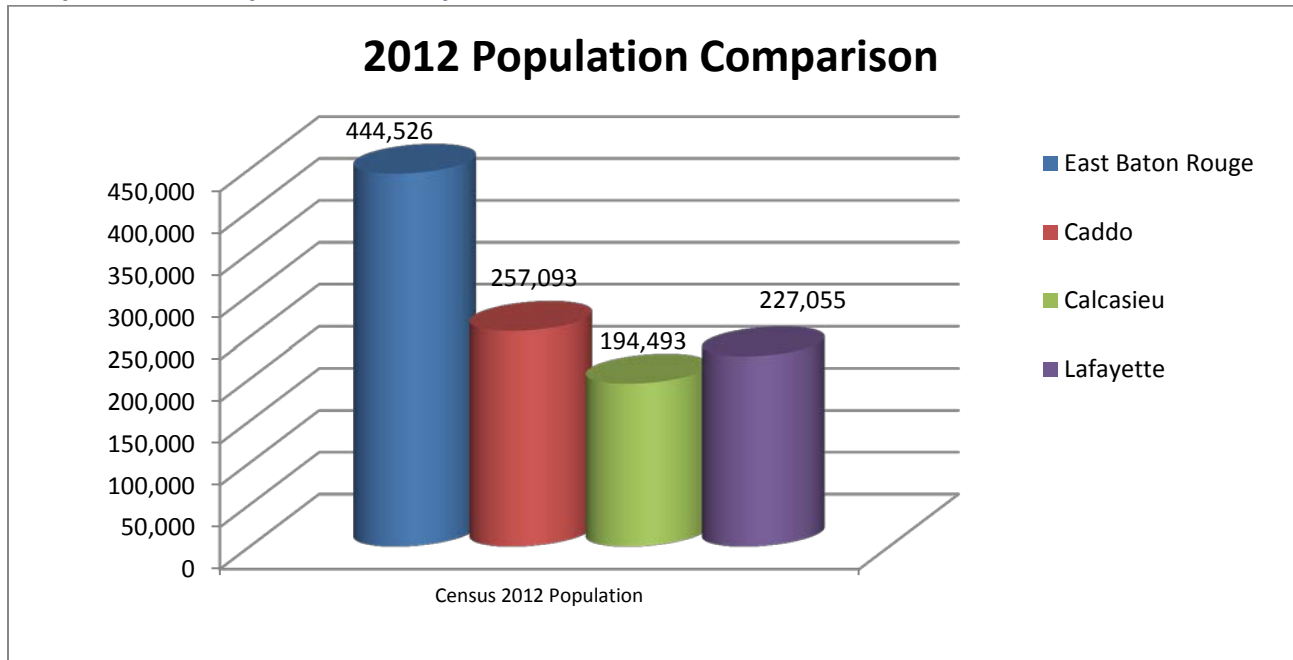
Graph 8: Mental Health Advocate

**2013**



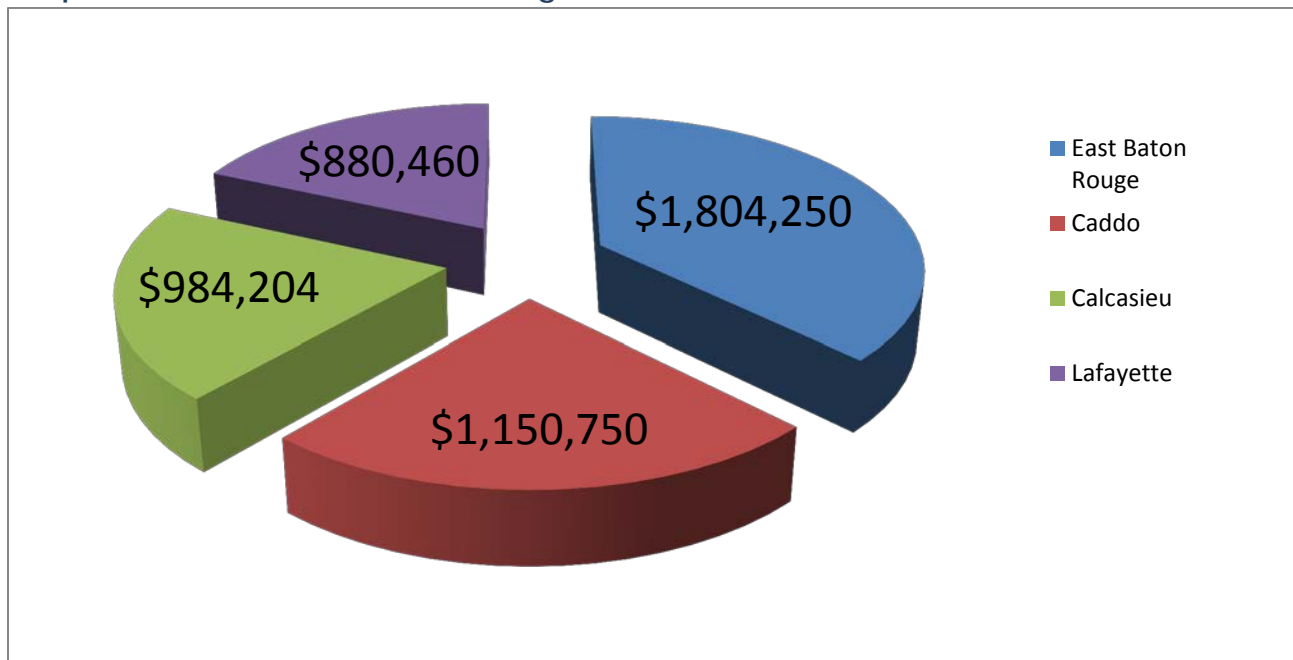
# Parish Comparisons

Graph 9: 2012 Population Comparison



East Baton Rouge Parish is the most populated parish in the State of Louisiana.

Graph 10: 2012 Coroners' Annual Budgets





Graph 11: 2012 Funds per Citizen

