

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



**ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

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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 2017. 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 sixth 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 2017:

- We provided expert testimony in the Louisiana and Federal Criminal Court system.
- In accordance with Louisiana Statutes, we maximized collection of revenue totaling \$774,959.
- We are having continued success with our Regional Autopsy Program for the parishes surrounding East Baton Rouge Parish - Ascension (103 cases), Pointe Coupee (14 cases), West Feliciana (27 cases) and Livingston (76 cases).
- We donated 82,116 prescription drugs to the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy.
- I now serve as President of the Louisiana State Coroner's Association and played an active role and supported the LSMS in the successful passage of opioid legislation with HB 192 and SB 55.
- I continue to serve on multiple boards and committees.

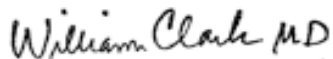
While we accomplished much in 2017, there is more to be done in the coming years to make the Coroner's Office a model for other coroners' offices in the state, region and the nation. Our focus for the future will involve several areas:

- **Death investigations-** I will maintain the gold standard of death investigation.
- **Infant Mortality-** My goal continues to be to prevent 100% of these tragic losses. In 2016 my office participated in the Cribs for Kids Safe Sleep Initiative and formed a Safe Sleeping Task Force with regional stakeholders. In 2017 we focused on a Safe Sleeping Education Campaign and saw a significant decrease in infant deaths that were due to unsafe sleeping environments. I will continue to work with community partners to better educate families on infant safe sleeping environments.
- **Heroin Deaths-** In 2017 my office continued an anti-heroin campaign. Our office worked with the Louisiana Opioid Task Force and the Office of the Governor to create impactful public policies to protect our citizens. I will continue to address our opioid epidemic in both our death investigations and with those in our community suffering from substance abuse problems.

- **Mental Health-** I will continue my efforts to implement an automated system for Physician Emergency Certificates and Coroner Emergency Certificates by working with Louisiana Department of Health and other stakeholders. I will continue to work with community partners to open a new mental health stabilization center to prevent the inappropriate incarceration of our citizens with mental illness and the overcrowding of emergency departments.
- **Sexual Assault-** When I took office in 2012, I recognized the need for all victims of sexual assault, including men, women and children, to receive appropriate, efficient and consistent forensic medical exams with the highest level of dignity and in full compliance with state law. I understood that Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) are considered best-practice when conducting forensic medical exams. In 2016, I successfully implemented a SANE protocol that includes not only East Baton Rouge Parish but the entire Louisiana Department of Health Region 2 of Ascension, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, East Feliciana and West Feliciana. We have a solid team of SANEs with one full-time SANE Coordinator. We conducted 253 adult/adolescent exams beginning what I feel will be the gold standard in sexual assault forensic medical exams. Our goal for 2018 is to complete training in pediatric forensic medical examinations and begin 24/7 response for men, women and children of all ages.

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

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.

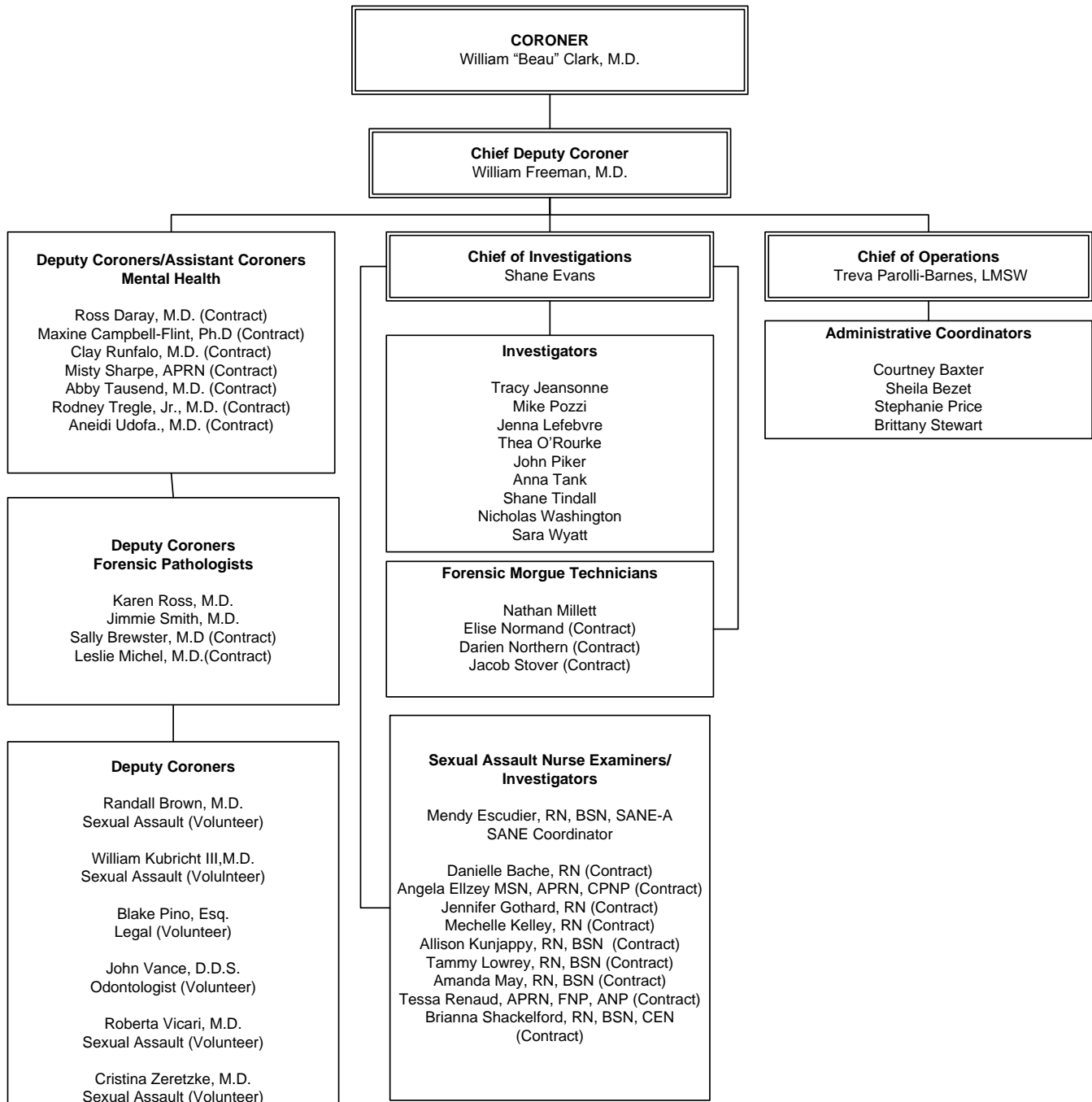
Local laws define the deaths a coroner must investigate, but most often include those that are sudden, unexpected, suspicious, violent, or have no attending physician. In some places in the United States, a coroner has other special powers, such as the ability to arrest the sheriff.

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 an 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. Each coroner may appoint one or more deputy or assistant coroners to perform his duties. 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 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 investigations. 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.

In the fall of 2015, Dr. Clark ran unopposed for a second term. He was sworn into office for this second term on March 11, 2016.

# 2017 Organizational Chart





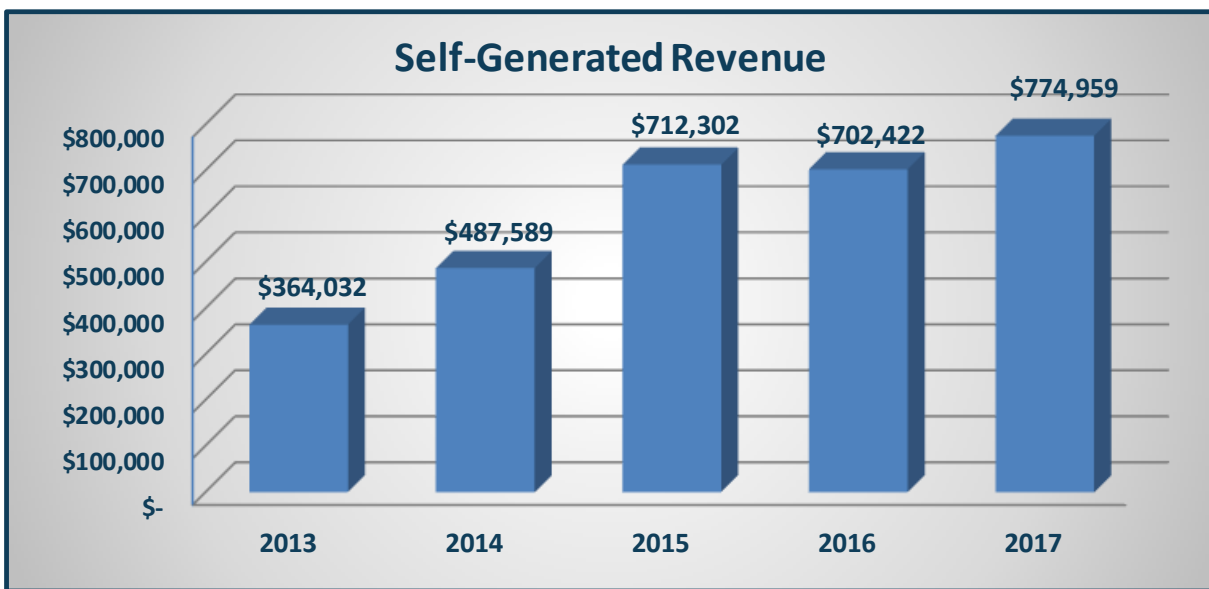
# Accomplishments

## Financial Management

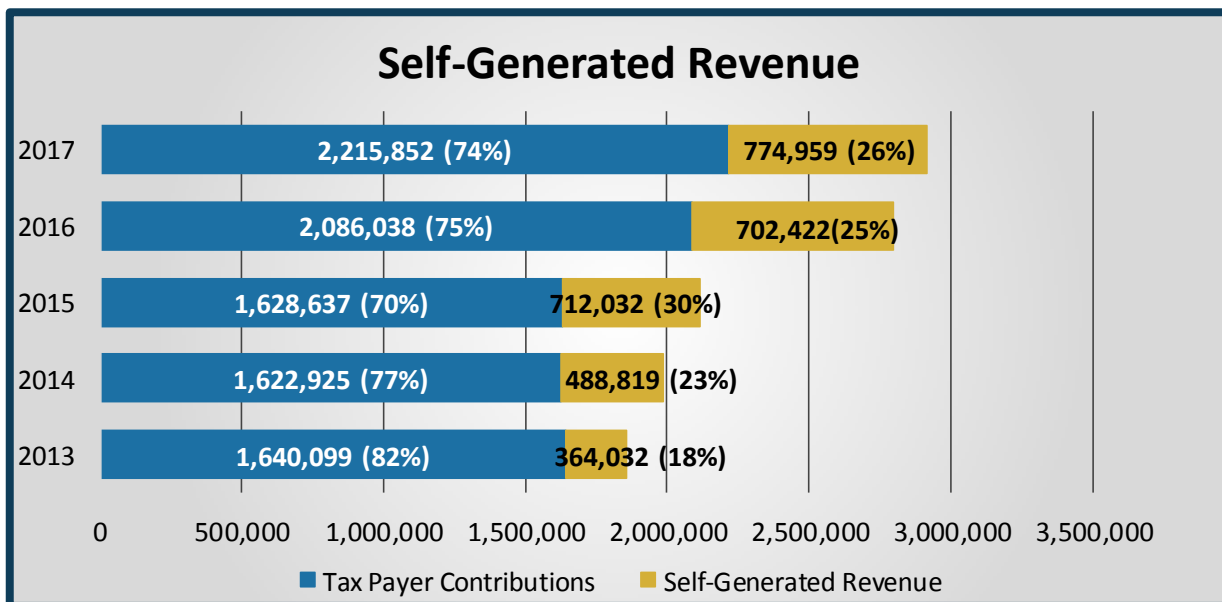
The approved 2017 operating budget was \$2,854,640. The amended 2017 operating budget was \$2,985,760. This increase was due to both increased revenues collected by optimizing all revenue sources and a general fund subsidy. The final 2017 expenditures totaled \$2,990,811.

**Between 2012 and 2017 we increased self-generated revenue (SGR) by 67%. We continue to be fiscally responsible by pursuing all possible revenue sources.**

**Graph 1: Self-Generated Revenue 2013-2017**



**Graph 2: Self-Generated Revenue versus Taxpayer Contribution 2013-2017**



## Mental Health

We recognize the emotional needs of the survivors of those who have died. We continued to collaborate with the Crisis Intervention Center and with the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center to provide resources to the families who have suffered a traumatic loss. Traumatic loss can be defined as any manner of death including: accident, homicide, suicide, infant death, unexpected, and natural. We recognize the need for more expansive mental health resources. During 2017, we worked with individual community stakeholders along with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Capital Area Human Services District to develop a plan for a new mental health stabilization center to prevent inappropriate incarceration of our citizens with mental illness and the overcrowding of emergency departments and in 2018 we will continue these efforts.

## Sexual Assault

The Coroner's Office continued to enjoy a cooperative, invaluable relationship with members of the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) including other agencies such as, the Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Advocacy Center (STAR), the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center, local law enforcement agencies, the East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney's Office, surrounding hospitals, and the Louisiana State Police Crime Lab. We succeeded with our efforts to redirect the assignment of collecting forensic evidence regarding sexual assault in this parish to the Coroner's Office. We again requested a budget increase to add Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners to our staff and were successful. We worked with Region 2 agency stakeholders and developed and implemented a sexual assault response protocol that includes Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners.

## Investigations

In 2017, the Coroner's Office investigated:

- 124 homicides compared to 84 in 2016
- 45 deaths related to heroin in comparison to 34 deaths in 2016
- 66 non-heroin overdoses as compared to 55 in 2016
- 7 infant deaths related to an unsafe sleeping environment compared to 17 in 2016
- 58 deaths related to suicide in comparison to 47 in 2016

*See Graph 3: 2017 Coroner's Death Cases*



## Public Relations

Dr. Clark presented education and information to the following Community Partners in 2017:

- Woman's Hospital Baby Grand – "Back to Sleep and the ABC's of Safe Sleeping".
- Behavioral Health Constituency Presentation
- Crisis Intervention Training
- Public Defender Presentation
- Honoring and Remembering Ceremony
- Celebrity Waiter – Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center
- DHH Presentation regarding Heroin Deaths in the Capital Region
- LSU Health Unit Mental Health Presentation
- St. Michaels High School Career Day
- Thanksgiving Service for Light and Sight
- Forum 35 – Lunch and Learn
- Kiwanis Club
- Oschner's Lifetime Learning Institute through LSU
- Louisiana Association of Drug Free Communities
- Louisiana Hospital Association
- Bocage Rotary Club
- Louisiana State Medical Society "Safe Opioid Event"
- Louisiana Public Broadcasting
- Better Business Bureau of South Central Louisiana
- Louisiana Department of Health "Opioid Epidemic Symposium"
- Our Lady of the Lake Physician's Assistant Students
- Louisiana Fatality, Search and Recovery Team
- Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana "Pinwheels for Prevention"
- Better Business Bureau of South Central Louisiana
- Mental Health Association "Beat the Odds"
- Louisiana Worker's Compensation Educational Conference
- Path Forward for the ACC – Discussion with Congressman Garret Graves
- National Association of Social Workers Conference
- St. Luke School Active Shooter Training
- STAR Champions of Change
- Louisiana Public Broadcasting Round Table Discussion – Opioids
- Baton Rouge Press Club
- Louisiana Academy of Family Physician
- International Assoc. of Chiefs of Police- Improving Police Response to Mental Illness
- Louisiana Geriatric Association
- Saint Francisville Rotary Club
- LSU Public Safety Day
- Louisiana Department of Insurance
- American Health Lawyer's Association
- Annual Recovery Day Event
- Louisiana Academy of Physician Assistance Conference
- Baton Rouge Retired Social Workers

- Louisiana Primary Care Association Conference
- Broadmoor Methodist Church
- Louisiana Department of Justice
- Louisiana Attorney General's Office
- Mayor's Health City Initiative

# 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
- 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
- Past President of the Capital Area Medical Society
- President of the Louisiana State Medical Society
- Louisiana Coroners Association First Vice President
- Bridge Center Board
- HCR 129 Task Force
- Baton Rouge Community College criminal Justice Advisory Board

## Key Business Partnerships

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office continues to partner with the many entities to initiate and improve relationships to better serve the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish.

## Educational Partnerships

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

- Louisiana State University
- Southern University
- Our Lady of the Lake School of Nursing
- 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
- Episcopal High School
- Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center
- Zachary High School Medical Program
- St. Joseph's Academy

# Statistical Information

## Investigations

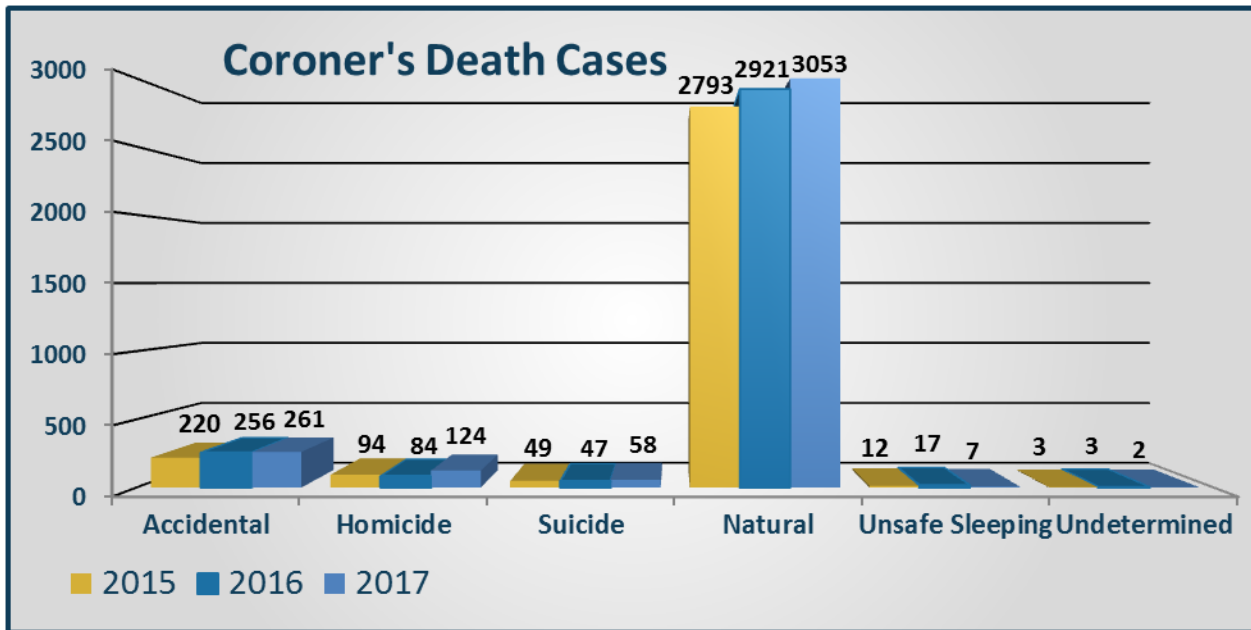
<b>Type of Investigation</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<i>Number of Coroner's Death Cases</i>	3153	3311	<b>3502</b>
<i>Number of Bodies Transported</i>	385	337	<b>421</b>
<i>Number of Scene Responses</i>	884	944	<b>992</b>
<i>Number of Toxicology Analysis Performed</i>	558	624	<b>672</b>
<i>Number of Histology Analysis Performed</i>	156	77	<b>47</b>
<i>Number of Cremation Permits Issued</i>	1126	1234	<b>1300</b>
<i>Number of Pauper Cremations Facilitated</i>	44	26	<b>80</b>
<i>Number of Unidentified Bodies</i>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Number of East Baton Rouge Parish Autopsies</i>	248	208	<b>235</b>
<i>Number of Regional Autopsy Program Autopsies</i>	221	223	<b>220</b>
<i>Number of Exhumations</i>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<i>Number of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams</i>	N/A	148*	<b>253**</b>
<i>Total Referrals to LOPA</i>	298	337	<b>427</b>
<i>Total Organ and Tissue Donations</i>	57	60	<b>52</b>
<i>Total of Enhanced Lives from Organ/Tissue</i>	2730	2870	<b>2590</b>
<i>Total Cornea Donations</i>	44	47	<b>52</b>
<i>Total Prescriptions Donated</i>	82,429	95,384	<b>82,116</b>
<i>Continuing Tutorships</i>	5	9	<b>10</b>

\*SAFE Adults Only Beginning February 27, 2016

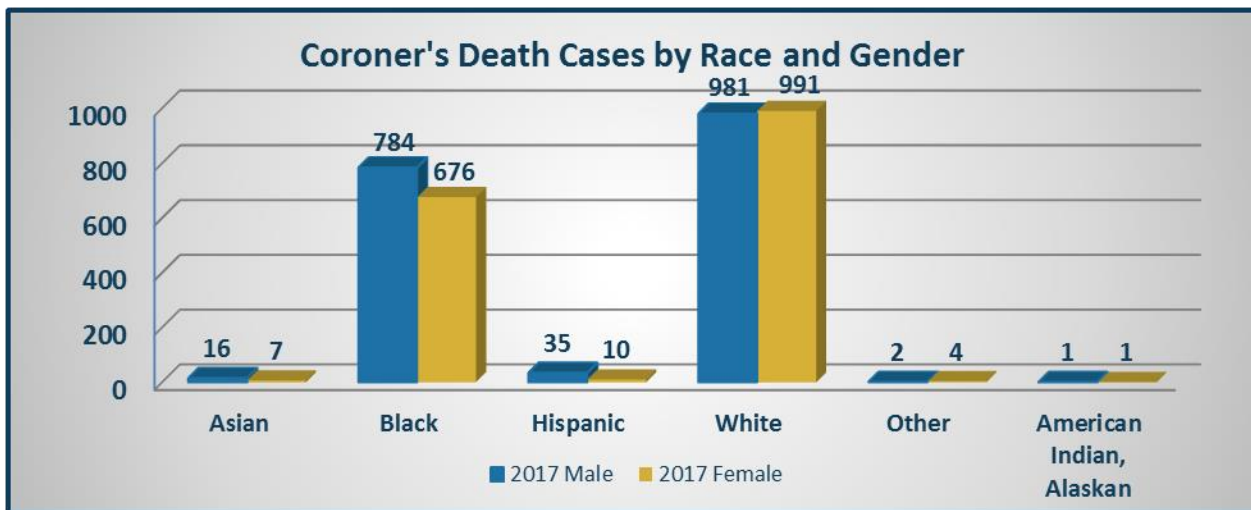
\*\*SAFE Adults/Adolescents Only

### Graph 3: 2017 Coroner's Death Cases

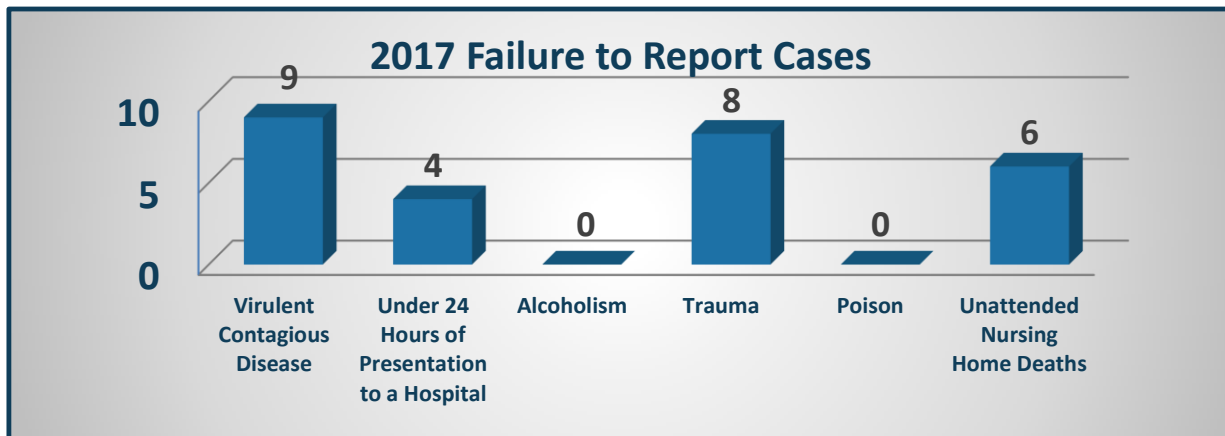
Compared to 2016 data, there were 5 more accidental deaths investigated in 2017. Suicides increased in 2017 by 11. Natural deaths increased by 132 and homicides increased by 40. The number of undetermined cases decreased. Overall, the Coroner's Office investigated more deaths in 2017.



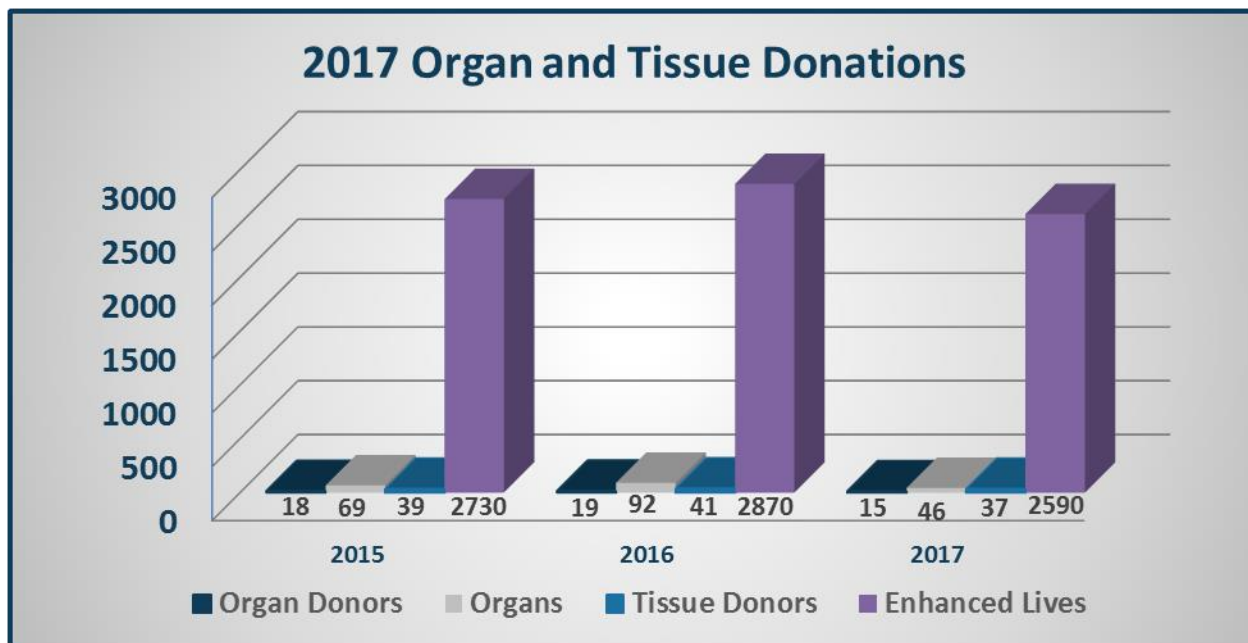
### Graph 4: 2017 Coroner's Cases by Gender and Race



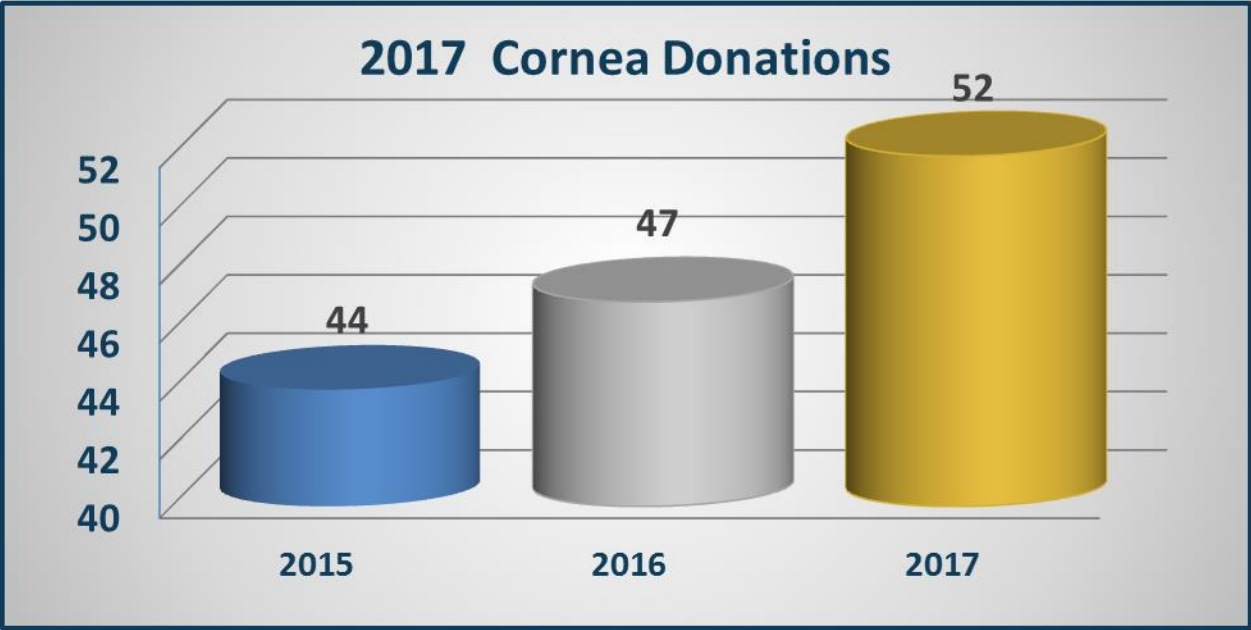
Graph 5: 2017 Failure to Report Coroner Death Cases



Graph 6: 2017 Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency Organ and Tissue Donations

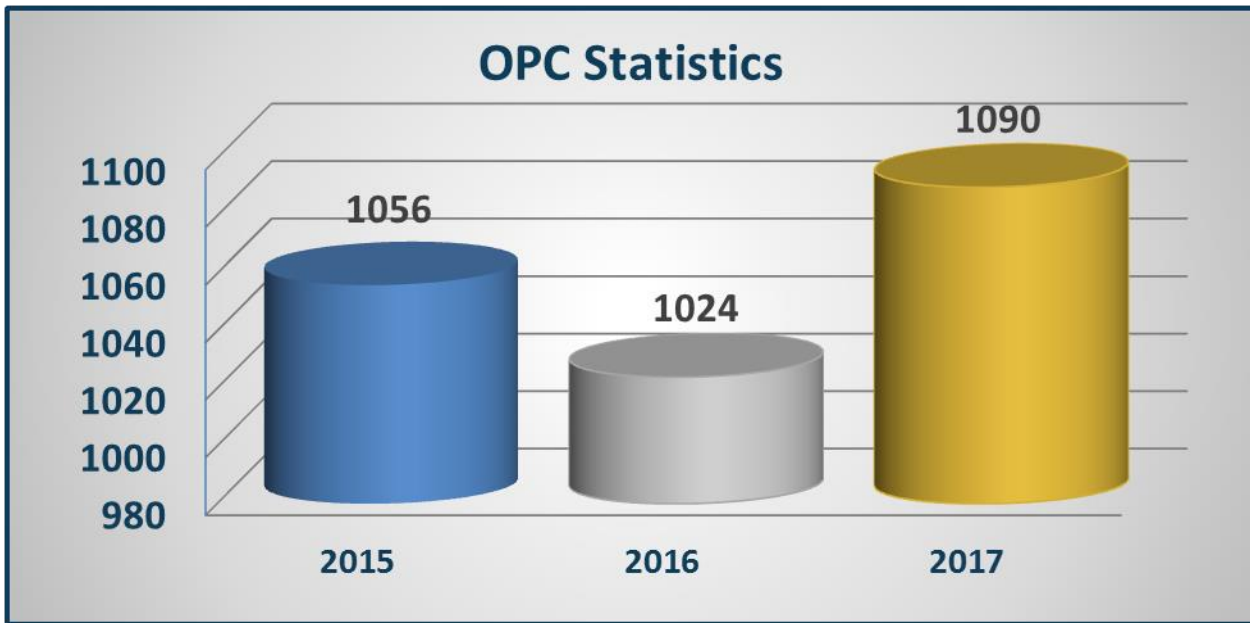


Graph 7: 2017 Baton Rouge Eye Bank Cornea Donations



# Mental Health

Graph 8: 2017 Order of Protective Custody (OPC)



Graph 9: 2017 Coroner Emergency Certificate (CEC)

