



**REGIONAL MEDICAL
EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

2020 Annual Report

Washoe County
Regional Medical
Examiner's Office



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Chief's Report

History and Current Status

The history of the Medical Examiner's Office can be summed up in the pre-2007 and post-2007 eras. Prior to 2007, the office was the Washoe County Coroner Office (WCCO) and was managed by a layperson coroner. Pathologists were retained on a contract basis to perform autopsies, and frequently also actively practiced hospital pathology at the same time. Effective July 1, 2007, the Board of County Commissioners approved county code changes that established a Medical Examiner system in Washoe County, and the office became known as the Washoe County Medical Examiner-Coroner Office. A forensic pathologist was the Chief Medical Examiner and Coroner, and employed a second forensic pathologist as a full-time Assistant Medical Examiner; numerous part-time locum tenens pathologists from across the country were added over time to handle the increasing regional caseload. A Deputy Chief Medical Examiner position was added in 2015 due to both caseload and the need for succession planning. Dr. Ellen Clark was the first Chief Medical Examiner of the office and retired at the end of 2016 after many years of dedicated service.

The office relocated in January 2017 to the current site, 990 East 9th Street, to a modern, state-of-the-art facility, newly constructed in 2016. The office rebranded at this time the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office (WCRMEO).

Dr. Laura Knight, previously Deputy Chief Medical Examiner from 2015-2016, became Chief Medical Examiner and Coroner in January 2017 and remains in that position. Three Assistant Medical Examiners complete the physician staff of the office. All forensic pathologists employed by the WCRMEO are board-certified by the American Board of Pathology in Forensic Pathology.

Total deaths reported to WCRMEO in 2020 reached an all-time high of 5,909. This includes Washoe County deaths and all outside referral counties. Total deaths reported has increased steadily over the years; the 2020 total represents a 16% increase over 2019, and a 55% increase in just 5 years, since 2015. WCRMEO pathologists also performed more autopsies than any prior year, 864 (full autopsies and head-only autopsies) in 2020. This number has steadily risen over the years and represents an increase of 46% in 5 years since 2015. Total examinations performed by the forensic pathologists in 2020 was 1,260 (up 39% since 2015), and reflected a large increase in external examinations (26%) from 2019. The total workload of the forensic pathologists in 2020 also increased significantly in the area of jurisdictional cases requiring records review and death certification (referred to as consultations); these rose by 25%, many associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The WCRMEO played a significant role in public health surveillance in 2020, collecting the first swab from a deceased individual to screen for COVID-19 on March 6, 2020. WCRMEO collected nasopharyngeal and other swabs for COVID-19 testing in 272 deceased individuals in 2020, with 50 positive results. All deaths reported to the office

during the pandemic were historically screened for COVID-19 symptoms. All cases certified as due to COVID-19 had a confirmed positive laboratory test for SARS-CoV2. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, total body storage capacity in the region was exceeded (including hospitals, mortuaries, and WCRMEO). An additional body cooler was installed at the Medical Examiner's Office in July of 2020, which added capacity for Medical Examiner cases and also allowed for local mortuaries to securely store bodies in a temperature-controlled environment during surge events.

The WCRMEO continued to receive grant funding in 2020 from the CDC (through the state) for data entry into the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and for toxicology testing and related expenses from the SUDORS grant. Data entry through these programs is utilized for state and national level death prevention efforts.

Continuing Excellence and Future Goals

Future goals and priorities of the office include national accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners; continuing partnerships with organ and tissue donation organizations; mass fatality preparedness; and increased academic partnership with the University, including a possible fellowship training program to produce future forensic pathologists. We will continue to be the regional referral center for high quality autopsies, providing services on a contract basis to 18 additional counties in Nevada and Northern California, and the regional center for excellence in medicolegal death investigation. We will continue to conduct high quality mass fatality training exercises, and training conferences on medicolegal death investigation for surrounding county coroners and law enforcement. We will enhance the education of medical students, through cooperation with the University of Nevada-Reno School of Medicine, hopefully, recruiting future forensic pathologists to the field to combat what has become a dire workforce shortage. Finally, and most importantly, we will strive to continue to serve the citizens of Washoe County with diligence, respect, and compassion, at a time when many of them are having the worst day of their lives, having lost a loved one.

Final Words

This report represents the 5th annual statistical and informational report of the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office. It is my sincere hope that other community agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, regional county coroners, and citizens may find it interesting and useful. Additionally, I hope this data may be of use in prevention efforts, as many of the deaths that come to the attention of the Medical Examiner/Coroner are ultimately preventable.

Yours in service,

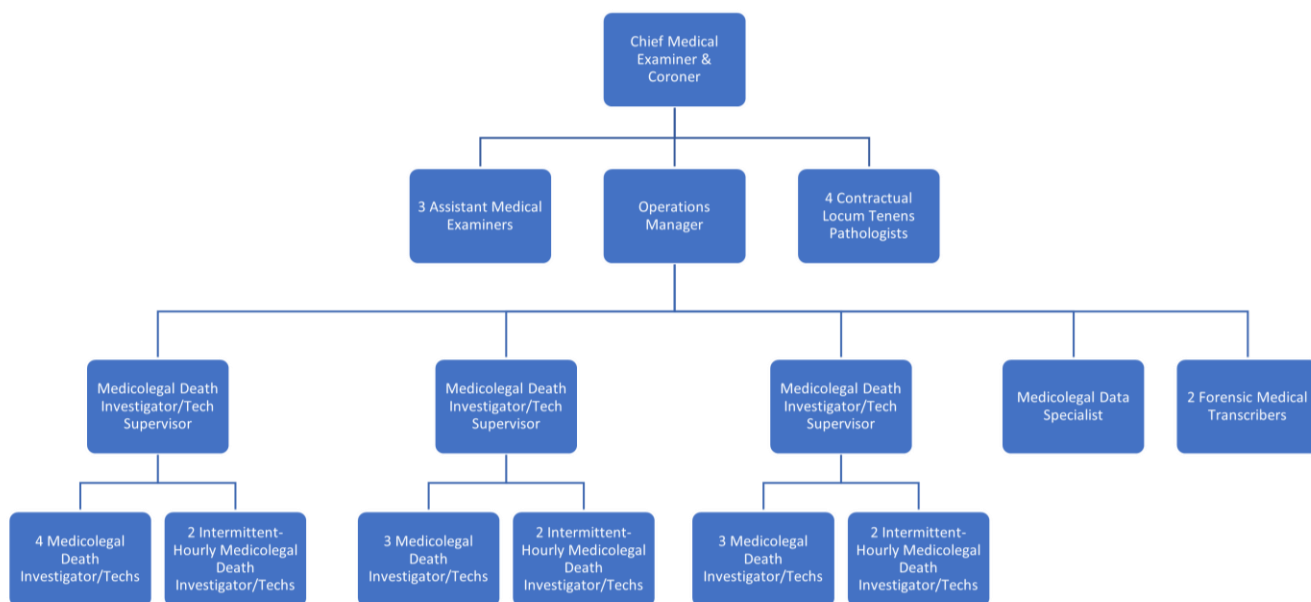


**Dr. Laura D. Knight, MD
Chief Medical Examiner & Coroner,
Washoe County Regional Medical
Examiner's Office**

**Associate Professor, Departments of
Pathology and Pediatrics, University
of Nevada – Reno School of
Medicine**

Introduction

Organizational Chart



Mission Statement

The mission of the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office (WCRMEO) is to investigate unexpected and unexplained deaths in order to identify and report on the cause and manner of death. We apply scientific investigative techniques and medical procedures, using integrity and compassion, to serve families and public agencies impacted by sudden unexpected death.

Statutory Authority

The WCRMEO is primarily governed by Chapter 259, 440, and 451 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Chapter 35 of the Washoe County Code (WCC). NRS 259 requires that each county have a coroner and WCC 35 creates the Medical Examiner system to fulfill coroner duties.

Description

The Medical Examiner investigates sudden or unexpected deaths, traumatic deaths, and suspicious deaths. Certain categories of sudden death, by law, must be reported to and investigated by this office. All suspicious and many apparent natural death scenes in Washoe County are attended and evaluated by trained Medicolegal Death Investigators employed by the Medical Examiner's Office. Many reported deaths are ultimately determined to be due to natural causes, but a significant number of reported cases are found to be due to accidents, homicidal trauma, and suicides. Of the deaths reported to and falling within the office's jurisdiction in 2020, 62% required autopsy or other medical examination and an additional 38% required detailed review of medical history and circumstances of death. Board-certified forensic pathologists (medical doctors specializing in forensic pathology) conduct these autopsies and medical examinations.

Responsibilities of the office include:

- Determining the cause and manner of death for jurisdictional cases
- Electronic certification of death certificates in all cases of unnatural death and in many cases of natural death
- Conducting investigations of death scenes
- Identifying, collecting and processing evidence in order to ensure scientific integrity and usefulness
- Recognizing unsuspected homicidal violence
- Recognizing and reporting communicable and dangerous diseases, poisonings, and consumer product safety concerns
- Positively identifying the dead
- Notifying the decedent's next of kin and providing proper assistance to grieving families
- Ensuring integrity of the personal property of decedents
- Providing expert legal testimony in criminal and civil matters
- Preparing for and responding to mass disasters
- Assisting in providing for burial of indigent citizens in accordance with law

Community and Academic Involvement

The WCRMEO is very active throughout the community. In 2020 WCRMEO staff made many presentations to the community including the Nevada Law Enforcement Academy, Nevada Department of Public Safety, the Peer Support Group, and lectures to medical students at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). The office also holds a two-day conference on death scene investigation for law enforcement/coroner agencies in the region.

Each pathologist in the office has a letter of appointment to teach at the University of Nevada, Reno with a rank of Assistant or Associate Professor. In addition, the office hosted educational rotations for dozens of UNR medical students, as well as law enforcement officers, and many others.

Staff participate in fatality review committees and other prevention efforts, including the NV State Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities, NV State Maternal Mortality Review Committee, Washoe County Child Fatality Review Team, Regional Substance Abuse Task Force, CDC NV Advanced Review Team for the Sudden Death in the Young project, and hospital-based peer review committees. The WCRMEO continued to receive grant funding in 2020 from the CDC (through the state) for data entry into the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and for toxicology testing and related expenses from the SUDORS grant. Data entry through these programs is utilized for state and national level death prevention efforts.

In 2020, Dr. Laura Knight and other MEO staff were co-authors on two scientific abstracts presented at national conferences. One of these presentations highlighted a bereavement mementos program operated by a non-profit organization auxiliary to the WCRMEO. The other presentation was a collaboration with UNR medical students studying deaths from the emerging opioid Kratom (mitragynine); this retrospective study was subsequently published in 2021 in the *American Journal of Forensic Medicine & Pathology*.

Awards and Honors

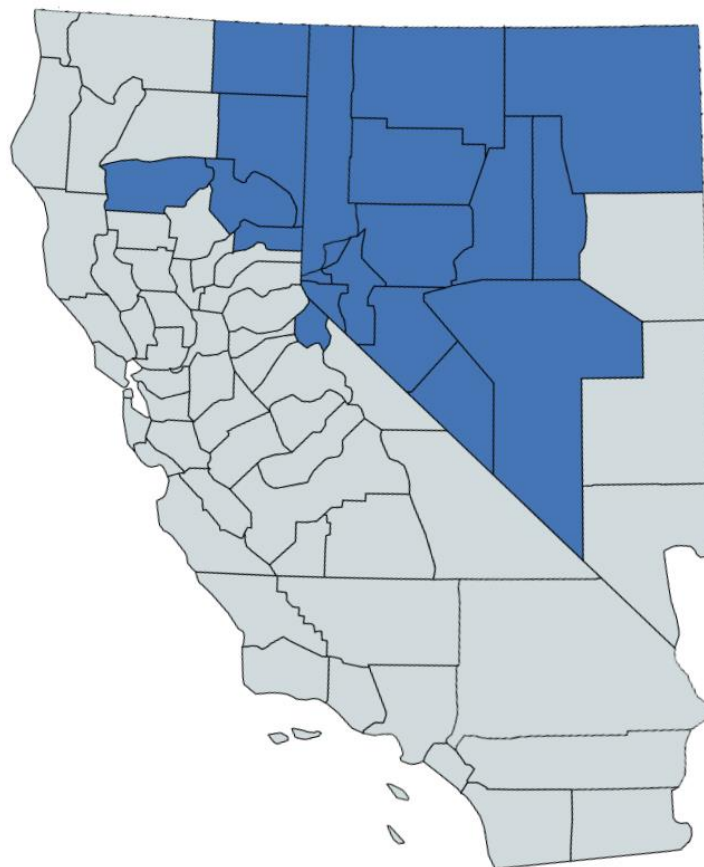
In 2020, the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office received the following awards.

- Hope Strength Life Award from Nevada Donor Network (NDN)
- The Platinum Level Partner Award from Nevada Donor Network and the US Health Resources and Services Administration

Jurisdiction and Service Area

The WCRMEO's primary jurisdiction is Washoe County. However, the office provides services to 13 additional Nevada counties (including the state capital) and 6 California counties through interlocal agreements.

California Counties
Alpine
Lassen
Modoc
Plumas
Sierra
Tehama



Nevada Counties
Carson City (state capital)
Churchill
Douglas
Elko
Esmeralda
Eureka
Humboldt
Lander
Lyon
Mineral
Nye
Pershing
Storey
Washoe

WCRMEO service area highlighted in blue

Examination Types and Descriptions

Autopsy	A full postmortem examination encompassing detailed examination of the exterior and interior of the body, including dissection of internal organs and structures, to determine cause of death. Specimens for additional studies, such as toxicology testing, are obtained during the autopsy.
Limited Autopsy- Head Only	An autopsy examination limited to the external examination of the entire body and internal examination of only the head. Used in select trauma or suspected trauma cases only. Toxicology specimens can be obtained during a limited autopsy.
External Examination	An examination of the exterior of the body that documents identifying features, stigmata of disease, and findings of injury, without accompanying internal dissection. Toxicology specimens such as blood can be obtained during an external examination.
Consultation	Death investigated by the WCRMEO in which no physical examination is performed because the decedent has well-documented medical condition(s) and no primary care physician, or trauma with prolonged hospitalization, determined to be the cause of death. A Medical Examiner reviews medical records and circumstances of death and completes the death certificate.
Jurisdiction Terminated	Natural death from known natural disease that is reported to the WCRMEO but does not fall within its jurisdiction

Manner of Death Types and Descriptions

Natural	Death caused by a natural disease or medical condition
Suicide	Death caused by a purposeful self-action with the intent of ending one's own life
Homicide	Death at the hands of another
Accident	Death caused by an unintentional action or external factor
Undetermined	Death in which the cause of death may or may not be known, but the circumstances in which the death came about are unknown or cannot be determined

General Statistics

In 2020, 95% of all deaths occurring in Washoe County were reported to the ME's Office

Total Cases by Type

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	'19-'20 Percent Change
Autopsies	565	657	740	784	805	816	1.4%
Consultations	655	641	534	527	463	578	24.8%
External Exams	316	279	265	269	314	396	26.1%
Head-Only Autopsy	27	54	42	48	48	48	0.0%
Jurisdiction Terminated	2255	2622	3103	3368	3450	4071	18.0%
Total Cases Reported	3819	4253	4684	4996	5080	5909	16.3%

State of Residence for All Reported Cases

Alabama	1	Louisiana	0	Ohio	0
Alaska	0	Maine	0	Oklahoma	0
Arizona	9	Maryland	0	Oregon	14
Arkansas	0	Massachusetts	0	Pennsylvania	0
California	435	Michigan	0	Rhode Island	0
Colorado	1	Minnesota	1	South Carolina	0
Connecticut	0	Mississippi	0	South Dakota	0
Delaware	0	Missouri	2	Tennessee	2
Florida	4	Montana	1	Texas	3
Georgia	0	Nebraska	0	Utah	4
Hawaii	1	Nevada	5314	Vermont	0
Idaho	5	New Hampshire	0	Virginia	1
Illinois	2	New Jersey	0	Washington	2
Indiana	0	New Mexico	1	West Virginia	0
Iowa	0	New York	2	Wisconsin	0
Kansas	0	North Carolina	0	Wyoming	0
Kentucky	0	North Dakota	0	Unknown/Other	104

Total Examination Cases* by Manner of Death

	2015**	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	'19-'20 Percent Change
Natural	288	326	431	483	511	540	5.7%
Accident	237	263	358	352	369	421	14.1%
Suicide	137	170	165	165	191	180	-5.8%
Homicide	34	38	46	42	42	60	42.9%
Undetermined	41	27	43	58	52	58	11.5%

*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO.

**Manner of death for cases occurring outside Washoe County limits is not certified by the WCRMEO but rather the local county coroner. The majority of outside county cases are reported back to the WCRMEO by the jurisdiction agency with manner of death after the death is certified. Prior to mid-2015, cases occurring outside Washoe County limits returned no manner of death reporting.

Total Examination Cases* by Sex

	2020	Percentage
Male	897	71.2%
Female	360	28.6%
Unknown	3	0.0%

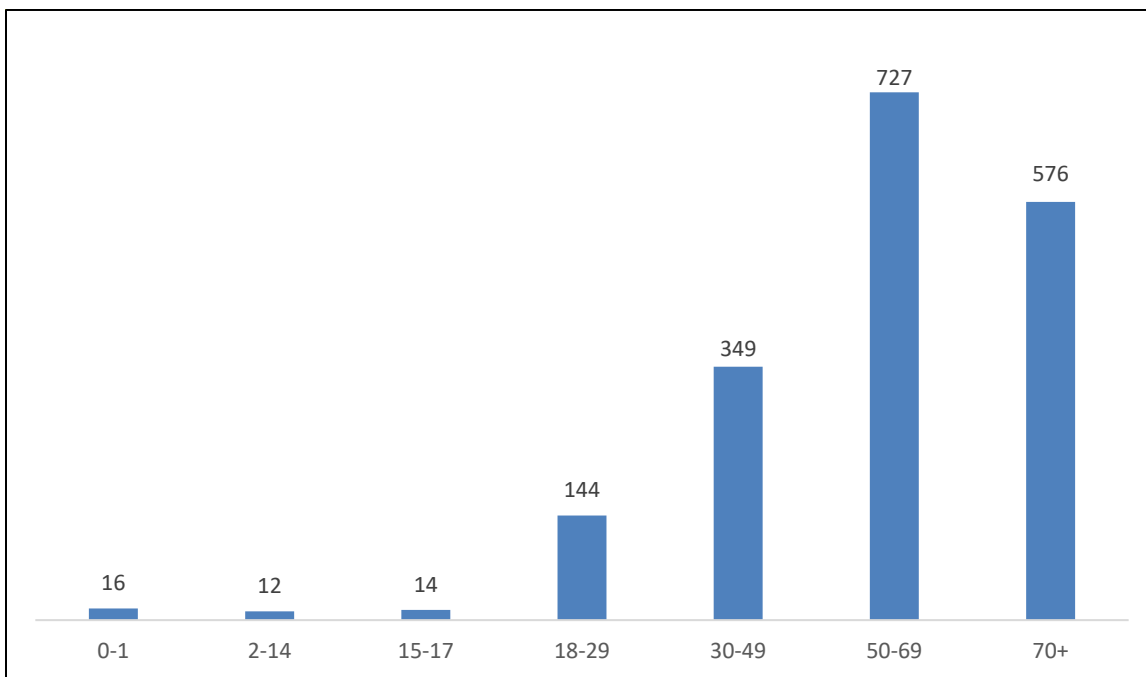
*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO.

Total Examination Cases* by Race

	2020
White	1052
Hispanic/Latinx/South American	89
Black/African American	59
Asian/Pacific Islander	20
American Indian/Native American	30
Other/Unknown	15

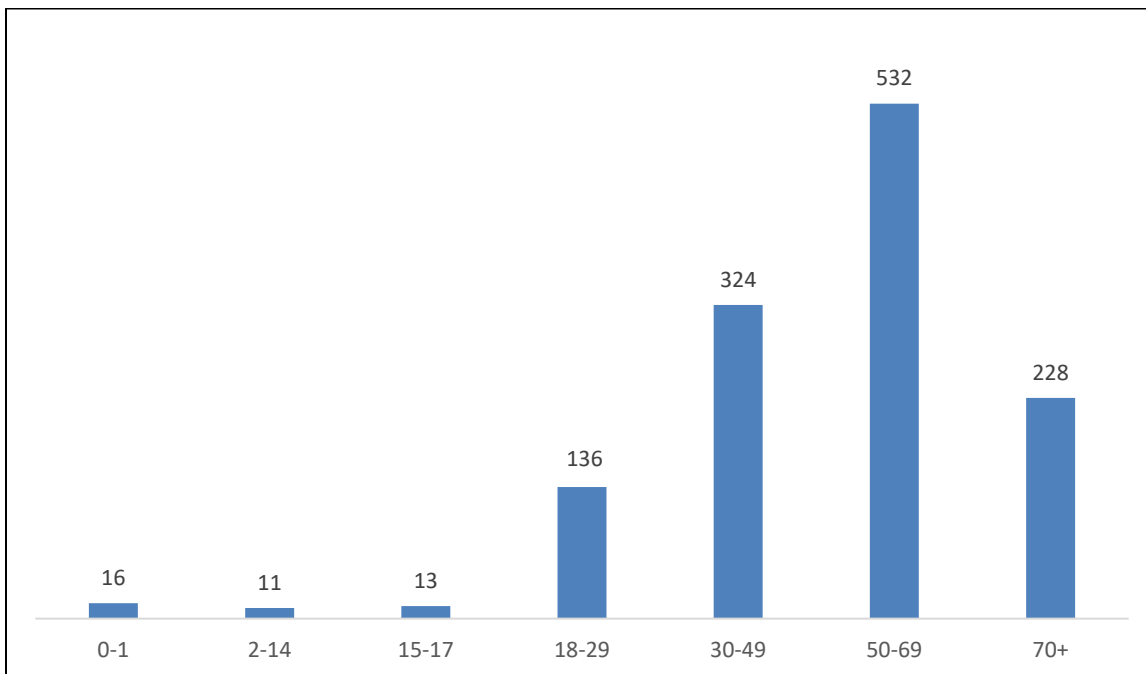
*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO. Race information is reported by next of kin. Multiple races may be reported for a single decedent.

Total ME Jurisdictional Cases* by Age



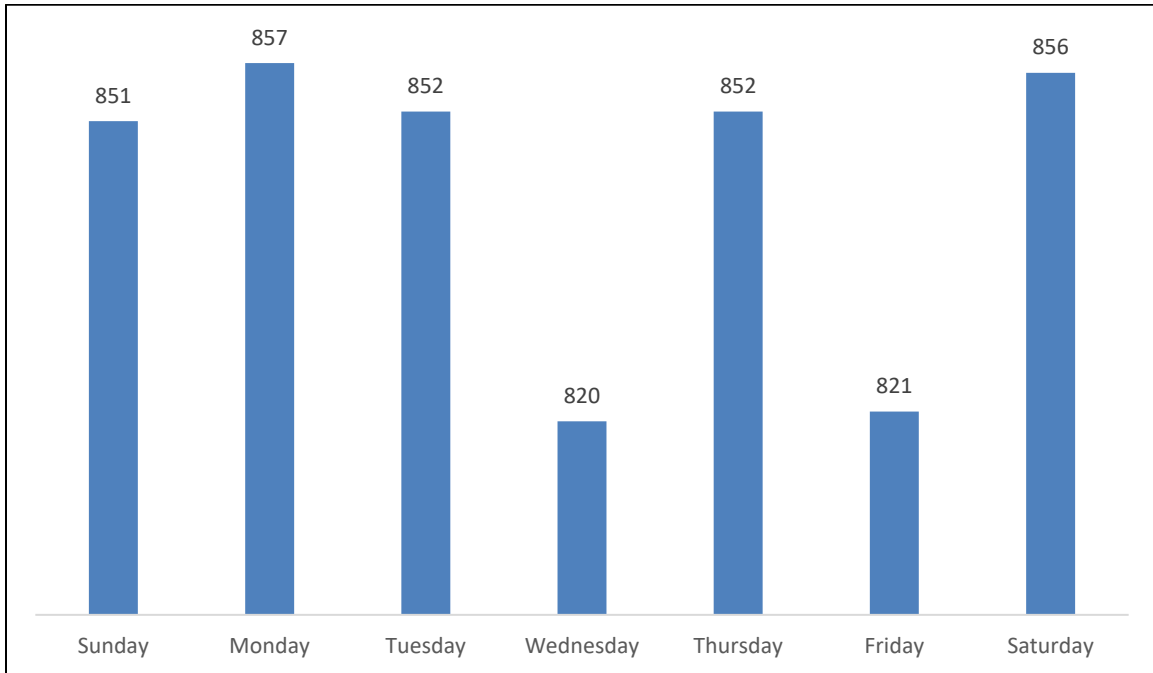
*Total Medical Examiner Jurisdictional Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, External examinations, and consultations completed by the WCRMEO.

Total Examination Cases* by Age

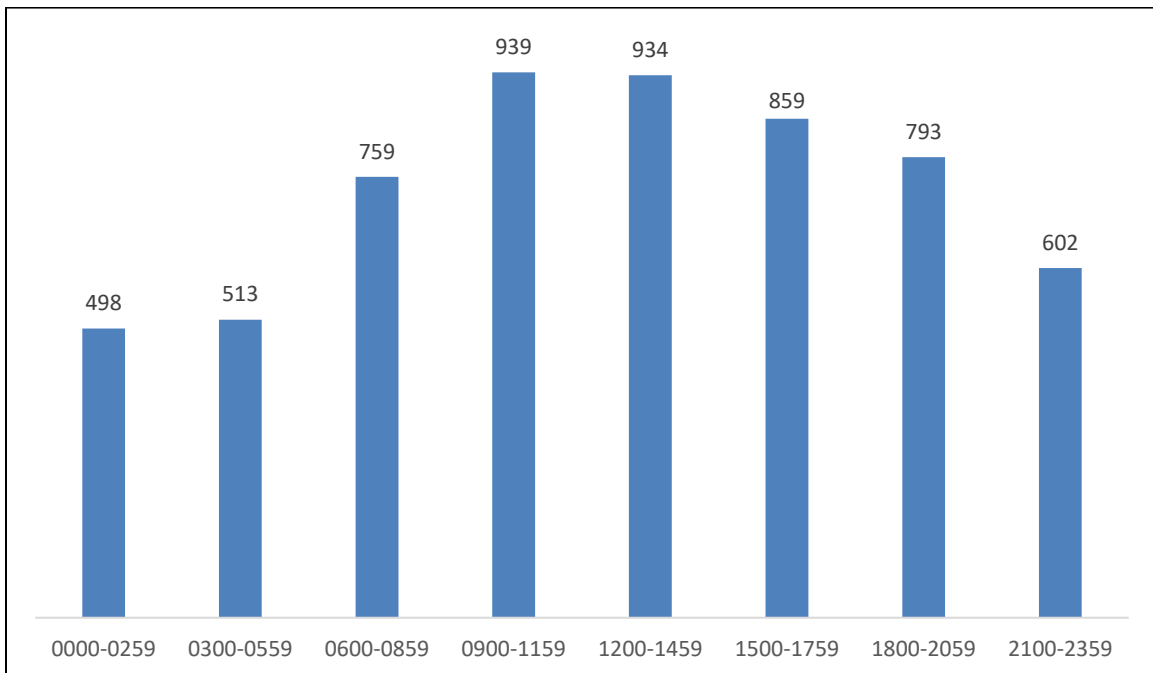


*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO.

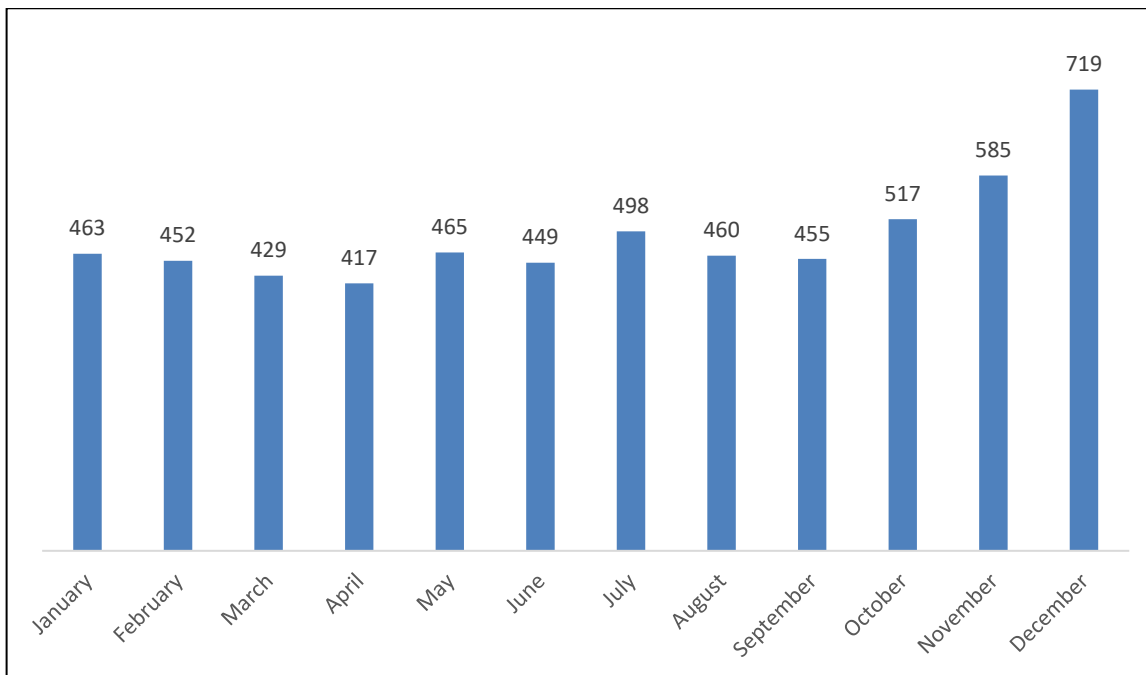
Total Reported Deaths by Day of the Week



Total Reported Deaths by Time of Death



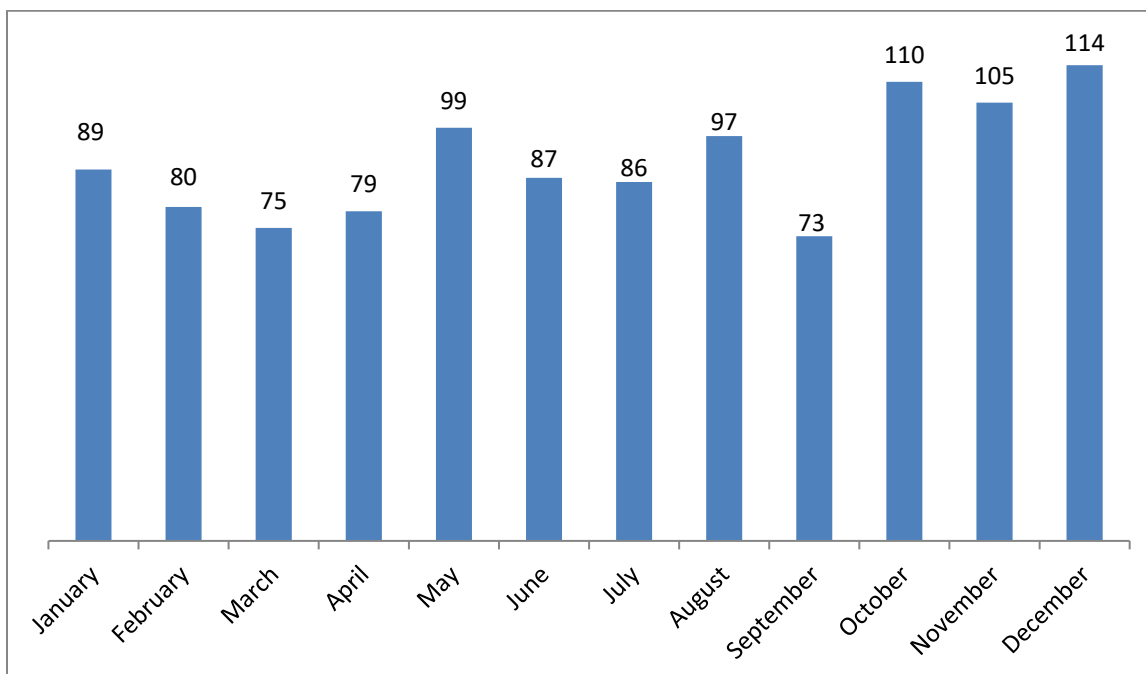
Total Reported Deaths by Month



Scene Responses by Month

1094 total scene responses in 2020

948 responses in 2019, 803 responses in 2018



Specific Causes & Types of Death

Major Causes of Death, for Each Manner of Death

For All* Autopsy/External Examination and Consultation Cases Performed at WCRMEO

NATURAL

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Cardiac (Atherosclerotic and/or Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease, Congestive Heart Failure, Coronary Artery Disease, Cardiomyopathy, Myocardial Infarction)	304	57%
Pulmonary Related Complications	71	13%
Complications of Chronic Alcoholism	45	8%
Cerebral/Dementia	32	6%
Other	31	6%
Complications of Diabetes and/or Ketoacidosis	24	4%
Cancer	17	3%
Gastrointestinal Related	12	2%
COVID-19*	3	1%
Total	539	100%

*It is important to note that the vast majority of COVID-19 deaths occurred in hospitals under the attendance of physicians. Those deaths did not fall under Medical Examiner jurisdiction and are not included in this data.

ACCIDENT

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Complications of blunt force injuries, fractures, & falls	267	54%
Drug intoxication	188	38%
Asphyxia, various types	15	3%
Drowning	12	2%
Hypothermia	11	2%
Others	5	1%
Total	498	100%

SUICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Gunshot wound	57	56%
Hanging	21	21%
Drug Intoxication	12	12%
Sharp Force Injuries	5	5%
Blunt Force Injuries (Intentional)	2	2%
Drowning	2	2%
Carbon Monoxide	1	1%
Thermal Injuries	1	1%
Total	101	100%

HOMICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Gunshot Wound(s)	19	58%
Blunt Force Injuries	6	18%
Sharp Force Injuries	5	15%
Thermal Injuries	2	6%
Strangulation	1	3%
Total	33	100%

UNDETERMINED

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Undetermined Cause	14	38%
Drug Intoxication	12	32%
Traumatic Injuries (Unexplained)	5	14%
Others	6	16%
Total	37	100%

*Includes Washoe County and outside counties covered by interlocal agreement

WASHOE COUNTY HOMICIDES BY INCIDENT LOCATION*

Injury Location	Number
Reno	26
Sparks	6
Nixon	1

* Cases included are only those where injury and death occurred in Washoe County

HOMICIDES BY COUNTY

Cases for counties other than Washoe are only included if the case was referred to WCRMEO by that county's coroner

County of Death	Total
Carson City	1
Churchill	3
Douglas	2
Elko	4
Humboldt	3
Lassen	4
Lyon	3
Modoc	1
Pershing	2
Plumas	1
Storey	2
Washoe	33*

*Includes those who were injured in another county but died in a Washoe County hospital

Washoe County Transportation Deaths

There were 90 transportation-related deaths in Washoe County in 2020, up from 63 in 2019, 77 in 2018, 76 in 2017, and 88 in 2016.

Transportation Deaths, By Sex

Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage of Change '19 to '20
Male	66	54	58	41	71	73.2%
Female	22	22	19	22	19	13.6%

Transportation Deaths, By Age

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage of Change '19 to '20
0-17	3	7	2	2	5	150.0%
18-29	20	12	17	13	24	84.6%
30-49	23	14	13	10	20	100.0%
50-69	32	22	21	22	26	18.2%
70+	10	21	24	16	15	-6.3%

Transportation Deaths, By Role

Role	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage of Change '19 to '20
Driver/Operator	49	47	44	35	59	68.6%
Pedestrian	23	15	18	16	21	31.3%
Passenger	12	10	14	10	9	-10.0%
Cyclist	1	4	1	2	1	-50.0%

Washoe County Drug Intoxication Deaths

2020 saw drug intoxication deaths increase significantly, up 18% from 2019. The bulk of 2020 illicit drug-related deaths involved methamphetamine, however a significant uptick in fentanyl was seen, with more than double the number of fentanyl-involved illicit drug deaths compared to 2019. Other designer drugs including fentanyl analogues also increased (tripled from 2019, though fewer in number than fentanyl).

Note: In this reporting, illicit, prescription, and over-the-counter drug death data was stratified in more detail beginning in 2017.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Drug Deaths (Washoe County)	125	145	109	133	110	173	169	203	239
Major Categories*									
Illicit Drugs Only	36	54	41	53	38	78	73	86	114
Illicit Drugs and Ethanol Combined						1	5	14	13
Illicit Drugs & Over-the-Counter Drugs Combined, with or without ethanol						2	1	8	9
Prescription Drugs Only						34	31	27	23
Prescription Drugs and Ethanol Combined						11	10	8	7
Prescription Drugs Only, or Prescription & Over-the-Counter Drugs Combined	77	64	64	65	43	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Prescription & Over-the-Counter Drugs Combined						8	4	8	10
Over-the-Counter Drugs Only, or Over-the-Counter Drugs and Ethanol Combined						6	3	5	5
Illicit and Prescription Drugs Combined	8	17	2	11	19	22	22	18	20
Prescription Drugs, Illicit Drugs, & Ethanol Combined						2	4	4	9
Prescription Drugs, Over-the-Counter Drugs, & Ethanol Combined						1	0	3	0
Huffing volatiles/intoxicants, with or without other drugs						1	1	11	1
Illicit Drugs, Prescription Drugs, Over-the-Counter Drugs, & Ethanol Combined								0	2
Illicit Drugs, Prescription Drugs, and Over the-Counter Drugs Combined								3	7
Unable to Determine Specific Drugs Involved						2	0	2	0
Ethanol only (acute ethanol intoxication), or ethanol + toxic alcohol									3
Long Term Effects of Chronic Drug Abuse Without Acute Intoxication						5	16	15	18
Illicit-involved Deaths, By Drug*									
Methamphetamine (Without Heroin)	25	50	26	43	46	69	82	90	105
Heroin (Without Methamphetamine)	11	9	12	13	16	13	10	17	7
Methamphetamine and Heroin	3	4	3	8	9	16	13	15	23
Fentanyl (Alone)							2	3	9
Fentanyl (Alone or With Others)								25	56
Fentanyl and Methamphetamine							1	8	13
Fentanyl and Heroin							0	1	2
Cocaine (Alone or With Others)	5	11	4	3	4	5	8	10	15
Mitragynine (Alone or With Others)								12	14
Designer Drugs	1	0	0	0	4	9	1	5	16

*Not inclusive of all intoxication deaths.

Drug Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	3	1.3%
18-29	36	15.1%
30-49	78	32.6%
50-69	112	46.9%
70+	10	4.2%

Drug Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	165	69.0%
Female	75	31.4%

Methamphetamine-related Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	0	0.0%
18-29	9	7.1%
30-49	35	27.6%
50-69	76	59.8%
70+	7	5.5%

Methamphetamine-related Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	89	70.1%
Female	38	29.9%

Heroin Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	0	0.0%
18-29	4	13.3%
30-49	17	56.7%
50-69	8	26.7%
70+	1	3.3%

Heroin Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	22	73.3%
Female	8	26.7%

Fentanyl Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	2	3.6%
18-29	24	42.9%
30-49	22	39.3%
50-69	8	14.3%
70+	0	0.0%

Fentanyl Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	43	76.8%
Female	13	23.2%

Washoe County Drug Death Comparison

Type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage of Change '19 to '20
Total Deaths	110	173	169	203	239	17.7%
Methamphetamine-related Deaths	55	85	85	105	127	30.0%
Heroin-related Deaths	25	29	23	32	30	-6.3%
Fentanyl-related Deaths				25	56	124%
Designer Drug-related Deaths	4	9	1	5	16	220.0%
Prescription Drug-related Deaths	62	78	71	70	74	5.7%

Statistics on Vulnerable Populations and Other Special Categories

Washoe County Homeless Person Deaths

Deaths of homeless individuals (persons with no fixed address or living quarters) reported to the WCRMEO are specifically tracked in the WCRMEO case database. There were a total of 49 deaths among the homeless in 2020, which is an increase from 39 in 2019 and 37 in 2018. Most of the deaths were accidental in nature or due to natural disease.

Washoe County Homeless Deaths, By Sex

Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	23	23	32	27	38
Female	1	4	5	12	11
Total	24	27	37	39	49

Washoe County Homeless Deaths, By Age

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
0-17	0	0	0	0	0
18-29	1	2	1	3	3
30-49	6	7	11	14	12
50-69	14	14	23	17	26
70+	3	4	2	5	8

Washoe County Homeless Deaths, By Manner of Death

Manner	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Accident	11	12	22	19	27
Natural	9	9	7	10	15
Homicide	0	2	3	2	0
Suicide	2	2	3	4	2
Undetermined	2	2	2	4	5

Washoe County Homeless Person Deaths, by Manner of Death, Cause of Death

ACCIDENT

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Drug-related deaths	16	59.3%
Vehicular Accidents	5	18.5%
Environmental Exposure	5	18.5%
Drowning	1	3.7%

NATURAL

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Cardiovascular Disease	6	40.0%
Complications of Chronic Alcoholism	5	33.3%
Cancer	1	6.7%
Covid-19	1	6.7%
Diabetes	1	6.7%
Stroke	1	6.7%

HOMICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Sharp Force Injuries	0	0.0%
Blunt Force Injuries	0	0.0%

SUICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Gunshot Wound of Head	1	50.0%
Hanging/Neck Compression	1	50.0%

UNDETERMINED

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Blunt Force Injuries	2	40.0%
Drug Intoxication	1	20.0%
Environmental Exposure	1	20.0%
Undetermined	1	20.0%

Law Enforcement-Involved Deaths in Washoe County

Type of Death	Number
In-Custody Deaths (Jail)	0
Officer-Involved Shootings*	4

*For disambiguation purposes: While these deaths from officer-involved shootings occurred within Washoe County, these statistics include Washoe County Sheriff's Office, Reno Police Department, and Sparks Police Department.

Washoe County Incarcerated/In-Custody Deaths, by Manner of Death

Manner	Number	Percent
Natural	0	0%
Accident	0	0%
Homicide	0	0%
Suicide	0	0%
Undetermined	0	0%

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths

A total of 30 deaths of individuals aged 17 and under fell under WCRMEO jurisdiction in Washoe County in 2020.

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Age

Age	Number	Percent
0	8	26.7%
1	3	10.0%
2	0	0.0%
3	1	3.3%
4	0	0.0%
5	1	3.3%
6	1	3.3%
7	0	0.0%
8	0	0.0%
9	0	0.0%
10	1	3.3%
11	0	0.0%
12	1	3.3%
13	1	3.3%
14	2	6.7
15	0	0.0%
16	6	20.0%
17	5	16.7%

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Sex

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	22	73.3%
Female	8	26.7%

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Manner of Death

Manner	Number	Percent
Accident	14	46.7%
Undetermined	6	20.0%
Homicide	6	20.0%
Suicide	2	6.7%
Natural	2	6.7%

Washoe County Pediatric Causes of Death

Manner	Cause of Death	Number
Accident	Blunt Force	5
	Drowning	3
	Suffocation/Asphyxia	3
	Drug Intoxication	2
	Complications of Toxic Envenomation	1
Homicide	Gunshot Wounds	4
	Blunt Force	1
	Sharp Force	1
Natural	Complications of Acute Necrotizing Chorioamnionitis	1
	Lymphocytic Myocarditis	1
Suicide	Hanging	1
	Gunshot Wound	1
Undetermined	Undetermined	5
	Drug Intoxication	1

Washoe County Senior Deaths

In 2020, there were 540 deaths at 65 years of age and older that met the criteria for Medical Examiner jurisdiction. Deaths in seniors present special challenges, such as the need to rule out neglect or abuse, and the propensity for ultimately lethal injury from simple falls.

Senior Deaths, By Sex

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	343	63.5%
Female	197	36.5%

Senior Deaths, By Manner of Death

Manner	Number	Percent
Natural	283	52.4%
Accident	219	40.6%
Suicide	21	3.9%
Undetermined	13	2.4%
Homicide	4	0.7%

Causes of Death

Manner	Cause	Number
Natural	Cardiovascular related	176
	Pulmonary related	31
	Other	76
Accident	Fall related	159
	Motor vehicle related	16
	Drug related	26
	Other	18
Suicide	Gunshot Wound	15
	Drug Related	5
	Hanging	1
Homicide	Gunshot Wounds	2
	Smoke Inhalation	1
	Traumatic Force Injuries	1
Undetermined	Drug Related	5
	Trauma Related	1
	Other	5
	Undetermined	2

Other Statistics of Interest⁺

- 1,672 bodies were transported to and stored at the Medical Examiner's Office in 2020, compared to 1,512 bodies in 2019, 1,495 bodies in 2018, 1,463 bodies in 2017 and 1,320 bodies in 2016.
- A total of 1,841 bodies were transported on the order of the WCRMEO in 2020.
- There were 174 unclaimed and abandoned decedents reported to the WCRMEO in 2020.
- Toxicology testing was performed on 1,206 cases in 2020, 1,076 cases in 2019, 1,022 cases in 2018, 956 cases in 2017, and 809 cases in 2016.
- There were no cases in Washoe County in which a decedent remained unidentified after thorough investigation in 2020. There was 1 case in 2019, 1 case in 2018, and no cases in both 2017 and 2016.
- 37 organ, 275 tissue, and 167 ocular donations were performed on Medical Examiner cases in 2020, with the full cooperation of the WCRMEO.
- The WCRMEO participated in 0 exhumations in 2020.

⁺Required by the National Association of Medical Examiners for accreditation purposes.