



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner

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In Memory and Dedication

The 2023 Annual Report is proudly dedicated to Shon Jeffery, an esteemed member of our team who passed away on March 16, 2024. As the Bereavement Coordinator for the Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner, Shon has been an indispensable part of our community since she transitioned into the role in October 2023. Her journey with us began as an Administrative Assistant on August 15, 2022, where she demonstrated unparalleled dedication and compassion.

Shon's impact on our office and the community we serve has been profound. Through her work, she offered unwavering support to the next of kin and families of decedents, guiding them with empathy and understanding during their most challenging times. Shon's commitment to her role went beyond professional obligations; she connected with people personally, providing comfort and solace.

A proud resident of the Town of Brookhaven in Delaware County, Shon's influence extended into the community she called home. Her dedication to serving those around her exemplified the very best of what it means to be part of our community.

In this annual report, we honor Shon Jeffery's legacy and her significant contributions. Her work has left an indelible mark on our hearts and the fabric of Delaware County. We are grateful for her service, compassion, and positive impact on many lives. We will miss you Shon. The OME team.



Executive Summary

The Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner (DCOME) has made tremendous strides this past year in staff development training, hiring, standardization of pathology services, improved data collection, and advances in toxicology efforts. The DCOME staff is a cohesive working unit, and morale stays positive in hopes of the anticipated new facility and professional development they receive.

In June 2023, the DCOME hired Amber Weeks as its new Chief of Forensic Investigations. Ms. Weeks comes to us from New Jersey, where she was a forensic investigator supervisor for the Southern Regional Medical Examiner's Office. She is a board-certified investigator with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI), a registered nurse in NJ and PA, and holds a license in forensic nursing. Ms. Weeks is completing her studies toward her Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree through Hawai'i Pacific University.

In October 2023, the Delaware County Council appointed Dr. Albert Chu as the agency's Chief Medical Examiner. Dr. Chu leads morgue operations, including managing all pathologists, forensic specialists, and autopsy technicians. Dr. Chu completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University and received his medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He then completed an Anatomic and Clinical Pathology residency at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and a Forensic Pathology fellowship at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland. Before becoming the Chief Medical Examiner at the DCOME, he served as an Assistant Medical Examiner at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences in Houston, Texas, and as Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for the City of Philadelphia.

Five of the seven forensic investigators received their board-certification certificates from the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) with the assistance and leadership of Ms. Weeks, who mentored them directly. One other investigator will hopefully receive her board certificate in 2024. This is a huge accomplishment and an agency requirement, as a certain percentage of the investigators are board-certified through ABMDI for NAME accreditation.

At the beginning of the year, the DCOME transitioned from an antiquated case management system to our new system called VertiQ (Moon). Moon is the central depository for all investigative records, pathology examination reports, and cremations. Later in the year, we successfully integrated two of our partner relationships into this case management system.

The DCOME transitioned to an accredited toxicology lab (NMS) that provides a wide range of specialized testing. The DCOME successfully integrated NMS and Moon for requests and automatically received toxicology results into Moon. The second entity successfully integrated was the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Electronic Death Reporting System (EDRS). Before the integration of EDRS, the process required the investigators to type in the same reports twice into two separate systems, now saving hundreds of work hours a year.

Other successes in 2023 included developing new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and creating the County's first Mass Fatality Plan. In early 2024, a new format for publishing these policies will go live. This will provide risk management and compliance requirements for our future accreditation.

Ms. Weeks has developed and assigned different forensic investigators to specialized death review teams such as the child death review, violent death review, motor vehicle accident review, suicide review, and unidentified cold case review. Additionally, Ms. Weeks initiated a peer review program that provides quality improvement for all case files/investigations. This is also an accreditation requirement. In addition to those assignments, Ms. Weeks initiated several committees, such as wellness, community outreach, and education committees.

The DCOME has been quoted as the "place to be and work" and received many accolades from other agencies, such as the District Attorney's Office, Criminal Investigation Division (CID), and the local police agencies in Delaware County. In early 2023, the DCOME hired two full-time forensic investigators; all other positions were filled throughout the year. This is a big difference from past years when there was such a high employee turnover rate.

In 2023, the DCOME received and investigated 1,600 total reported deaths (jurisdiction accepted and terminated cases). An additional 2,205 cremation permits were investigated and issued. Of the jurisdiction accepted cases, there were 527 examinations (full, partial, or external), and an additional 217 cases were certified by record review. This is a decrease in reported and jurisdictional accepted deaths compared to the previous year. Of note, homicides decreased by 17%, from 41 incidents in 2022 to 34 in 2023; however, suicides showed a 26% increase (61 in 2022 compared to 77 in 2023).

Introduction

The Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner (DCOME) proudly presents our 2023 Annual Report. The DCOME Annual Report provides specific information about deaths investigated by the DCOME County during the 2023 calendar year. This information is a resource for Delaware County citizens and leaders to identify trends in preventable deaths, which can be used to protect the lives of all Delaware County citizens through education and changes in public policy.

The DCOME is one of three counties in Pennsylvania that operate under a medical examiner system; the remaining counties in the Commonwealth are coroner's offices. In contrast to a coroner, who is an elected official who may or may not have any professional medical background, a medical examiner is a forensic pathologist who specializes in the study of sudden, unexpected, and/or violent death.

Not every death in Delaware County must be reported to or investigated by the DCOME. In fact, the decedents' primary care providers certify the majority of natural deaths which are not reported to the Office of the Medical Examiner.

According to Pennsylvania Revised Statutes, certain types of death must be reported to the medical examiner (typically those that are sudden, unexpected, and/or violent in nature – see “Legal Authority” below). After receiving a report of death, forensic investigators perform a preliminary investigation to ascertain whether the death falls under DCOME jurisdiction. If this is the case, the DCOME conducts a medicolegal death investigation (that may include an autopsy) and is in charge of determining the cause and manner of death on the death certificate.

In addition to death certification, the DCOME statutorily performs investigations for cremation approvals. A cremation investigation involves review of the death certificate to ensure that the cause and manner of death are consistent with a natural death and, if applicable, verification of the location of death as reported by the funeral director.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission

The mission of the medical examiner is to conduct expert medicolegal investigations into deaths that occur under statutorily prescribed circumstances. The findings of these investigations are then independently shared with members of the public and relevant agencies to improve public safety and health.

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Vision

By having licensed practitioners and professionally trained staff who conduct medicolegal investigations and adhere to industry standards in a setting striving for industry accreditation, we aspire to establish ourselves as a trustworthy source of accurate, scientifically supported assessments of deaths in our community.

Core Values

Service – The highest value that we uphold is service. We pledge to provide efficient, uplifting, moral, and compassionate service to the general public and to one another.

Integrity- We commit to conducting ourselves respectfully and professionally at all times when interacting with the people we serve and with one another. We commit to doing our best to be sincere, moral, and diligent. We commit to taking responsibility for our words and deeds and developing an organization that upholds integrity by demanding the same of others. When no one is looking, we still act morally.

Compassion - We agree to practice empathy for one another and the people we serve and be aware of the potential negative effects of our words and deeds on others. We understand that speaking openly and kindly, even in the midst of disagreement, is an act of compassion.

Positivity - We understand that perspective is important to attitude and that accurate assessments do not need to be pessimistic. We promise to face obstacles with a constructive mindset.

Adaptability - We understand that nothing remains the same. We pledge to look for the good in change and recognize that it presents an opportunity for development.

Teamwork - We understand how crucial it is to collaborate with people outside of our department and other department members; everyone on the team has a part to play. We strive to foster a positive, cooperative, service- and solution-oriented culture.

Boundaries - We understand that there are boundaries within which we must talk and act, and for our team to succeed, each member must put their all into playing their part. We pledge to work within the parameters of our responsibilities while being careful not to take on inappropriate roles or to criticize or undermine those in other jobs.

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Legal Authority

The Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner fulfills a core function mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's for each of the counties.

Act 154, Section 1218-B, states,

(A) Duty. The Coroner (Medical Examiner), having a view of the body, shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning a death that appears to have happened within the county, notwithstanding where the cause of the death may have occurred, for the purpose of determining whether or not an autopsy or inquest should be conducted in the following cases:

- (1) A sudden death not caused by a readily recognizable disease or, if the cause of death cannot be properly certified by a physician on the basis of prior recent medical attendance.
- (2) A death occurring under suspicious circumstances, including if alcohol, a drug or another toxic substance may have had a direct bearing on the outcome.
- (3) A death occurring as a result of violence or trauma, whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental, including, but not limited to, a death due to mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical or radiational injury, drowning, cave-in or subsidence.
- (4) A death in which trauma, chemical injury, drug overdose or reaction to a drug or medication or medical treatment was a primary or secondary, direct or indirect, contributory, aggravating or precipitating cause of death.
- (5) A perioperative death in which the death is not readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.
- (6) A death in which the body is unidentified or unclaimed.
- (7) A death known or suspected to be due to contagious disease and constituting a public hazard.
- (8) A death occurring in prison or a penal institution or while in the custody of the police.
- (9) A death of an individual whose body is to be cremated, buried at sea or otherwise disposed of so as to be unavailable for examination thereafter.
- (10) A sudden and unexplained infant death.
- (11) A stillbirth.

(B) Purpose. The purpose of an investigation under subsection (a) shall be to determine:

- (1) The cause and manner of the death.
- (2) Whether or not there is sufficient reason for the coroner to believe that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect of a person other than the deceased.

(C) Requirements. As part of an investigation under subsection (a), the coroner shall determine the identity of the deceased and notify the next of kin of the deceased.

Organization of the Office of the Medical Examiner

The DCOME is divided into departmental sections based on the following services:

Administration and Administration Support- Provide leadership and overall direction to the department. Administrative support comprises business support, reception, scheduling, records management, data entry, analytic reporting, and validation for electronic death certificates. This section also includes a Bereavement Coordinator who serves as a family advocate to assist bereaved family members in interacting with DCOME.

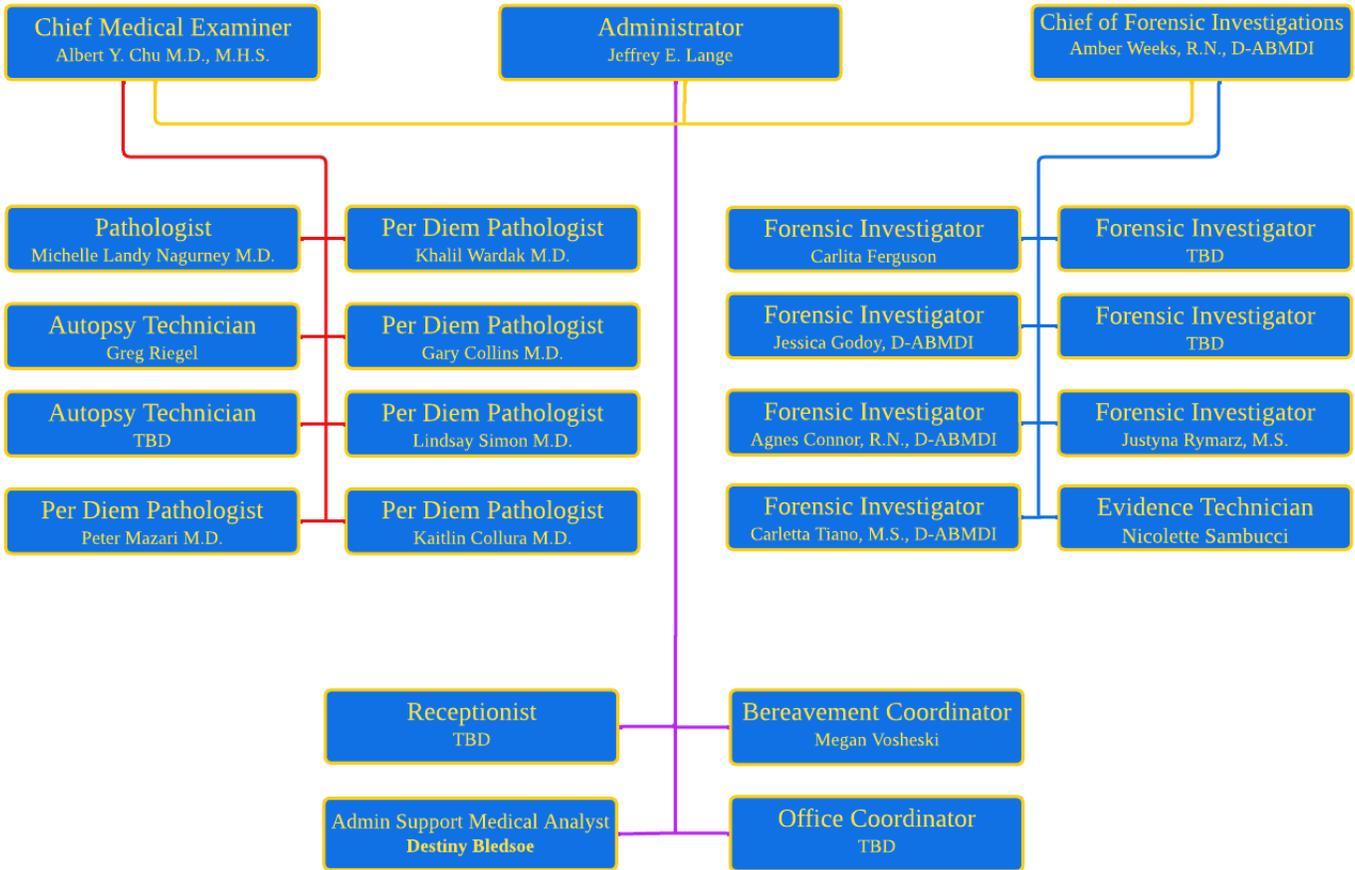
Morgue Operations- DCOME forensic pathologists are physicians who are trained and board-certified in the medical subspecialty of forensic pathology, and work under the direction of the Chief Medical Examiner. They make jurisdictional case decisions, approve organ and tissue donation requests, conduct postmortem examinations, certify deaths, review records and results, formulate medical conclusions, author autopsy reports, and provide expert testimony in legal proceedings. They also consult with experts in neuropathology, odontology, and anthropology as needed.

Autopsy technicians provide technical support for the examination of bodies admitted to DCOME's facility. Their duties include overseeing intake and release of decedents, assisting with postmortem radiography, taking autopsy photographs, performing autopsy eviscerations, and maintaining inventory of postmortem specimens.

Forensic Investigations- Led by the Chief of Forensic Investigations, who is certified by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) for Medicolegal Death Investigations, Forensic Investigators receive reports of death, conduct interviews, collect evidence, photograph the scene and body, evaluate scenes, and gather records and histories. They are the eyes and ears of the pathologists and are most often the face of the agency, interacting with other agency partners and the public.

Evidence- The evidence technician is responsible for overseeing the security, distribution, maintenance, and inventory of all collected evidence. The evidence technician safeguards the chain of custody of all evidence.

Organizational Chart



Contracted Transportation Services Provided by

- Preston Griffin (First Class Mortuary Transport)
- Guy Williams (G&S Mortuary & Cremation Transport Services)

Staff Professional Growth

Annual Reviews-

All employees must attend an annual review with their immediate supervisor to assess their performance and assess additional training if needed. This feedback session focuses on professional growth for the individual employee. Each employee will have a review to identify certifications that may be required, such as the American Board of Death Medicolegal Investigator and other professional certificates in their respective fields. If the employee lacks different areas of their job duties, a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) can be initiated to get the employee back on track.

Employee Recognition-

The DCOME will focus on employee recognition. This program will be awarded quarterly to employees who have shown initiative or championed change, improved the quality of work operations, improved safety programs, provided guidance and coaching sessions with new employees, and generally went above and beyond their regular work duties.

Training-

The DCOME has developed an intensive training program for all employees. There is mandatory training and a variety of elective-style classes/courses that fit within each employee's job category. These are broken down into Forensic Investigations, Morgue Operations (Autopsy Techs and Pathologists), evidence management, and general administrative functions. The employee has access to 20 plus elective-style classes and must choose a number per year. Certifications such as CPR, fire extinguisher operations, blood-borne pathogens, and harassment-type classes are some examples of annual mandatory training. Specific courses, such as FEMA Incident Command System (ICS), will be required for all new hires' first year.

Mental Health-

Working in the death investigation field can be physically and mentally exhausting. Management is committed to the well-being of each employee's mental health status. A weekly "peer support" newsletter with links and contact information for coping with stress and other mental health and emotional well-being counseling services is sent to all employees.

Meet the Team



Dr. Albert Chu was appointed as the Chief Medical Examiner in October 2023 and leads morgue operations, including managing all pathologists, forensic specialists, and autopsy technicians.

Dr. Chu completed undergraduate and graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University and received his medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Dr. Chu then completed a residency in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital and a fellowship in Forensic Pathology at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland.

Before becoming Chief Medical Examiner, he served as an Assistant Medical Examiner at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences in Houston, Texas, and as Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for the City of Philadelphia.



Jeffrey E. Lange was hired in September of 2022 as the Administrator for the DCOME. Mr. Lange leads the administrative support functions of the office.

Mr. Lange is originally from New Jersey and is a retired Chief of Police from the State of Maine. Mr. Lange has served in various public safety positions (Corrections, Fire, and Police) since 1989 and has completed three tours as a Law Enforcement Professional (LEP) in Afghanistan and Iraq. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration and will complete his Master of Public Administration (MPA) in 2024 from Columbia Southern University. Mr. Lange obtained his Executive Leadership Development from Roger Williams University and holds several certifications, including Six Sigma Lean Black Belt. Mr. Lange is also a National Emergency Management Basic Academy Train the Trainer.



Amber Weeks was hired in June 2023 as the Chief of Forensic Investigations for the Office of the Medical Examiner. Ms. Weeks leads the forensic investigations and evidence sections of the office.

Ms. Weeks is a board-certified Forensic Investigator with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI). Ms. Weeks has served as an investigator for seven years at the State of NJ Medical Examiner's Office before her role at the Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner. Ms. Weeks is a registered nurse in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and holds a license in forensic nursing in NJ, a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology with a Crime Scene Investigations certification from the University of Central Florida, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Drexel University, and is currently completing her studies towards her Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree through Hawai'i Pacific University. Ms. Weeks will obtain her Executive Leadership certificate from Villanova University through the CLIMB leadership program in 2024 for Emergency Management professionals in Delaware County, PA.

Carlita Ferguson was hired in September 1996 by the County of Delaware as a clerk for the Bureau of Elections. In January 1997, she transferred to the Office of Judicial Support, where she worked as a pre-arraignment clerk. In 1999, Ms. Ferguson transferred to the Juvenile Detention Center, where she worked as a Control Center Operator and then as a Lead Detention Officer for the female unit. In September of 2004, Ms. Ferguson transferred over to the DCOME, where she became the first hired Black female Forensic Investigator for the county. Ms. Ferguson, also during this tenure, was employed with Vision Quest, a program designed to help adjudicated delinquent youth transition from incarceration back to the community. Ms. Ferguson proudly is the mother of 2 children and grandmother to 3 granddaughters. After work, Ms. Ferguson goes home to enjoy her 2 pets, Chevy, an 11-year-old German Shepherd, and Blue, her 1-year-old gray kitten.

Greg Riegel was hired in June 2006 by the County of Delaware. In 2015, Mr. Riegel transferred to the DCOME as an Autopsy Technician. Mr. Riegel is a skilled and dedicated Autopsy Technician with a meticulous approach to post-mortem examinations. He plays a crucial role in supporting DCOME forensic pathologists and helping the pathologists accurately determine the cause and manner of death. He is also responsible for maintaining morgue operations, including documenting cases, submitting toxicology, fingerprinting unidentified decedents, and assisting with updating policies. Mr. Riegel is the AFSCME Shop Steward for the office. Mr. Riegel is also a veteran; he served in the United States Navy as an aviation electrician and aviation intermediate maintenance level repair, and spent 10 years serving our county.

Julia Barrera-Alvizuri was hired by the DCOME in November 2021 as a Forensic Investigator. Ms. Barrera-Alvizuri is a board-certified American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) investigator. Before her role here, she was an intern at the Miami-Dade County Medical Examiner Department. She has a Bachelor of Science in Public Safety Management with a concentration in Crime Scene Investigations from Miami Dade College. Ms. Barrera-Alvizuri has been a Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System member since 2019. This upcoming year, Ms. Barrera-Alvizuri plans to teach colleagues and other professional agencies the effects of human decomposition on public health. For future goals, she plans to successfully obtain a master's degree to help spread her passion for forensic science to others. On her off days, she likes to hang out with her 17-pound orange tabby cat "Jack."

Moira A. Guilin was hired by the DCOME in July 2022 as an evidence technician, and transitioned to an autopsy technician in December 2023. Ms. Guilin holds a Bachelor of Science degree specializing in Forensic Science from Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. Her passion for education is evident in her role as a mentor to medical students during their rotations. She plans to continue her education and

complete a master's degree. Additionally, Ms. Guilin works and volunteers for local firehouses and ambulance corps as a nationally registered emergency medical technician during her time off.

Justin "J" Arnold was hired by the DCOME in 2022 as a Forensic Investigator. Mr. Arnold is a board-certified Medical Death Investigator with the American Board of Medical Death Investigators. Originally from St. Louis, MO, Mr. Arnold has lived in the Delaware Valley region for a little over seven years and is a part-time Deputy Coroner for the Chester County Coroner's Office. Mr. Arnold spends much of his spare time in the gym and has been quoted as saying, "Health is wealth."

Jessica Godoy was hired by the DCOME in 2022 as a forensic investigator. She received her bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences with a focus on Health Sciences from Arizona State University. Ms. Godoy is a board-certified Medicolegal Death Investigator with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators with a specialized focus on unidentified remains and unknown decedents. Additionally, Ms. Godoy works frequently as an autopsy technician at DCOME. Ms. Godoy hopes to continue her education in medical school to fulfill a career in Emergency Medicine or Forensic Pathology.

Justyna Rymarz was hired by the DCOME in January of 2023 as a Forensic Investigator. Justyna earned her master's degree in Forensic Medicine from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, laying the groundwork for her career in death investigation. Justyna is in the process of obtaining an American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) certification. As a dual citizen of Poland and the United States, her international perspective gives her a deep appreciation of diversity in all its forms. This also assists with effective communication with different communities/nationalities and bridges cultural gaps in her work. In addition to her role as a death investigator, Justyna brings a diverse background in various professions, including rehabilitation, real estate, and investing. Justyna enjoys hiking, traveling, and spending time with her family outside of work.

Carletta Tiano was hired by the DCOME in February of 2023 as a Forensic Investigator. Ms. Carley Tiano, professionally known as Carletta, is a dedicated forensic professional with a solid scientific background. Ms. Tiano holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from Temple University and a Master of Science Degree in Forensic Medicine from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). Ms. Tiano is a board-certified American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator (ABMDI). She leads the Child Death Review Board for SUID (Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths) for the office. She is currently working on a project to examine and enhance standard practices and guidelines in nursing training within public health

settings for SUID. Ms. Tiano is deeply passionate about Forensic Medicine and aspires to attend medical school to become a Forensic Pathologist.

Agnes Connor was hired by the DCOME in February 2023 as a Forensic Investigator. Before her current role, Ms. Connor was a contracted employee of the DCOME, fulfilling duties as an autopsy technician and subsequently as a forensic investigator since 2016. Possessing certification as a board-certified Medicolegal Death Investigator (ABMDI), Ms. Connor also brings over two decades of experience as an Emergency Room Nurse to her professional repertoire.

Destiny Bledsoe was hired by the DCOME in November of 2022 as the Receptionist. During her time there, Destiny demonstrated exceptional dedication by pursuing certification as an autopsy technician, expanding her skill set to contribute directly to the forensic investigation process. Additionally, she is actively engaged in cross-training initiatives in Forensic Investigations, showcasing her determination to become an indispensable asset to the team. Complementing her practical experience, Destiny is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in General Studies at Delaware County Community College. Her educational journey is poised to continue focusing on pre-medical studies, which aligns with her aspiration to become a forensic pathologist. Destiny transitioned to the Office of the Medical Examiner's Medical Analyst position in March 2024.

Nicolette Sambucci was hired by the DCOME in February 2024 as the Evidence Technician. Ms. Sambucci completed her Bachelor of Arts and Science degree at The University of Tennessee, where she double majored in Forensic Anthropology and Criminology/ Criminal Justice. This upcoming year, Ms. Sambucci will start working towards her master's degree in Forensic Science with a concentration in Forensic DNA/ Genealogy. One of her goals is to become a certified Forensic Investigator for the Office of the Medical Examiner.

Dr. Michelle Nagurney was hired by the DCOME in March of 2024 as a Forensic Pathologist. Dr. Nagurney is board-certified in anatomic and forensic pathology from the American Board of Pathology. Before coming to Delaware County, she was a fellow in forensic pathology at the Allegheny County Office of the Medical Examiner and subsequently worked at the Philadelphia Medical Examiner's Office as an Associate Medical Examiner. She obtained her medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Her forensic interests include child and maternal fatalities, and she has participated in co-sleeping and neonatal infectious disease research.

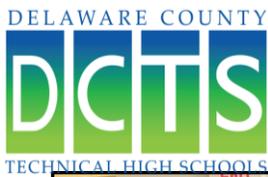


Budget, Capital, and Grant-Funded Projects

- The operating budget for the DCOME in 2023 was \$2,688.072, and most of these funds were spent in the Morgue Operations Division. Pathology examinations, the cost of salaries for physicians, scientific testing (toxicology), and supplies are just a small sample of the expenses in the morgue. The DCOME operates very similarly to healthcare practices.
- Capital Funded Purchases
 - There were no capital-funded expenditures in 2023.
- Grant Funded Equipment
 - There were no grant-funded expenditures for 2023.

Professional Partnerships

The DCOME continued the paid work agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Department of Public Health, Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention. This work agreement generates \$10,000 for the County’s general fund annually. The DCOME is required to provide drug-related statistical data twice a year. This is a multi-year work agreement between the agencies.



The DCOME has partnered with the Delaware County Technical School (DCIU), allowing high school juniors and seniors enrolled in the medical career classes to view adult autopsies as part of their teaching program.



Some of the Students from the Delaware County Technical School being led in instruction by Dr. Chu.



The DCOME has also partnered with the Delaware County Health Department and the Delaware County Department of Human Services for several different death reviews. The initial partnership was established in November of 2022. It will provide insight not only into child death reviews but also into suicides, overdose deaths, violent deaths, and motor vehicle

accidents resulting in death.

The DCOME has partnered with the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology (PIT), allowing students enrolled in the Licensed Practical Nursing program to perform and have hands-on experiences / clinical rotations three days a week working alongside our pathologists.



The DCOME has continued our partnership with Gift of Life. Gift of Life coordinates the recovery of organs and tissues for transplant. The complex organ and tissue donation and transplant process involves collaborating with highly skilled medical and investigative professionals at many levels. Working in partnership with healthcare teams, investigative teams, and other medical professionals, Gift

of Life provides extensive and compassionate services to help ensure every opportunity for donation and transplantation.

The DCOME reestablished our continued professional working relationships with many other organizations, such as the Delaware County Police Chiefs Association, the Delaware County 911 Center, Delaware County Emergency Management, the Delaware Emergency Management, and the Delaware County Regional EMS Office and the various funeral and cremation services in Delaware and surrounding counties.

Data-Sharing Collaboration

As mentioned, the DCOME shares statistical data with various governmental organizations in the County and the Commonwealth, along with non-government /civic organizations. This information comes in the form of drug-related deaths, firearms-related deaths, suicides, and infant deaths, to name a few. The importance of these partnerships allows for better decision-making based on factual data to assist in the development of prevention and outreach efforts, improvement of safety plans, adjustment of service delivery, and development/update of policy.



Community Involvement

The DCOME participated or assisted in community-sponsored events in Delaware County. Some included the Toys4Tots Toy Drive and the Delaware County Health Department Food Drive.



Toys4Tots Toy Drive



DCHD Food Drive

Future Opportunities for 2024

The DCOME plans to conduct community outreach programs to educate the public, hospitals, hospice agencies, and nursing homes on the mandatory reporting of deaths. The DCOME will also provide awareness training to Delaware County law enforcement agencies, EMS, and fire departments.



Ever wonder what the risks are when handling a decomposed body?

SAVE THE DATE!

Register by emailing the contact below the following information: your full name, what organization you are affiliated with, if you are planning to attend virtually or in person, and if you are seeking CEUs.

DCOME Chief of Forensic Investigations
Amber Weeks, RN, FNE, D-ABMOI
(610) 891-9953
WeeksA@coo.delaware.pa.us

**FEBRUARY 15, 2024,
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM**
**HUMAN BODY
DECOMPOSITION AND
PUBLIC HEALTH
CONCERNS**

**DELAWARE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
EMERGENCY SERVICES**
360 N. Middletown Road
Media, PA 19063
(Classroom)

Presentation Objectives:
Attendees will learn the process of human decomposition and the potential risks to the public health community. This presentation's target audience would be those exposed to these conditions, such as law enforcement, emergency management services, students, medical examiners, and coroner's offices.

Virtual attendance provided upon request.
Please RSVP by Febr. 2024.

Presented by Julia Barrera-Alvizuri, D-ABMOI and Amber Weeks, RN, FNE, D-ABMOI

Other outreach areas will include participating in mass fatality planning with the Emergency Management of Delaware County, the Southeast Healthcare Coalition, and the Delaware County Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Group, assisting community partners in preparing for mass fatality events.

DCOME's Bereavement Coordinator will enhance the notification process for missing persons and increase our capabilities to identify unknown individuals. Enhancements will be made through technology advancements and working with the community and law enforcement to identify our unidentified decedents.

Bereavement Office

Sincere Words

We encourage you to attend grief counseling and support groups. This time is very difficult and challenging, and there is no timeline for grieving. It is essential to understand that gradually, in your own time, you can begin to find some solace in what has happened.

Our Services

Delaware County gives its deepest condolences to you and your loved ones during this sensitive time of grief. When ready, the Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner offers you and your family resources and guidance. Our Bereavement Coordinator can provide specific programs and agencies to assist you further and ease your transition during this time of need. Please do not hesitate to contact 484-750-2150.

Grief and Bereavement Support Groups

Children Impacted by Grief

- *Youth Empowerment for Advancement Hangout (YEAH)*
267-469-3002

[YEAHPhilly – Reaching Philly Teens the Right Way](#)

- *Urban Youth Leadership Academy*
215-204-8917
- *Uplift Center for Grieving Children*
267-437-3123

[Uplift Philly – Uplift Center for Grieving Children](#)



Outpatient Agencies in Delaware County

- *Holcomb Behavioral Services*
126 E. Baltimore Pike, Media, PA

Hotline number 484-444-0412 can gain general information

Website-www.chimes.org/about/chimes-family/Holcomb-behavioral-health-systems/

Call to schedule an intake appointment for services to begin. Fees might apply office does take select providers.

- *Thrive Works Counseling*
Hotline 610-808-9923

Website www.thriveworks.com/media-counseling/ you can find information, fees, and providers offered. Call to schedule an intake appointment for services to begin.

Fees might apply. The office does take select providers.

- *Family and Community Service*
600 N. Olive Street, Media PA
610-566-7540

- *Glen Mills Counseling Center*
485 Baltimore Pike, Suite 201,
Glen Mills PA
Or
210 W. Front St. Media PA
610-656-1424

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

- *1-800-273-TALK*
24-hour hotline if you or someone you know is considering an act of suicide, experiencing trauma caused by losing a loved one to suicide
- *Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital Crisis Center*
610-237-4210
- *Survivors of Suicide, Inc*
215-545-2242
www.sosphilly.org

- *Crozer Chester Mental Health Crisis Center* 610-447-7600
- *Healthy Minds (Phila. BHIDS)*
215-685-6444 (24/7)
<https://healthymindsphilly.org/>
- *NAMI Bucks County PA*
215-343-3055
<http://namibuckspa.org/>
- *Center for Grief and Bereavement*
610-222-4110
<http://bereavementcenter.org/>

Suicide Resources (Trained Persons to Help)

- *Greater Philadelphia*
610-649-5250
- *Prevent Suicide PA- Delaware County Task Force*
[Delaware County - Prevent Suicide PA](#)
- *Delco Suicide Prevention Org*
delcosuicideprevention.org
- *Delaware County Crisis Connection*
855-889-7827
24/7 emergency aid



Support Groups for Families impacted by Homicide

- *Victim's Compensation Program*
24-hour hotline- 610-566-4342
Possible reimbursement of expenses. Funeral arrangements, medical bills, etc. Victims Assistance Advocate appointed; attend court appearances, compensation status.
- *Parents of Murdered Children*
484-557-1370
- *Mothers in Charge*
215-228-1718
- *Operation Save our City*
856-745-6045
- *Healing Hurt People*
215-762-1177
- *Court Financial Services*
610-891-5060
- *Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence*
267-233-4387
- *AVP's hotline of murder victims*
215-686-8033

Delaware County Mental Health Services

- *Mental Health Office*
20 S. 69th Street, Upper Darby, PA
19082
610-713-2365

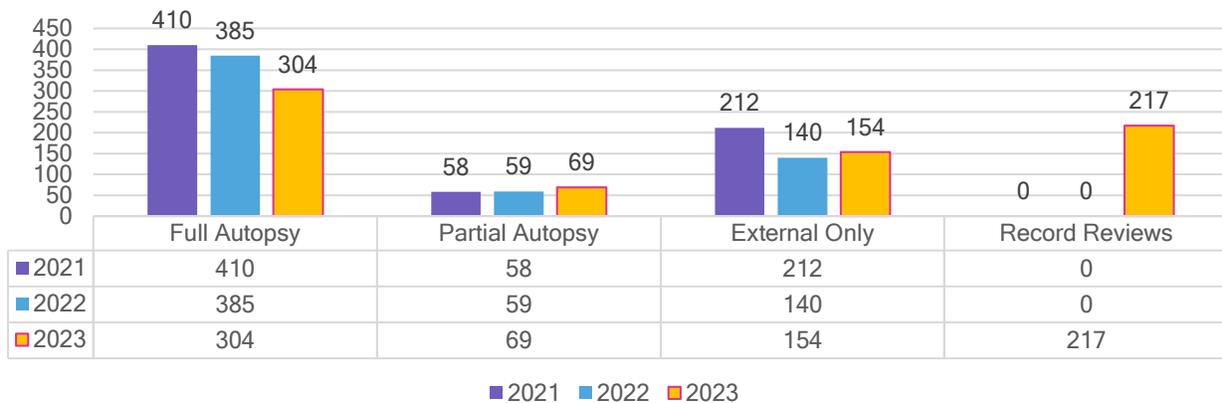
Peters Place

- *A Center for Grieving Children and Families*
336 King of Prussia Rd., Radnor, PA
19087-
610-687-515

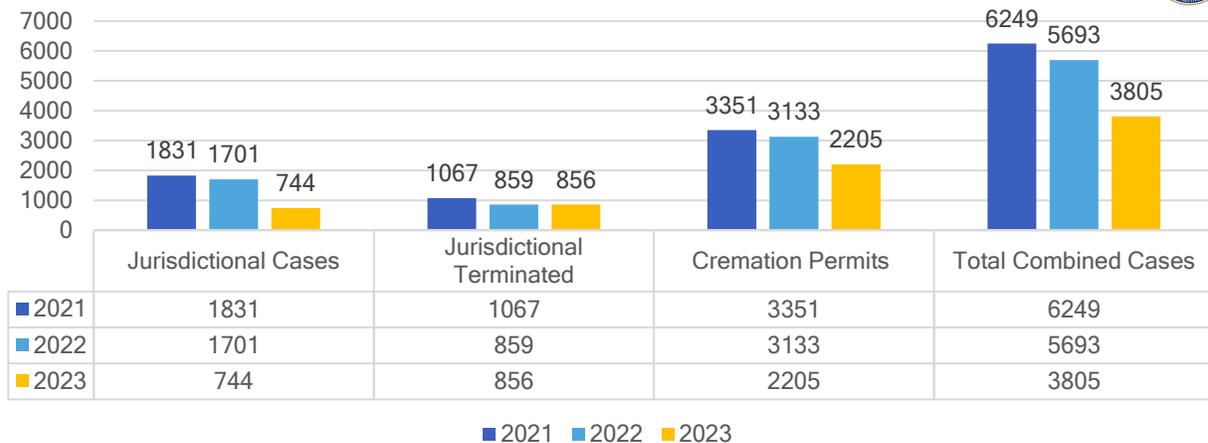
2023 Delaware County Statistics

It is important to recognize that each statistic in this report represents the loss of human life, leaving bereaved family and friends behind. We hope, as always, that understanding the trends in our community can assist policymakers, public health officials, and the systems of healthcare and public safety as they work to improve our lives.

Delaware County Types of Examinations



Delaware County Total Cases Investigated



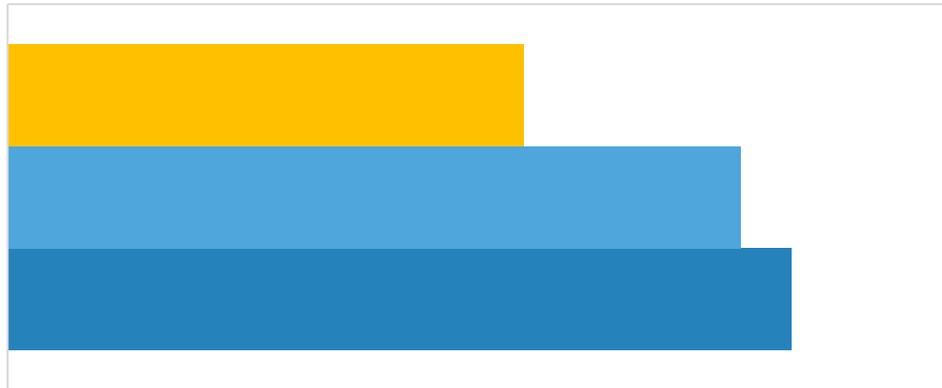
Both Jurisdictional and Terminated cases are all investigated along with a review of the cremation permits requests.

Delaware County Cremation Permits



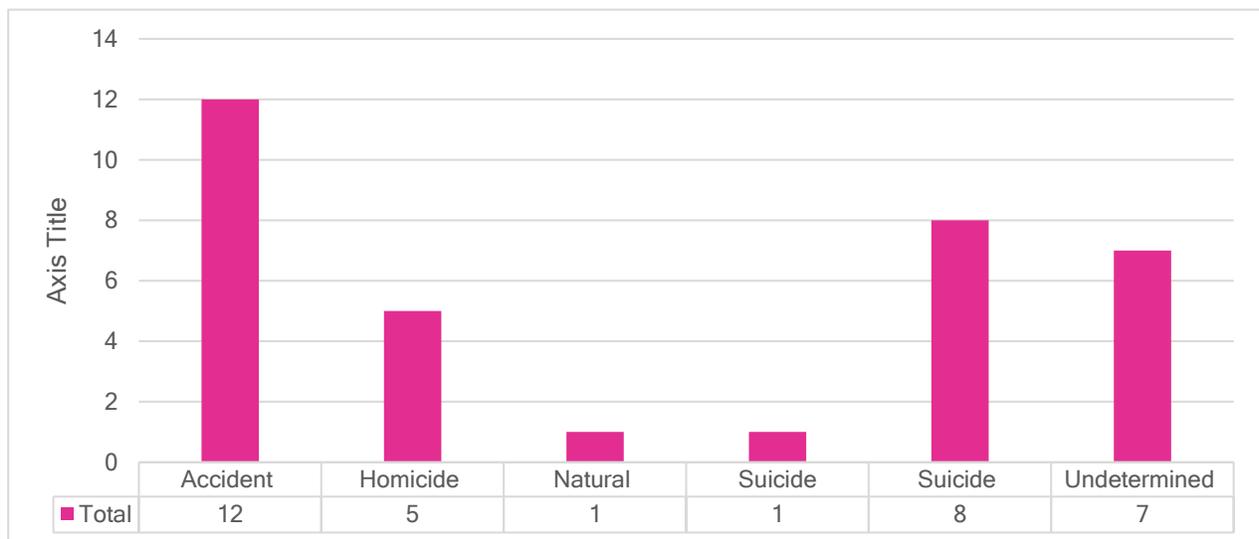
■ 2023 ■ 2022 ■ 2021

CREMATIONS PERMITS



	Cremations Permits
■ 2023	2205
■ 2022	3133
■ 2021	3351

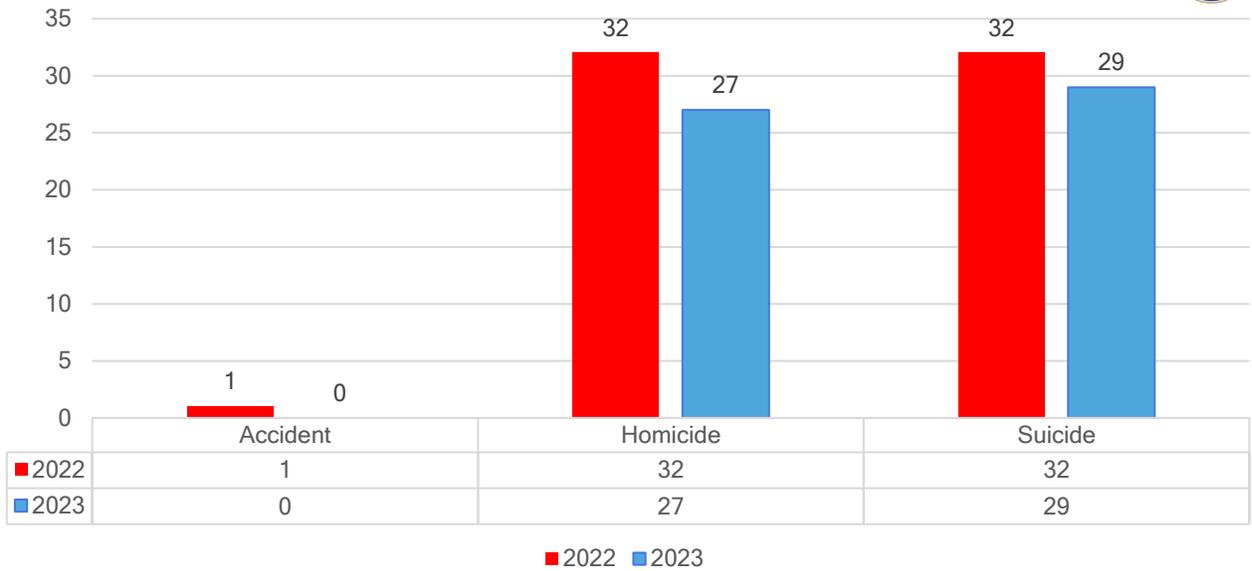
Delaware County Child Deaths (21 years and younger) Manner of Death



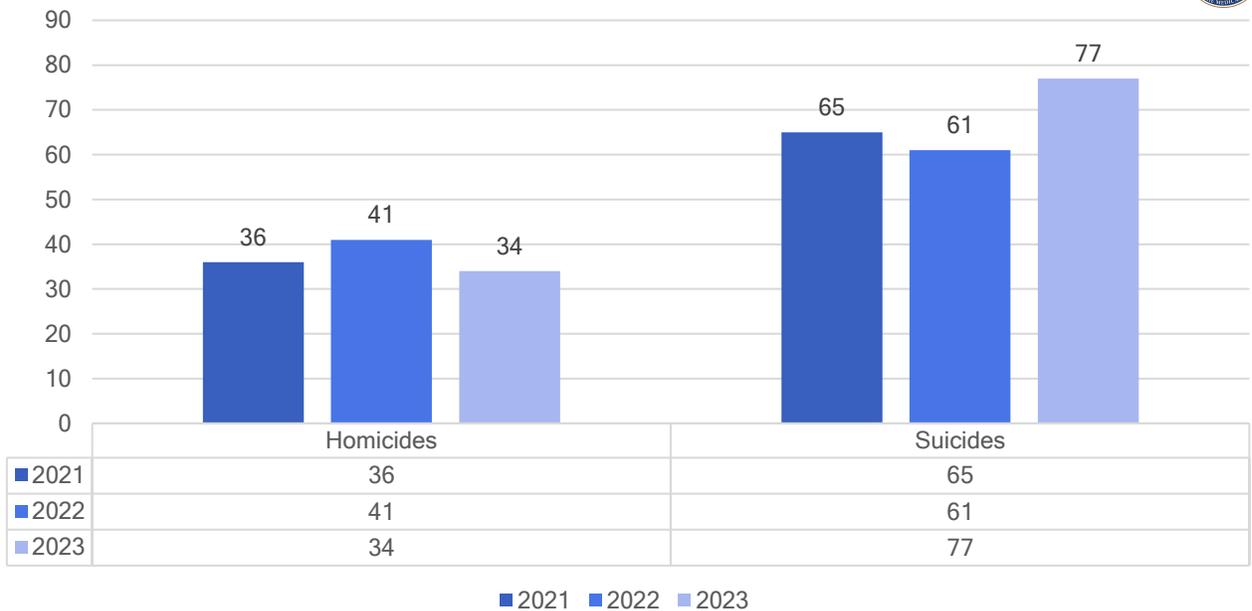
34 Child-Related Deaths

*Undetermined - 2 Stillborn deaths and 5 Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths

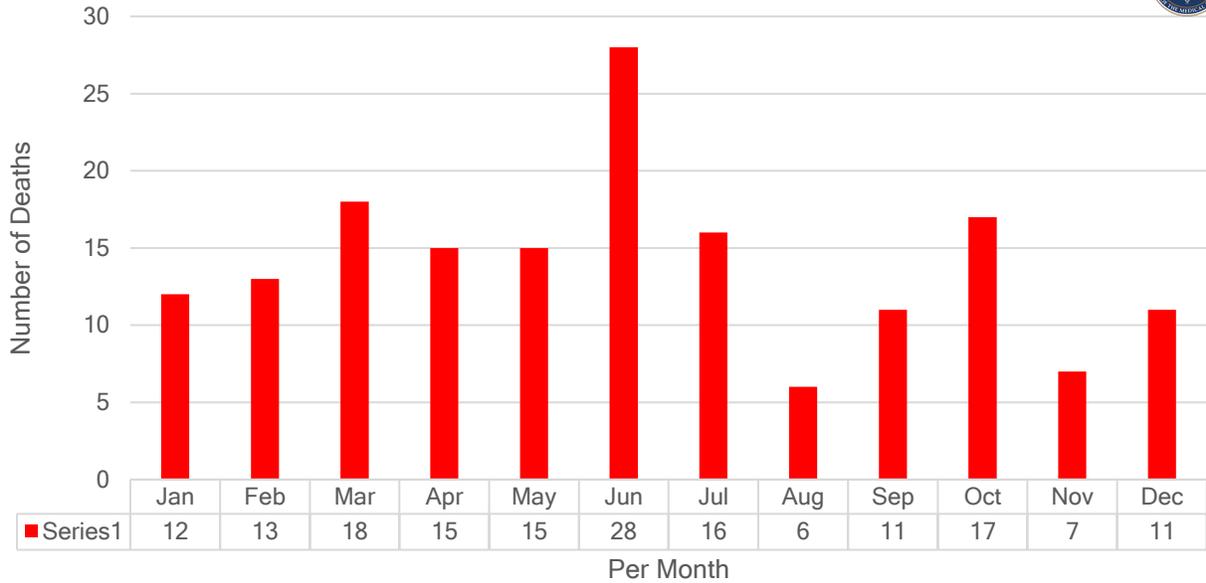
Delaware County Firearm Related Deaths



Delaware County Homicides & Suicides

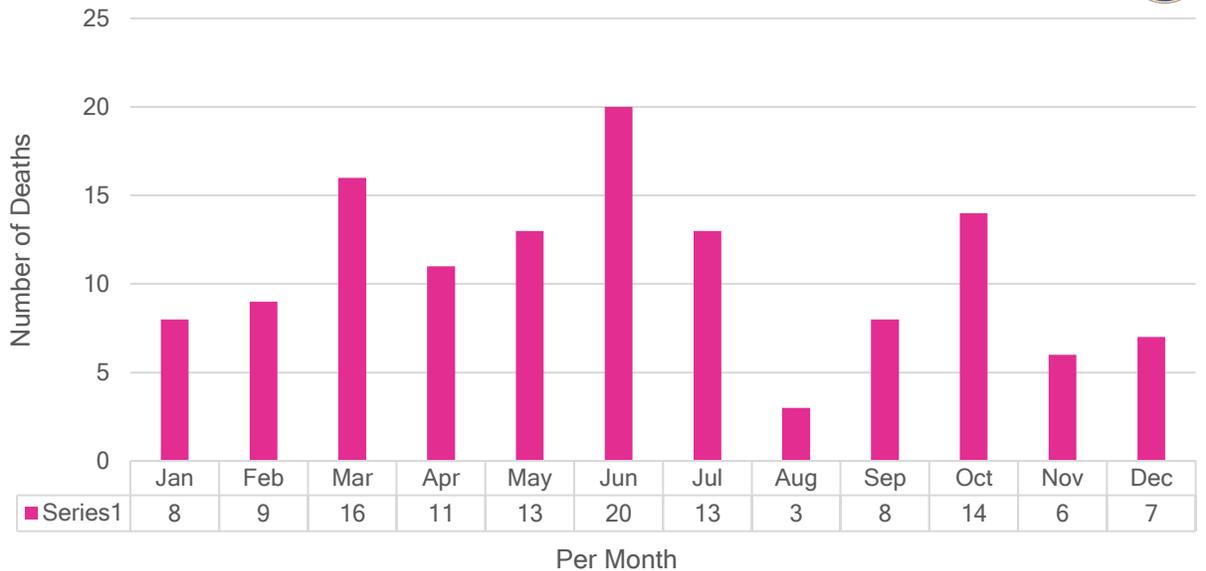


Delaware County Drug Deaths



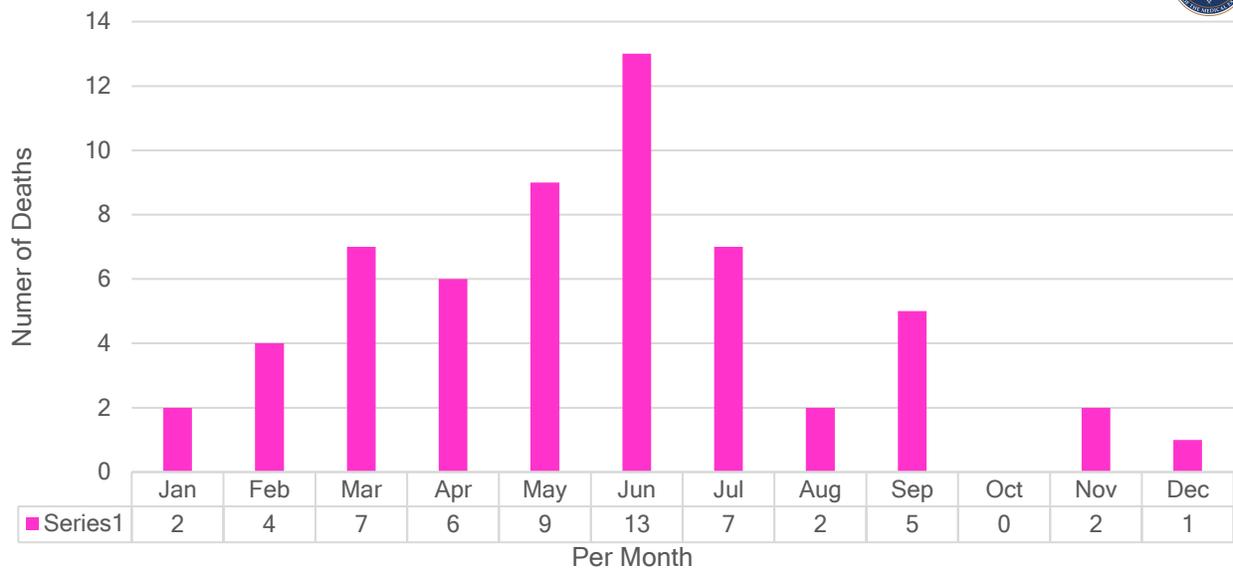
A total of 169 Drug Deaths for 2023

Delaware County Fentanyl Related Drug Deaths



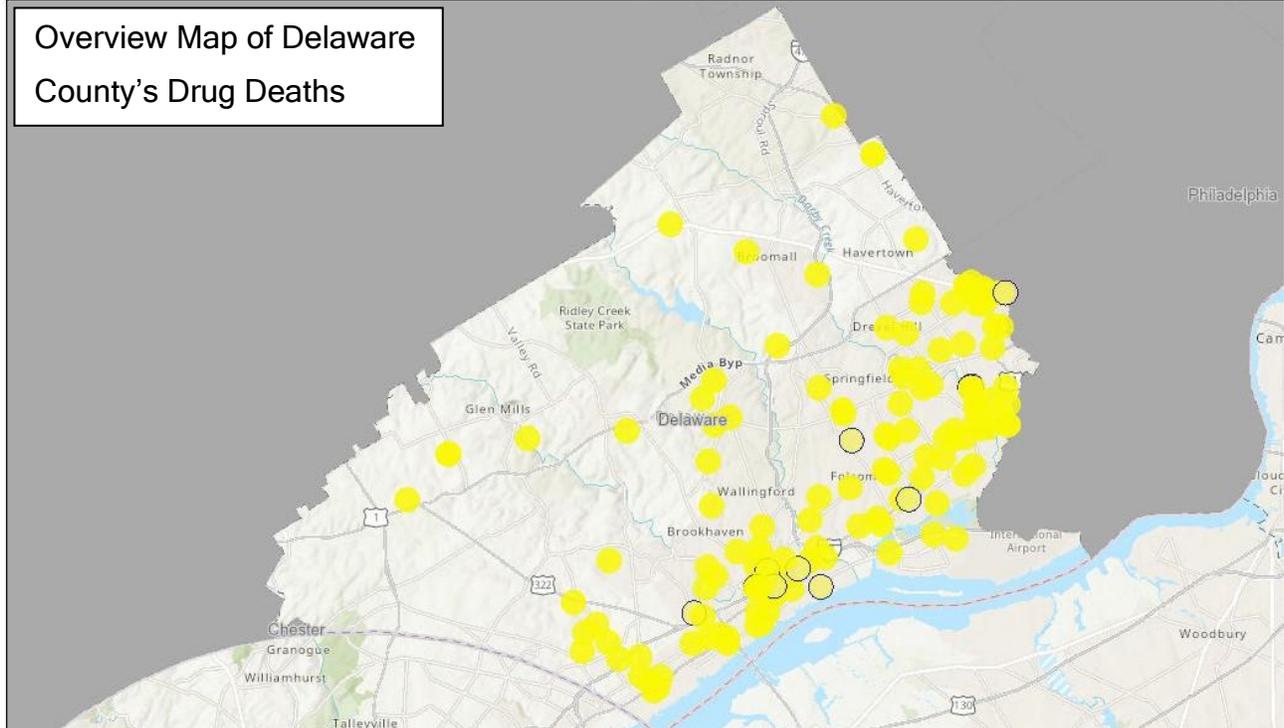
Of the 169 drug deaths, 128 were related to Fentanyl-This accounts for 76% of all drug deaths

Delaware County Xylazine Drug Related Deaths



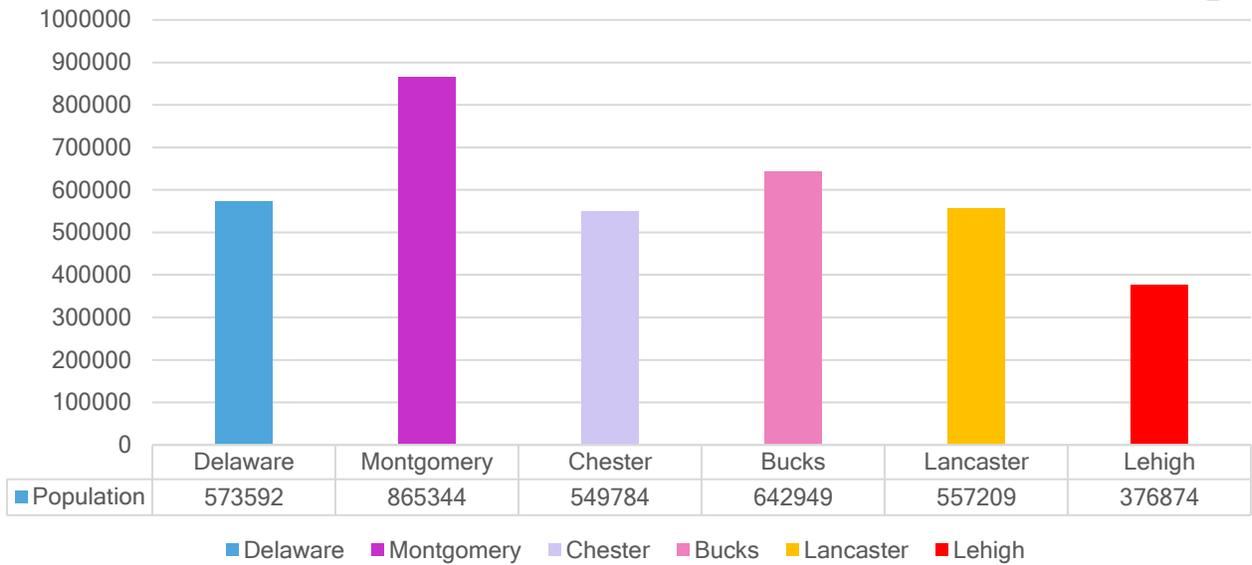
Of the 169 drug deaths, 58 were related to Xylazine. This accounts for 34% of all drug deaths.
 **Please note many times, these drugs are mixed with other drugs such as Fentanyl and other opioids.

Overview Map of Delaware County's Drug Deaths

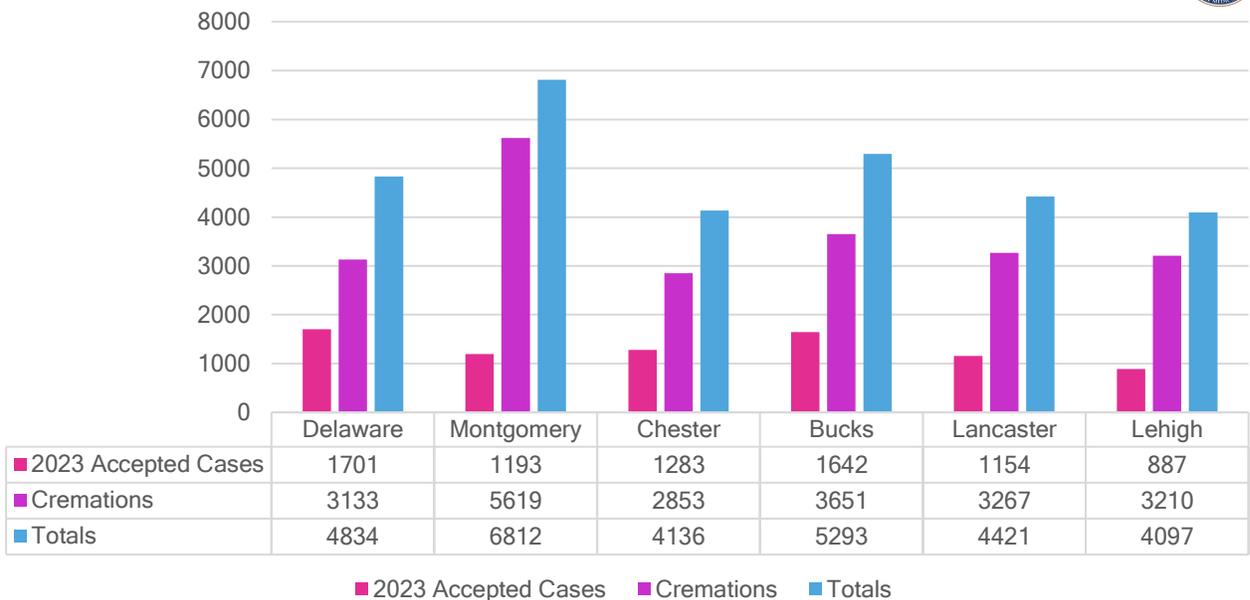


2023 Neighboring County Statistics

Population by County 2023

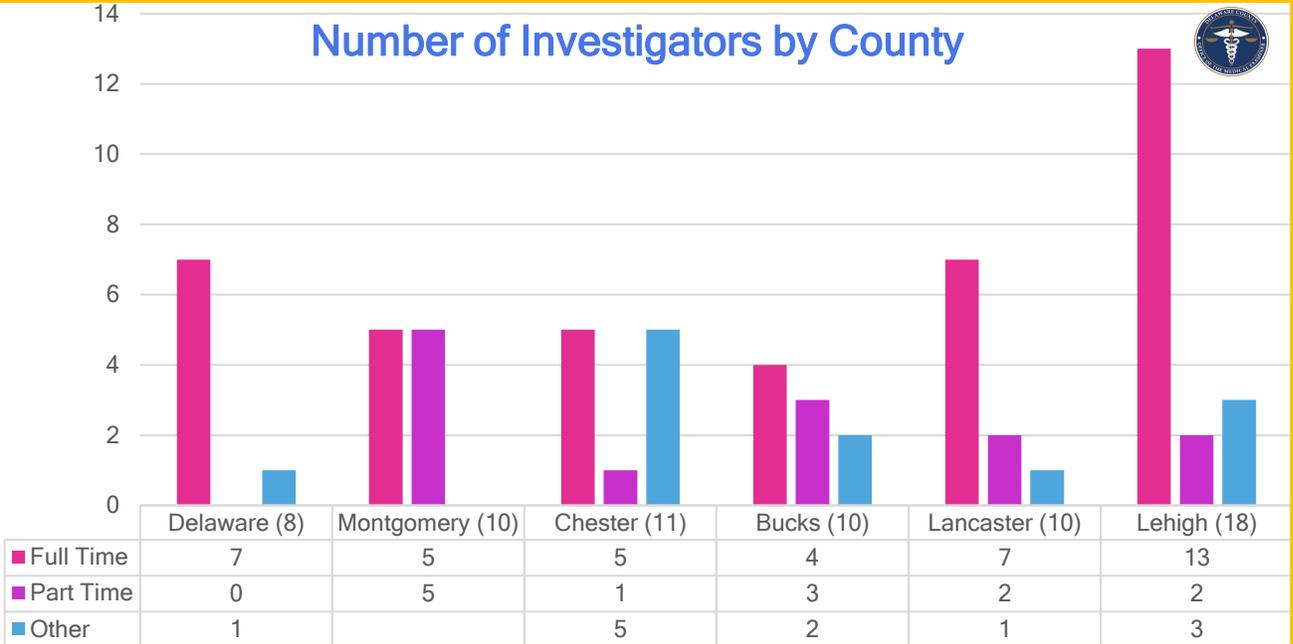


Total Stats for 2023 by County

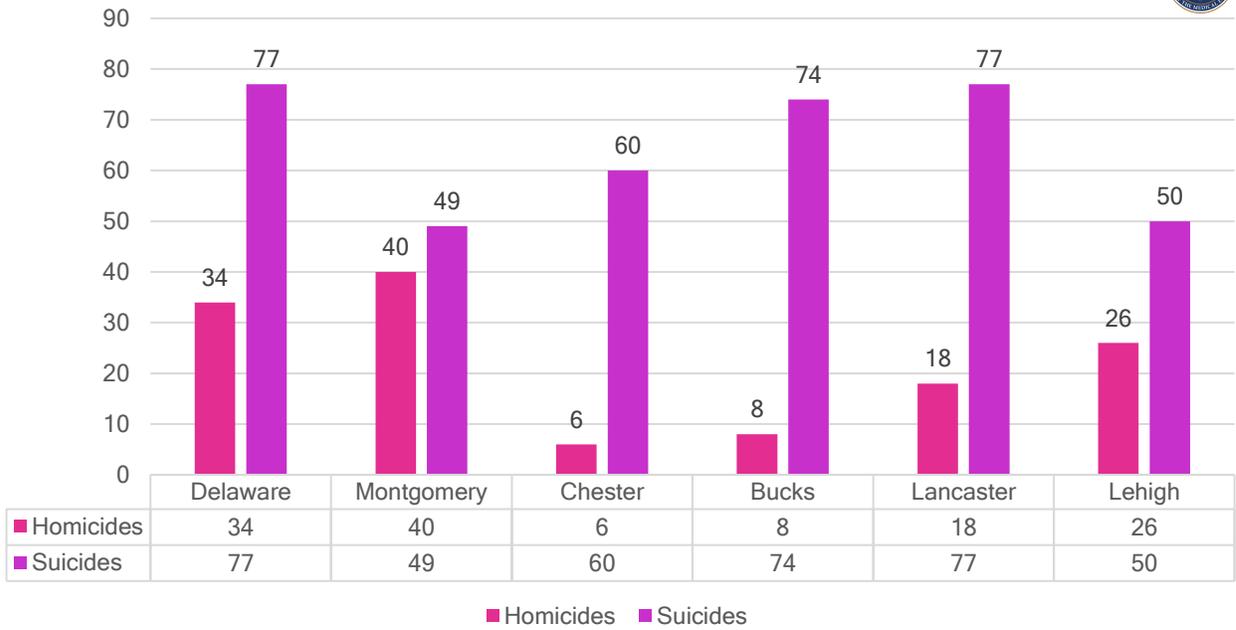


*Jurisdictional terminated cases are not included in the above.

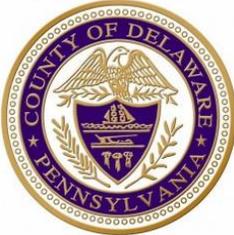
Number of Investigators by County



Homicides and Suicides by County



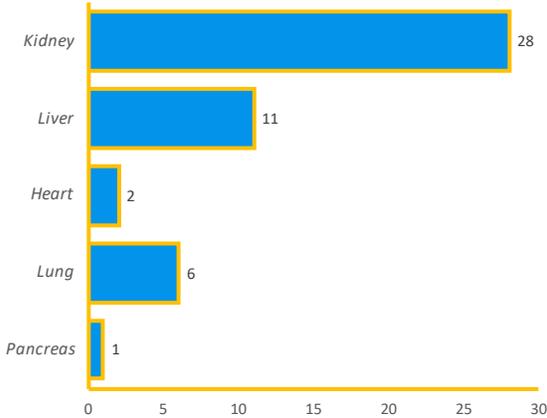
2023 Gift of Life Collaboration



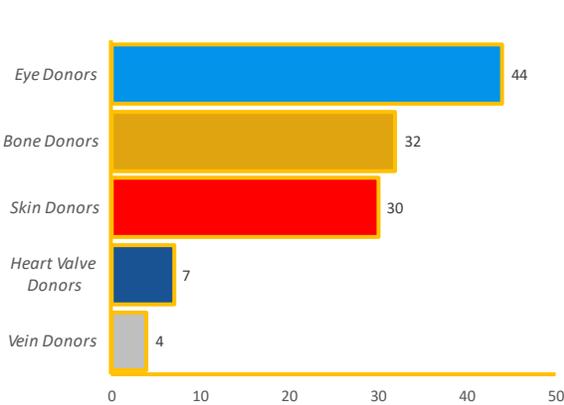
Delaware County, PA Impact on Transplantation 2023



19 Organ Donor 48 Organs Transplanted



51 Tissue Donors



Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey E. Lange
Administrator
Delaware County Office of the Medical Examiner

