



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Texas County Coroner's Office

Marie Lasater, MSN, F-ABMDI

Coroner

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Texas County Coroner's office is to provide a thorough and unbiased death investigation for all deaths occurring or originating in Texas County. The coroner is on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year and is fully accountable to the citizens of Texas County. An essential part of the coroner's duties includes being accessible to family members of the deceased, assisting them not only at the time of death, but in the months following for any matters that may arise. Forensic sciences are ever evolving, and continuing education is an absolute necessity. The Texas County Coroners Office seeks out education opportunities each year to bring the latest information in the forensic community back to ours.

The Coroner serves the jurisdictional region of Texas County, covering 1,179 square miles, and a population of 25,398 as of the 2019 census. The jurisdictional area includes the South Central Correctional Center in Licking.

Deaths shall be reported and investigated by the coroner when any person dies as a result of: Violence by homicide, suicide, or accident; Criminal abortion, including those self-induced; some unforeseen sudden occurrence and the deceased had not been attended by a physician during the thirty-six hour period preceding the death; in any unusual or suspicious manner; any injury or illness while in custody of the law or while an inmate in a public institution; the death of a child under the age of eighteen years old, and eligible to receive a certificate of live birth; any resident of a residential care facility who dies at the facility; and when death occurs outside a licensed health facility.

The Office of the County Coroner is established by the Constitution of the State of Missouri. The Coroner is elected to serve by the citizens of Texas County for a term of 4 years.

The Coroner's Office is a separate and independent division of the Texas County Government and is funded through the Texas County General Fund.

The Coroner recognizes the tragedy surrounding an untimely death and performs investigations, in part, to assist the grieving family who are often seeking answers as to cause and manner of death. A complete forensic investigation provides for the expeditious settling of insurance claims and estates, as well the implementation of civil and criminal actions. Questions which seem irrelevant in the initial hours after death can become significant in the following months. The surviving family and general public can have the peace of mind that a complete investigation was done.

The Coroner works in cooperation with the law enforcement community, but conducts a separate and unbiased investigation.

Although criminal death investigations constitute a small portion of deaths investigated by the Coroner, these deaths are studied in great detail because of the issues and legal consequences involved. In this way, the criminal justice system is offered the best support. The public health dimension of the Coroner's function is designed to isolate and identify causes of sudden unexpected death.

Impact of Covid-19 on Coroner's Duties:

Revised Statutes of Missouri, RSMo Section 191.703 issues the directive: "Death of patient with infectious or contagious disease, notification to funeral director or coroner. — A licensed health care facility that treats a patient having HIV or HBV infection or any other reportable infectious or contagious disease as defined by the department of health and senior services shall notify the funeral establishment personnel, coroner or medical examiner involved of such disease prior to the removal of the patient, when deceased, from the licensed health care facility. Notification shall be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the deceased patient.

DUTIES OF THE CORONER

The Coroner's Office is a statutory office, which is mandated to establish the cause and manner of death. The manner of death refers to the circumstances in which the cause of death arose (suicide, natural causes, accident and homicide).

Other Duties

Operate efficient Coroner's Office

Prepare a budget for income and expenditures

To be Conservator of Peace (throughout his/her county)

To execute process when the Sheriff is disqualified (when sheriff is a party)

To perform duties of Sheriff when office is vacant (by death or otherwise)

To hold Coroner's Inquest/Coroner's Jury

To issue Warrant to Summon Coroner's Jury (Coroner Inquest)

Coroner to administer oath to jurors

Coroner to issue subpoenas (witnesses)

Order postmortem examination (autopsy)

Certify cause and manner of death (death certificate)

Order blood sample test for alcohol and drug content (all motor vehicle fatalities)

Report toxicology results in writing to Missouri State Highway Patrol

Procure organ donations (procurement of cadaver organ and tissue donation)

As your Coroner, I have assumed the following additional duties:

Insure rapid response times to all calls.

Fully investigate any Covid-19 related deaths.

Provide for post mortem pet placement in the event of an "orphaned" animal.

Comprehensive testing in all suspected drug overdoses.

Assist families in every way possible after the loss of a family member, and procure additional resources as needed.

Perform IgG and IgM Covid testing on decedents as indicated.

Coroner Goals

The following goals for 2020 have been accomplished:

1. Achieved "Fellow" status and continued certification by American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators.
2. Actively participate in Emergency Planning exercises and training.
3. Obtained over \$3,800 in grant money for the Coroner's Office.
4. Completed the didactic portion of the SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner process), now qualified to perform sexual assault examinations on the pediatric population.
5. Participated on the opioid task force for this area.

2021 Goals

1. Obtain Texas County Coroner office accreditation by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators.
2. Continue to actively participate in emergency planning in conjunction with the Emergency Managing Director, particularly in regard to mass fatality events or deaths due to contagious disease.
3. Continue to pursue grant opportunities with priority of funding for toxicology and a digital x-ray machine to minimize autopsy expense.
4. Add a Deputy Coroner to the department to facilitate response times.
5. Obtain full SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) board accreditation.

2020 CASES

TOTAL CASES: 302

SCENE RESPONSES: 68

HOSPICE/NURSING HOME: 143

AUTOPSIED CASES: 13

TOXICOLOGY CASES: 37

COVID TESTS: 14

DECEASED TRANSPORTS: 31

2020 MILEAGE 5,768

MORGUE USED: 12

EXTERNAL EXAMS: 70

DONOR REFERRALS: 15

ORGAN DONORS: 3

TISSUE DONORS: 11

WHOLE BODY DONORS: 3

EXHUMATIONS: 0

UNIDENTIFIED: 0

UNCLAIMED: 1

MANNERS OF DEATH:

NATURAL: 262

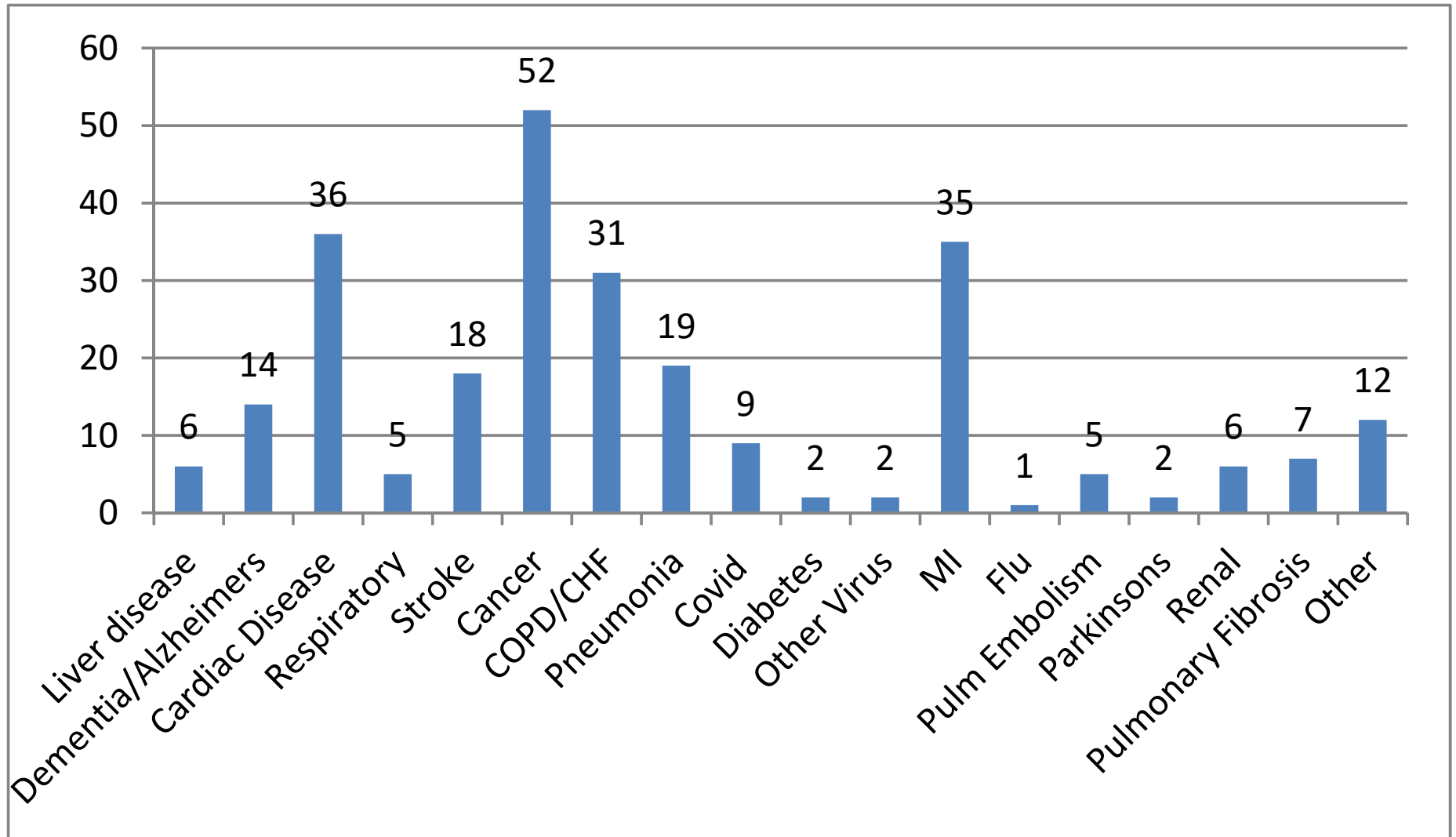
ACCIDENTAL: 29

HOMICIDE: 6

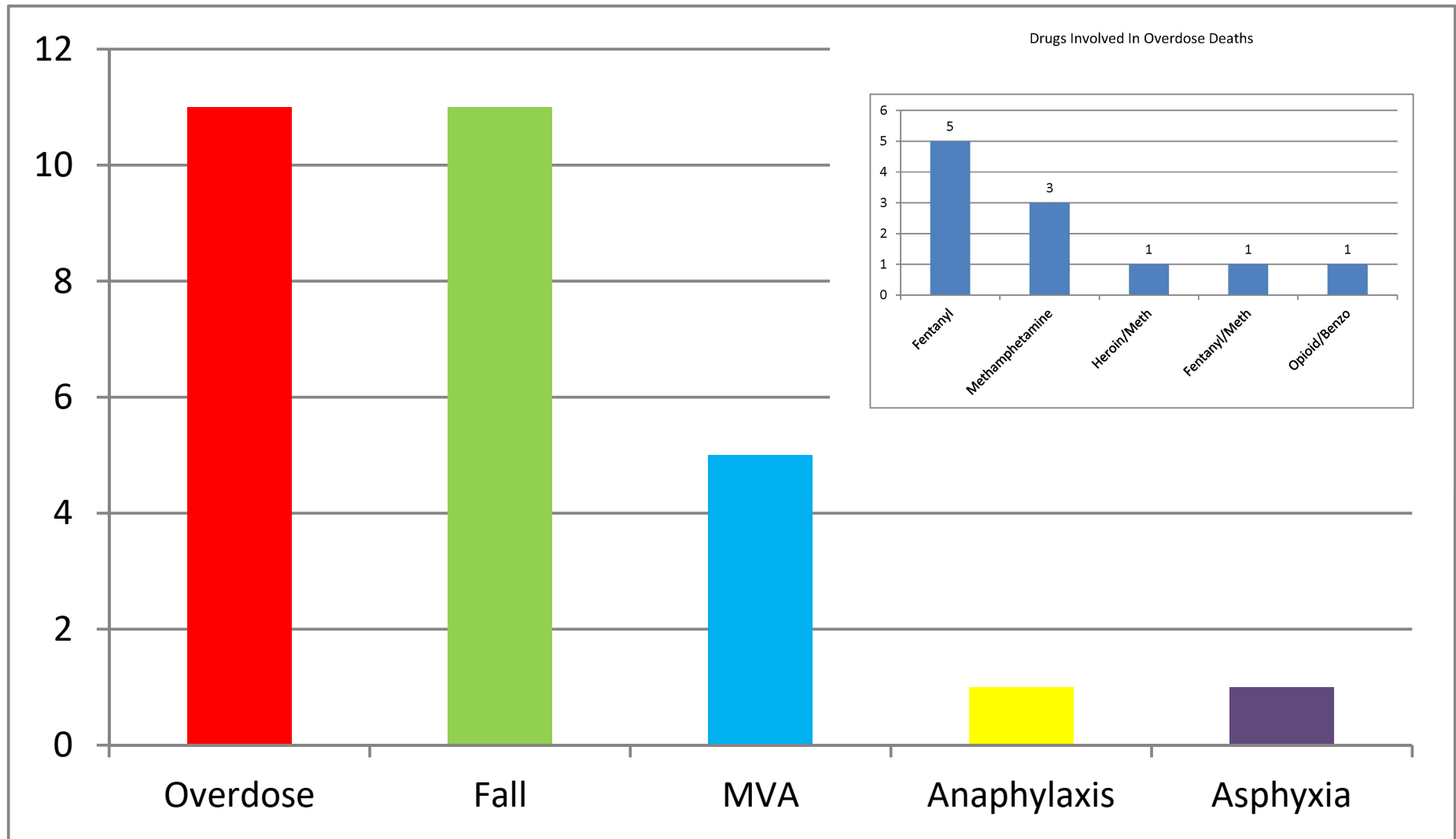
SUICIDE: 6

UNDETERMINED: 0

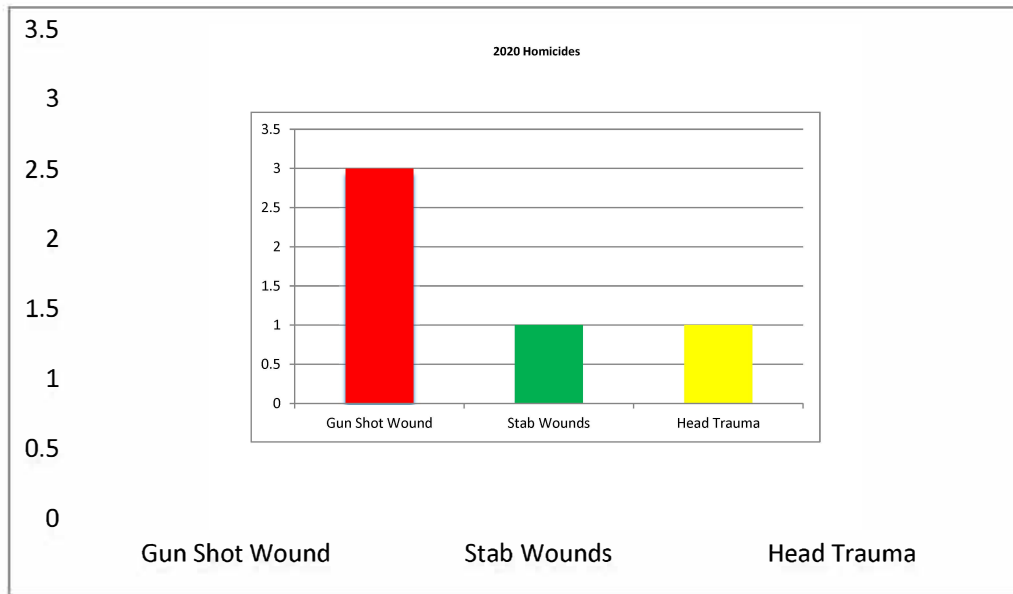
2020 Natural Deaths



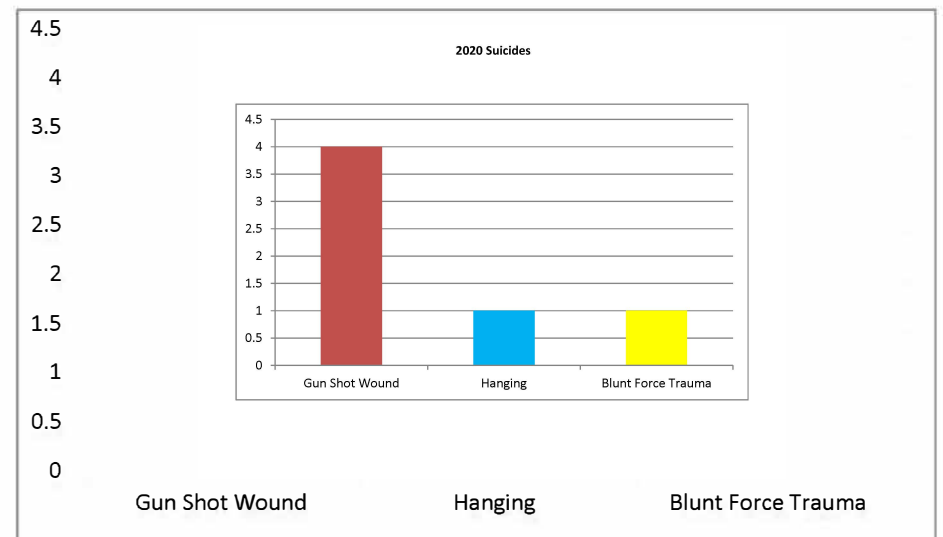
2020 Accidents



2020 Homicides



2020 Suicides



Age at time of death

