Ottawa County

2018 Annual Report

Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office
12251 James Street Suite 400
Holland, 49424

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Message to the Board of Commissioners and Citizens of Ottawa County

The Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Ottawa County. The Office of the Medical Examiner certifies death after investigation and postmortem examination and issues the death certificate as required by law. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The main duties of the Office of the Medical Examiner are to determine the cause and manner of death, and certify deaths that are reported to the medical examiner. The cause of death is the disease process or injury that resulted in death. There are thousands of diseases and injuries that may result in death. The manner of death is a classification in which a determination is made regarding whether the death resulted from natural causes, homicide, suicide, or an accident. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as indeterminate.

Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and/or postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest or successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case. Because deaths occur around the clock, medical examiner staff members are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

With the skill and experience of the medical examiner investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Ottawa County are among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the medical examiners.

Our medical examiners and investigators also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Medical examiner investigators frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death. Medical examiner investigators are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families. The information provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2008 our office contributed significant input toward the implementation of a web based death investigation report system. After providing assistance to Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc. of Big Rapids, Michigan, the Medicolegal Death Investigation Log or, MDI Log was launched in June of 2008. MDI Log is a comprehensive investigative report/database system that enables the Medical Examiner to review death scene investigation information from a secure Internet site any time of the day. MDI Log enables Medical Examiner Investigators to submit death scene investigation reports via the Internet in an efficient manner. MDI Log has evolved to become a valuable tool for our office and it is now available to medical examiner offices across the country.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners for their support of the medical examiner program and the services we provide to the citizens of the Ottawa County.
Types of Deaths Reportable to the Medical Examiner

The Michigan County Medical Examiner Law, Act 181, P.A. of 1953, as amended, and the Michigan Public Health Code, Act 368, P.A. of 1978, as amended, mandates that specific types of death be referred to the Medical Examiner for investigation (see list below). These deaths include sudden and unexpected deaths, accidental deaths, and violent deaths. The medical examiner has the authority under these Acts to order an autopsy at any time it is deemed necessary to determine or confirm the cause and manner of death.

Deaths Reportable to the Medical Examiner:

- Violent death (e.g., strangulation, gunshot, stabbing, poisoning, etc.)
- Accidental deaths (e.g., falls, drowning, motor vehicle collisions, burns, overdose, etc.)
- Death of a prisoner (e.g., deaths in any county or city jail while imprisoned or in custody).
- Suspicious Circumstances (e.g., Unidentified Bodies or events surrounding death)
- Sudden and Unexpected deaths (e.g., all deaths during a surgical procedure, in recovery, anesthesia-related, unexpected natural death, occupational-related deaths)*
- Without medical attendance within 48 hours of death:
  - In cases of chronic illness, the attending physician may sign the death certificate if s/he can be reasonably certain of the cause of death.
  - Death of a mother due to an abortion.
  - Unexpected infant deaths

The medical examiner would generally order an autopsy for any of the reportable deaths listed above.
Ottawa County Medical Examiner Cases

Population 279,955
Cases Reported to Medical Examiner 380
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination 115
   1. Number of Medical Examiner Cases with Complete Autopsy 132
   2. Number of Medical Examiner Cases with External Examination 0
   3. Number of Medical Examiner Cases with Limited Examination 0
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination 170
C. Number of deaths not certified by Medical Examiner's Office after investigation 210

Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent
Limited Examination: An examination which is focused on a specific organ or region of the body, i.e., heart. The limited examination also includes an external examination.
External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent.
Medical Examiner Staff

David A. Start, MD
Chief Medical Examiner
Forensic Pathologist

Stephen D. Cahle, MD
Deputy Chief Medical Examiner
Forensic Pathologist

Matthew D. Carr, MD
Pathologist

Sarah Wilkins, MD
Pathologist

Robert S. Bladek, B.S.M.T., M.H.S., PA (ASCP)
Medical Examiner Investigator

Rebecca Druzgal
Medical Examiner Investigator

Matthew Kempf, D-ABMDI
Medical Examiner Investigator

Robert Tovey
Medical Examiner Investigator

Paul A. Heidel, M.D., M.P.H.
Medical Director
Ottawa County Department of Public Health

Lisa Stefanovsky, M.Ed.
Health Officer
Ottawa County Department of Public Health

Sundy Vargas, Health Administration Specialist
Medical Examiner Records and Support Liaison
Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Manner of Death by Postmortem Examination

- Homicide: 4
- Suicide: 27
- Natural: 125
- Undetermined: 3
- Accident: 82
- Pending: 0
Deaths by Race/Ethnicity

2018 Deaths by Race/Ethnicity

- Unspecified: 2
- Other: 1
- American Indian/Alaskan Native: 2
- Asian: 9
- African American/Black: 19
- Hispanic: 17
- White: 340
Deaths by Natural Causes

- Cardiac: 4
- Neurological/Genitourinary: 1
- Other: 0
- Pulmonary: 0
- Liver: 1
- Gastrointestinal Cancer: 0
- Assisted Suicide: 0
Deaths by Unnatural Causes

Accidental Deaths by Type
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes

Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death
Suicide by Means

- Firearm: 9
- Hanging: 9
- Poisoning/Drugs: 13
- Jump/Fall: 0
- MVA: 0
- Stab/Cuts: 0
- Other: 3
Suicide by Sex

2018 Suicide Deaths by Sex

- Female: 6
- Male: 21
Homicide Deaths

- **Firearm**: 4
- **Blunt Trauma**: 0
- **Stabbing**: 0
- **Motor Vehicle**: 0
- **Asphyxia**: 0
- **Other**: 0
Deaths by Age Group

- 0 < 1: 2 deaths
- 1-5: 1 death
- 6-10: 0 deaths
- 11-17: 5 deaths
- 18-25: 17 deaths
- 26-44: 53 deaths
- 45-64: 92 deaths
- 65+: 210 deaths
- Unknown: 0 deaths
Deaths by Sex

- Male: 222
- Female: 153
- Indeterminate: 0
### Miscellaneous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unclaimed Bodies 2017-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Death Cases 2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 0-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cremation Permits Issued 2017-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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Gift of Life Referrals

Thank you

Ottawa County DONATES LIFE!

2018 Highlights

101 Non-Hospital Deaths Referred via MDILog!
   ➢ 27 in 2017, a 274% increase
23 ME Referred TISSUE Donors!
   ➢ 7 in 2017, a 228% increase
16 ME Referred Cornea/Eye Donors!
   ➢ 3 in 2017, a 400% increase

#1 in state for converted donors & #2 in State for Donors Referred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 Top Counties for ME Referred Donors!</th>
<th>Non-Hospital Death Referrals</th>
<th>Eligible for Tissue Donation</th>
<th>Tissue Donors</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
<th>Eye Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washtenaw</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskegon</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dedicated efforts of the Ottawa County ME Office, Holland Hospital, and area funeral homes, resulted in the following in 2018!

23 TISSUE & 16 EYE/CORNEA DONORS

Donor families find great comfort knowing their loved one could help others. Hundreds of recipients will benefit from these gifts. The Ottawa County community has gone ABOVE & BEYOND to help facilitate these donations!

Thank you, Ottawa County!
You are making a difference!

For more information or educational opportunities, please contact:
Curpri Sanders 734-922-1014 Stephanie Sommer 734-922-1331 email: ME_FH@golm.org

www.golm.org → For Professionals → Funeral Service → password: donatelif