

The Cause of Death is What Now?

Lessons Learned & How to Prepare

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MASS FATALITY SHOOTINGS

OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTINGS

OPIOID CRISIS

SO WHERE WE ARE TRENDING NOW?

25 YEARS



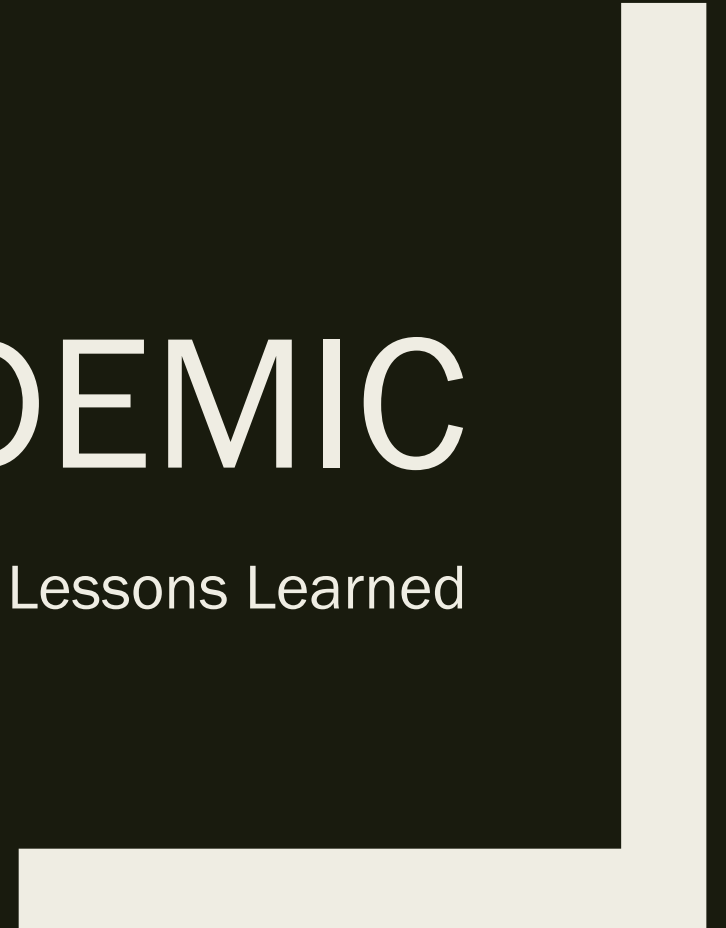
Lisa Kaspriak

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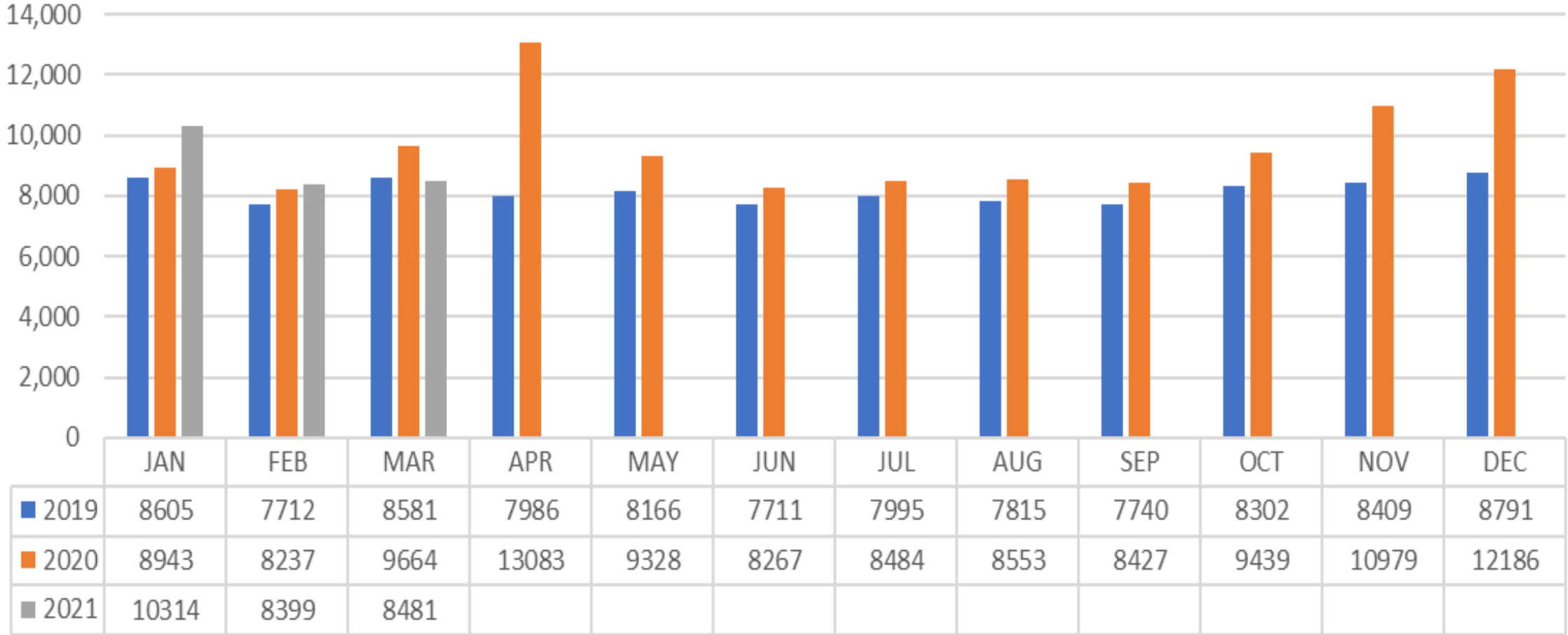


COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Department Affects & Lessons Learned



Michigan # of Deaths



Source: Michigan 2020–21 Death File, Extracted April 16, 2021 . Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services.

The Benefits

- County Disaster Coordination without a finite event
- Connection with Colleagues Nationwide = Realtime Collaboration for emerging P&P

Challenges

- MEI's afraid of what they were exposing themselves and their families to
- Increased Caseload 22% jurisdiction-wide
- In a public health emergency such as covid 19, death certificate information is critical in measuring the pandemic's effects on the population and directing the appropriate public health response
- Now and always report death after Vaccine to VAERS nationwide CDC system

Unclaimed / Abandoned Bodies ↑ during Pandemic

- Up 600% over previous year across our jurisdictions
- MDHHS has an Emergency Relief Burial Services system at no cost to the county.



International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners
Collaboration · Education · Accreditation
Dedicated to the promotion of excellence in medicolegal death investigation through
collaboration, education and accreditation.

IACME POSITION STATEMENT

CORONERS AND MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATORS (MDI) SHOULD BE DESIGNATED FIRST RESPONDERS

Coroners and Medicolegal Death Investigators (MDI) are exposed to numerous risk factors in the line of their public service duties. These factors increase their risk for exposure to biohazard contaminants, infectious diseases and potential violence, all of which increase the threat to their physical safety.

The medicolegal death investigation community has a high level of exposure and risk to life threatening factors when responding to death scenes to include; handling and transporting bodies/human remains; when in close interactions with family members and/or bystanders when conducting forensic interviews; and/or when notifying them of a death. There is additional risk of exposure to contaminants and infectious disease during the performance of forensic scene investigations, post mortem examinations, forensic autopsies and when obtaining/handling and testing biological specimens.

First responders are at a great risk of exposure when interacting with patients, decedents and the general public. Coroners and MDIs are on the front lines alongside their counterparts from emergency medical services, law enforcement, fire department personnel and health care providers. In many jurisdictions, especially those in rural areas, the Coroner or MDI may be the only individual who comes into contact with family and bystanders to be able to determine other potentially ill or exposed persons.

Those currently designated as first responders, whether at the local, state or federal level, qualify for additional benefits such as hazardous duty pay, enhanced paid time off or sick leave, and enhanced line-of-duty death benefits. Coroners and MDIs should be eligible for these additional benefits and therefore should be designated First Responders.

The official position of the International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners is that all Coroners and Medicolegal Death Investigators receive First Responder designation at the local, state and federal levels to ensure these public servants are eligible for benefits associated with First Responder classification.

Respectfully,

The IACME Board of Directors

Medicolegal Death Investigators

...

The Last of the First Responders



FEMA

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance

Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, FEMA is providing financial assistance for COVID-19 related funeral expenses.

To be eligible for funeral assistance, you must meet these conditions:

- The ...incurred funeral expenses after January 20, 2020.
- An official death certificate** that attributes the death directly or indirectly to COVID-19 and shows that the death occurred in the United States.
- Funeral expenses documents** (receipts, funeral home contract, etc.).
- Proof of funds received from other sources** specifically for use toward funeral costs.
- Up to \$9,000** specifically for use toward funeral costs.

*?BACKLOG?
Your Medical
Examiner may be
asked to Review
each and every
Case from the past
15 months.*

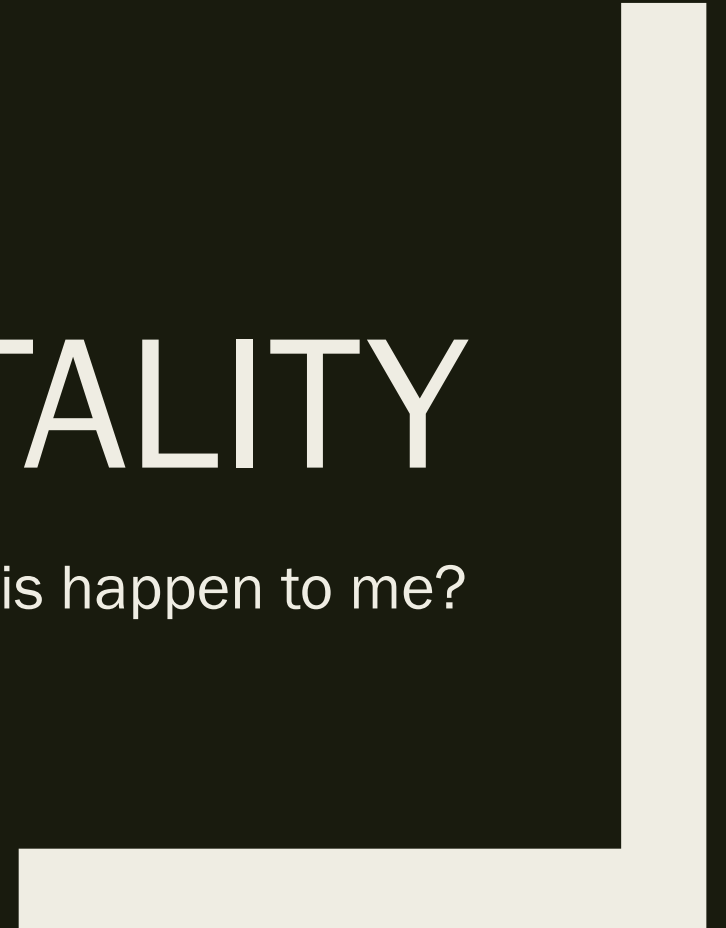
Possible Action Items

- Consider reclassifying Medicolegal Death Investigators as First Responders.
- Consider the same Hazardous Pay that may have been released for other First Responders.
- If your M.E. Department experiences a rush for Death Certificate/Case Reviews consider CARES ACT or American Rescue Act Funds to assist with Administrative Workload increase in response to COVID19 crisis.

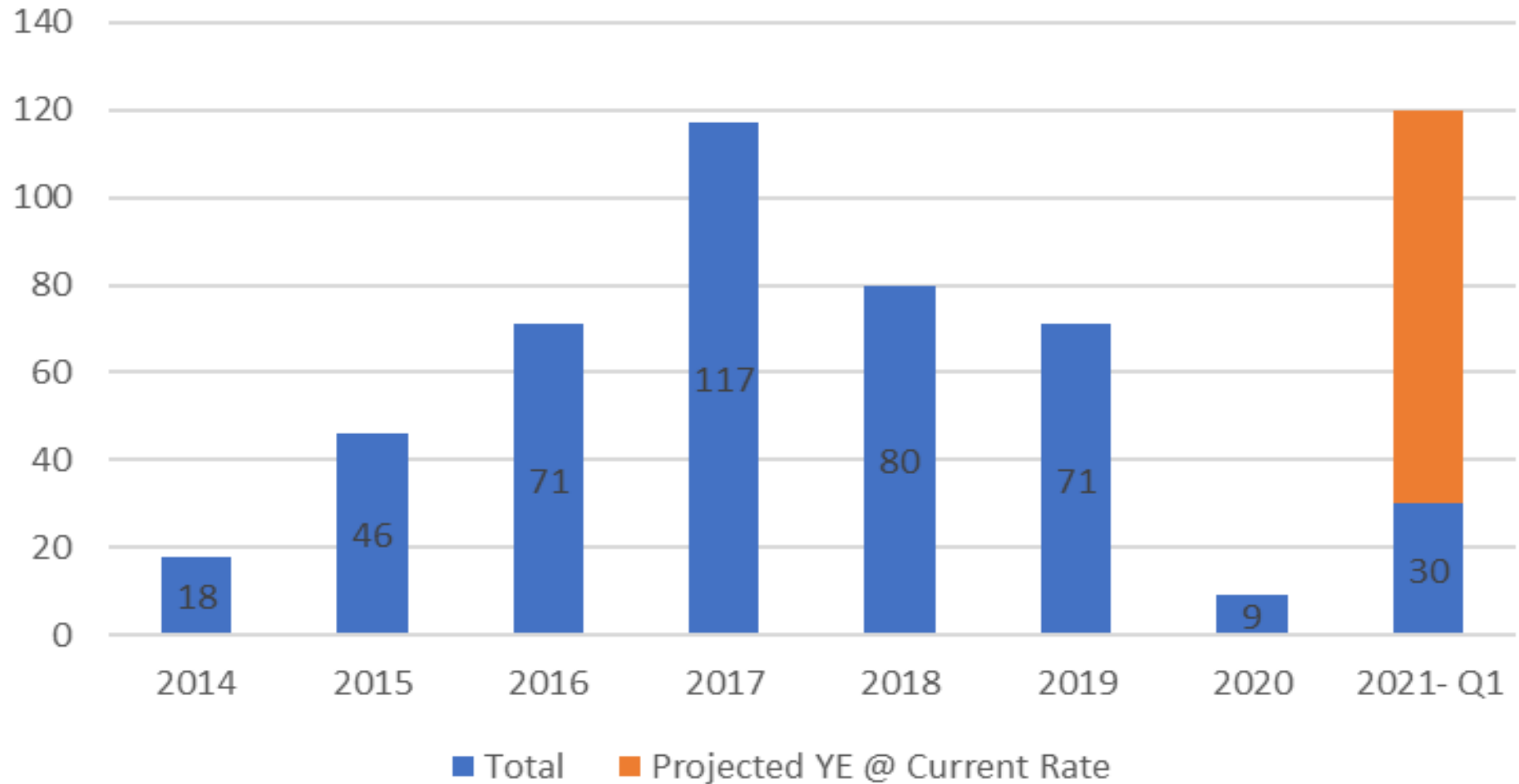


MASS FATALITY

Could this happen to me?



United States Mass Shootings Fatality #'s



US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health

Trends in United States Mass Fatality Incidents and Recommendations for Medical Examiners

[Acad Forensic Pathol.](#) 2017 Sep; 7(3): 318–329

Possible Action Item

- Consider reviewing the Mass Fatality Readiness of your Department
 - Know your Overload Number - Definition of a Mass Fatality is any incident resulting in more decedents to be recovered and examined than can be managed by the local medical examiner.
 - In today's world which revolves around a 24-hour news cycle and social media coverage, it will be publicly unacceptable to fall short in these operations.

SHOOTING INVESTIGATION

OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING

Is departmental separation maintained just in case?

Checks & Balances

- Full Independent Control. Operate to the highest possible standards without the potential for perceived law enforcement influence.

Possible Action Item

- Consider reviewing the separation of
 - Office of the Medical Examiner (Responsible for the Decedent in Cause & Manner of Death)
 - &
 - Offices of Law Enforcement (Responsible for the Scene and Overall Justice)

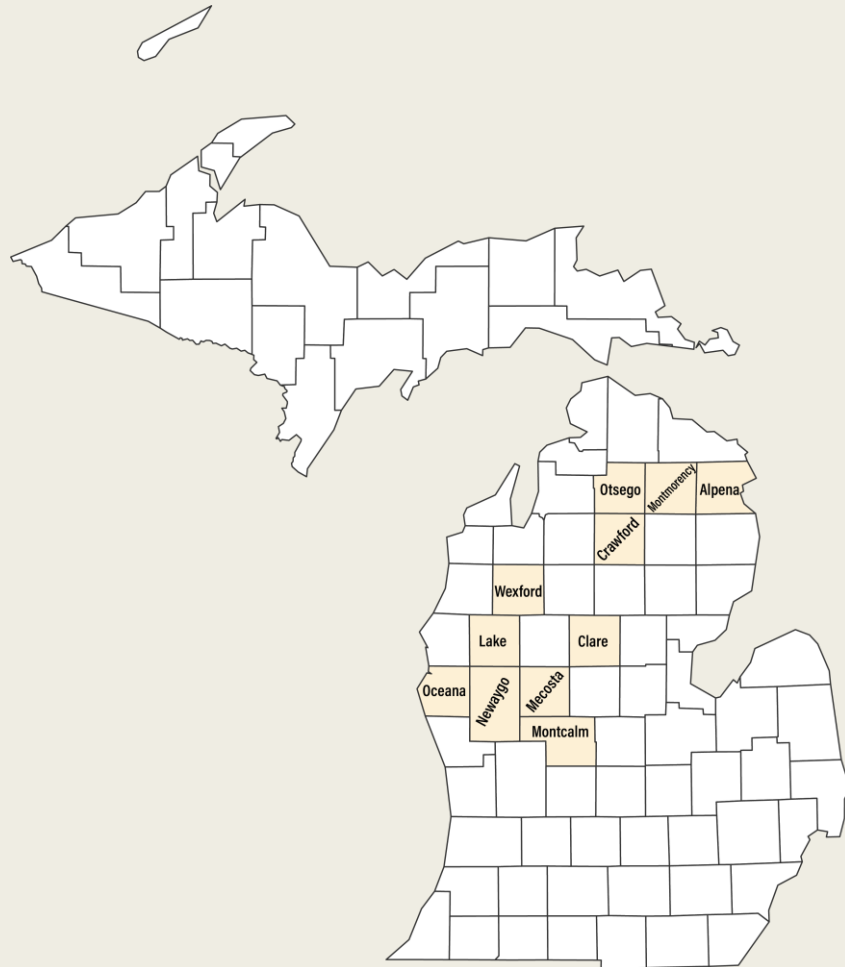
A black and white photograph showing a person's hand holding a syringe on a carpeted floor. The scene is dimly lit, with the hand and syringe being the primary focus. The background is dark and out of focus.

OPIOID CRISIS

Where are we at with this?

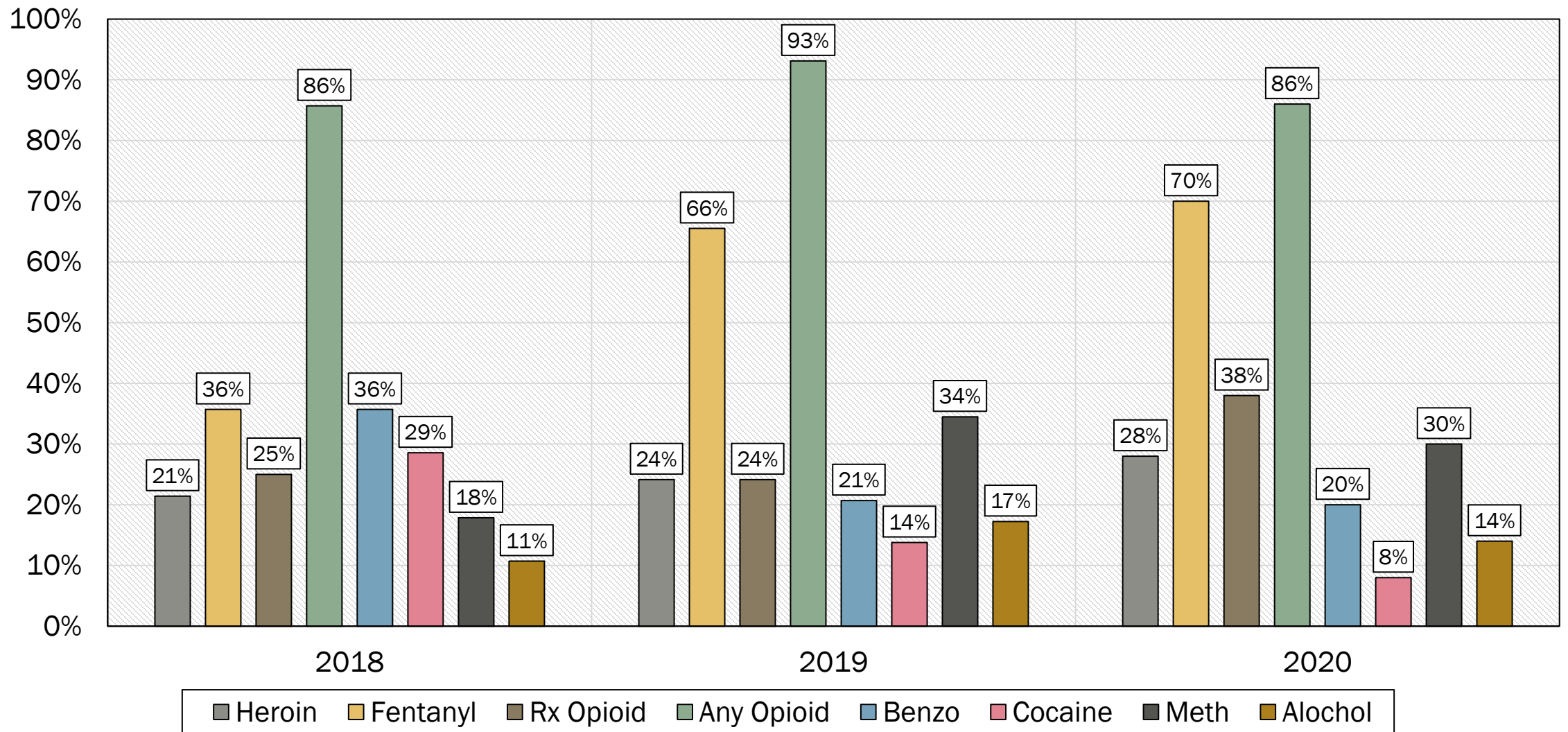
A large, white, L-shaped graphic element located in the bottom right corner of the slide. It consists of a vertical bar on the right and a horizontal bar at the bottom, meeting at a right angle.

MMMEG: # Cases Toxicology Data Collected



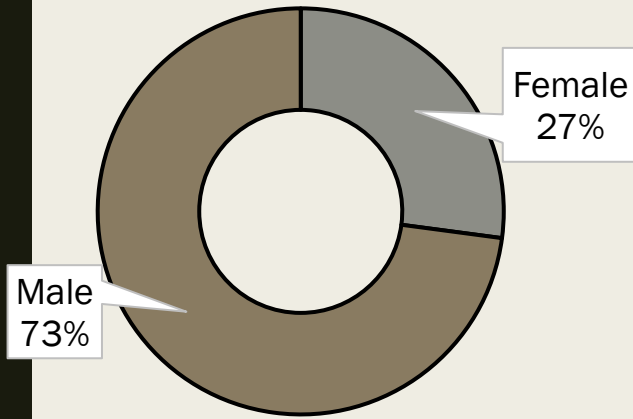
Total by Year	2018	2019	2020	Total
Alpena	0	2	17	19
Clare	32	36	39	107
Crawford	0	6	11	17
Lake	6	8	13	27
Mecosta	18	20	24	62
Montcalm	29	40	47	116
Montmorency	0	0	1	1
Newaygo	10	26	36	72
Oceana	0	15	18	33
Otsego	0	7	12	19
Wexford	11	24	27	62
Total	106	184	245	535

Overdose Toxicology Trends

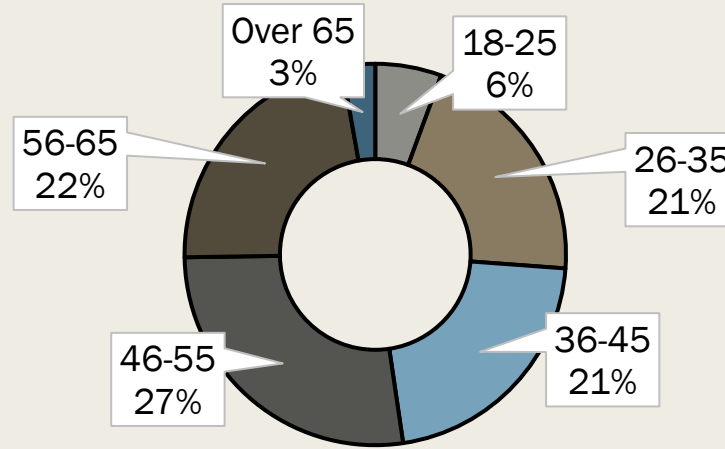


Overdose Deaths Descriptives

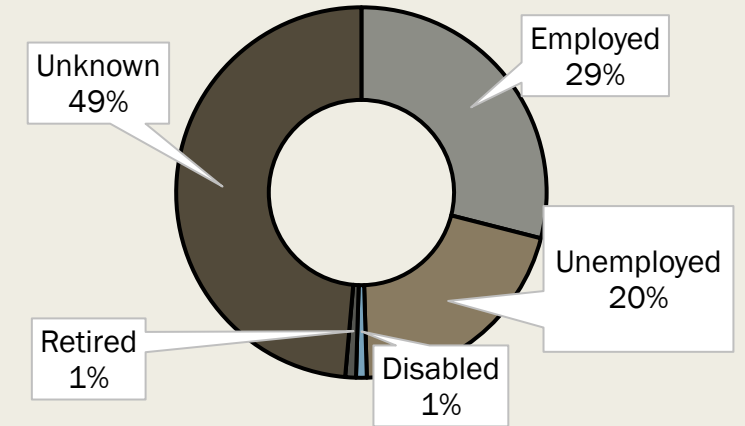
Gender



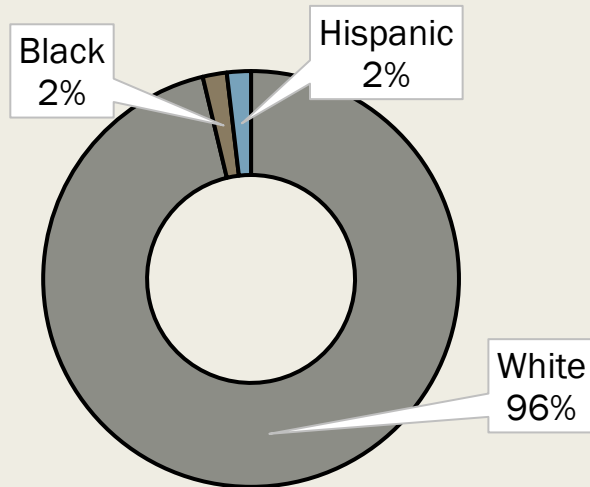
Age



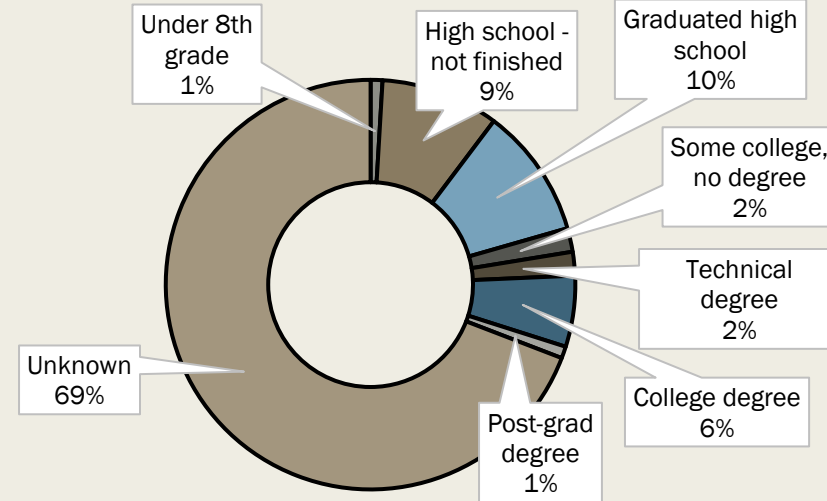
Employment



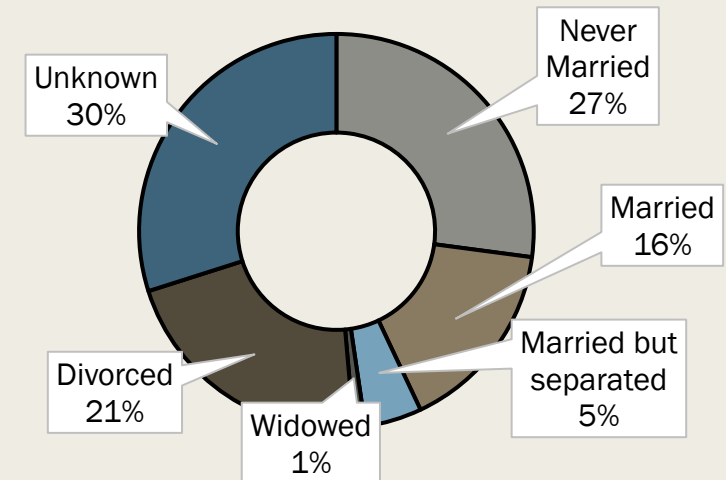
Race



Education



Marital Status



Overdose death (intentional or accidental)

OD Death	2018	2019	2020	Total
Alpena	0	1	3	4
Clare	10	8	11	29
Crawford	0	2	1	3
Lake	0	1	2	3
Mecosta	5	2	4	11
Montcalm	7	2	7	16
Newaygo	2	1	4	7
Oceana	0	3	4	7
Otsego	0	0	3	3
Wexford	4	9	11	24
Total	28	29	50	107

Possible Action Items

Consider the continued cost increase to the M.E. Department Budget

- Toxicology for all, Grant subsidizing for this
- Quality without breaking the bank
 - New Tools for on-scene immediate analysis
 - Beneficial to Law Enforcement



WHERE ARE WE TRENDING NOW?

_____ is the New Gold

Data is the New Gold!

- Consider easy to use electronic death databases
- Automatically Increases MI Law Compliance
- Data when and where you need it
- It's the Right Thing to Do !

Ensure the county is

Compliant with the MI Donation Law

COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS (EXCERPT)

Act 181 of 1953

52.209 Body determined suitable for donation; agreement; release of information; conduct of examination within certain time period; section to be known as "Kyle Ray Horning's law."

Sec. 9.

(1) If a county medical examiner, upon viewing the body, determines that the body, may be suitable for donation or for the donation of body parts, the county medical examiner, in a timely manner as prescribed under subsection (2), contact Michigan's federally designated organ procurement organization or its successor organization as defined in section 10102 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.10102.



MEDICAL EXAMINER SERVICES



www.MedicalExaminerGroup.com

231-510-6205

main@mmmeg.org

Lisa Kaspriak, Administrator
Presenter

DR. PAUL WAGNER, D.O.
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

MECOSTA *SINCE* 1995

LAKE *SINCE* 1996

CLARE *SINCE* 2014

WEXFORD *SINCE* 2017

MONTCALM *SINCE* 2017

NEWAYGO *SINCE* 2018

OCEANA *SINCE* 2019

OTSEGO *SINCE* 2019

CRAWFORD *SINCE* 2019

ALPENA *SINCE* 2020

MONTMORENCY *SINCE* 2020

OSCODA *SINCE* 2021