



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

## Douglas County Coroner's Office

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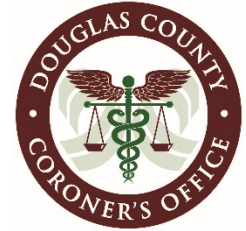
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## Duties of the Coroner

The Coroner's Office is a statutory office, mandated by the Colorado Constitution and Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 30-10-601 through 621. Under these statutes, the Coroner's primary role is to make proper inquiry regarding the cause and manner of death of any person who dies under the jurisdiction of the office.



Types of deaths that are reported to the Coroner:

- No physician in attendance.
- The attending physician is unable or unwilling to certify the cause of death.
- The attending physician has not been in actual attendance within the past 100 days prior to death.
- All cases in which trauma may be associated with the death, such as traffic accidents, gunshots, falls, etc. This includes inpatients who have sustained fractures any time in the past.
- Deaths by poisoning, suspected poisoning, chemical or bacteria, industrial hazardous material, or radiation.
- All industrial accidents.
- Known or suspected suicides.
- Deaths due to self-induced or unexplained abortion.
- Operating room deaths and deaths that occur during a medical procedure.
- All unexplained deaths (deaths that occur in healthy individuals).
- Deaths that occur within 24 hours of admission to a hospital or nursing care facility.
- Deaths in the custody of law enforcement.
- Deaths of persons in the care of a public institution.

Deaths meeting the above criteria are investigated by the Coroner's Office, with jurisdiction that may or may not be assumed in individual cases with pathology reviews performed as determined necessary by the Coroner. Per statute, autopsies must be performed by a Forensic Pathologist (CRS 30-10-606.5). The result of the investigation determines final cause and manner of death.

The cause of death is defined as the disease or injury that resulted in the death of an individual. The manner of death is ruled as Natural, Accident, Homicide, Suicide, or Undetermined. Undetermined Manner of Death includes deaths in which the manner could not clearly be determined, as in some drug overdoses where there is no clear evidence as to whether the event occurred with intent or accidentally. Undetermined is also used for Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS), and in other cases, such as found skeletal remains, where no other clear manner of death can be determined.

In addition, associated responsibilities of the Coroner's Office include but are not limited to:

- Legal pronouncement of death
- Legal identification of the deceased
- Take custody of the body and personal belongings
- Legal identification and notification of Next of Kin
- Issuance of death certificates
- Helping families understand the actions of the Coroner's Office, and through the grieving process

The Douglas County Coroner's Office operates 24/7/365 serving the citizens of Douglas County!

## Mission Statement

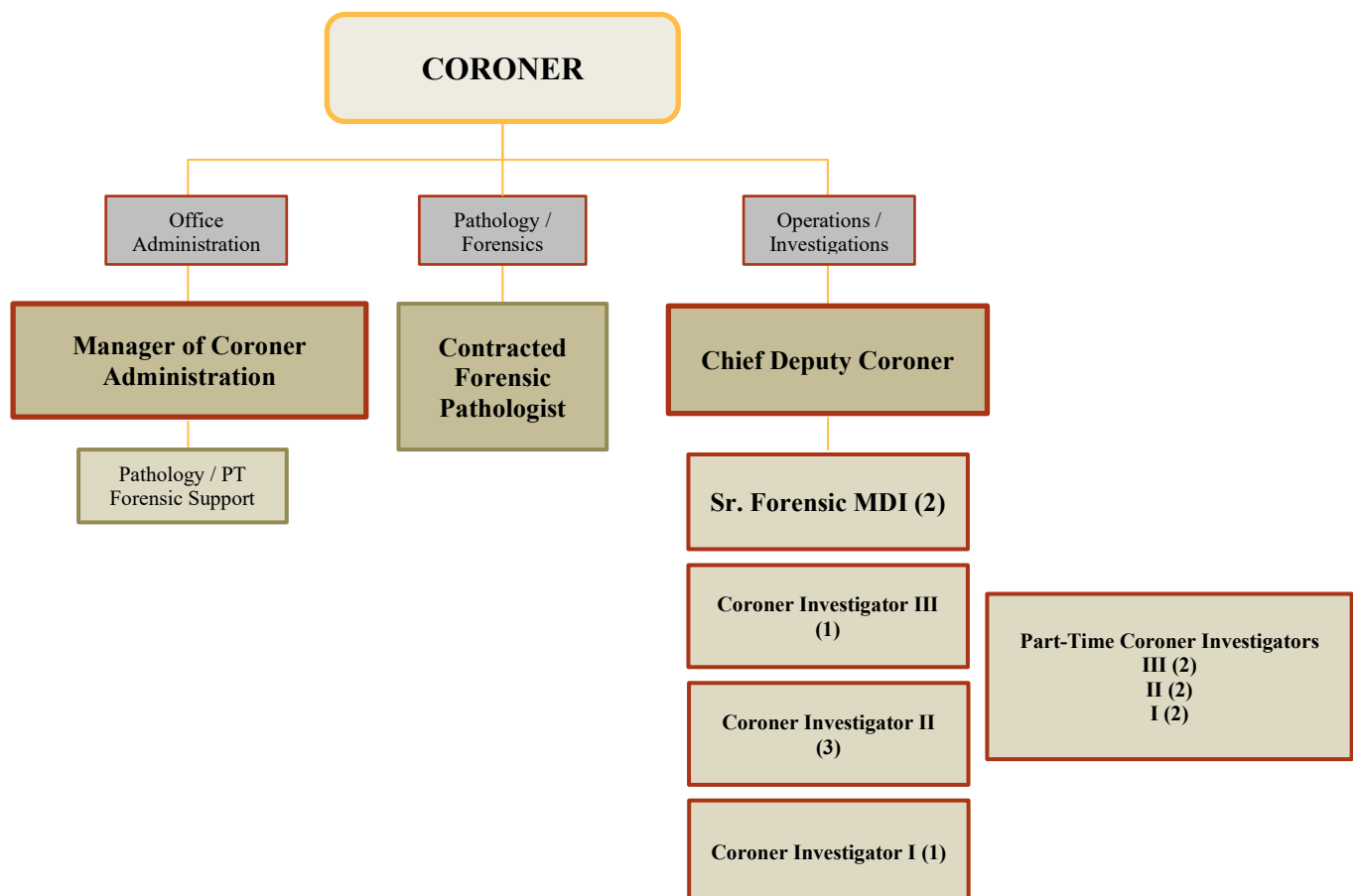
### MISSION STATEMENT

*As an impartial, independent agency, our mission is to serve the public by providing the citizens of Douglas County, medical professionals, and members of the justice system with accurate, scientific, and unbiased medical based determination of cause and manner of death, as well as associated responsibilities. To this end, we strive for nothing less than excellence in practice, integrity, compassion, and continuous advancement in the field.*

### CORE VALUES

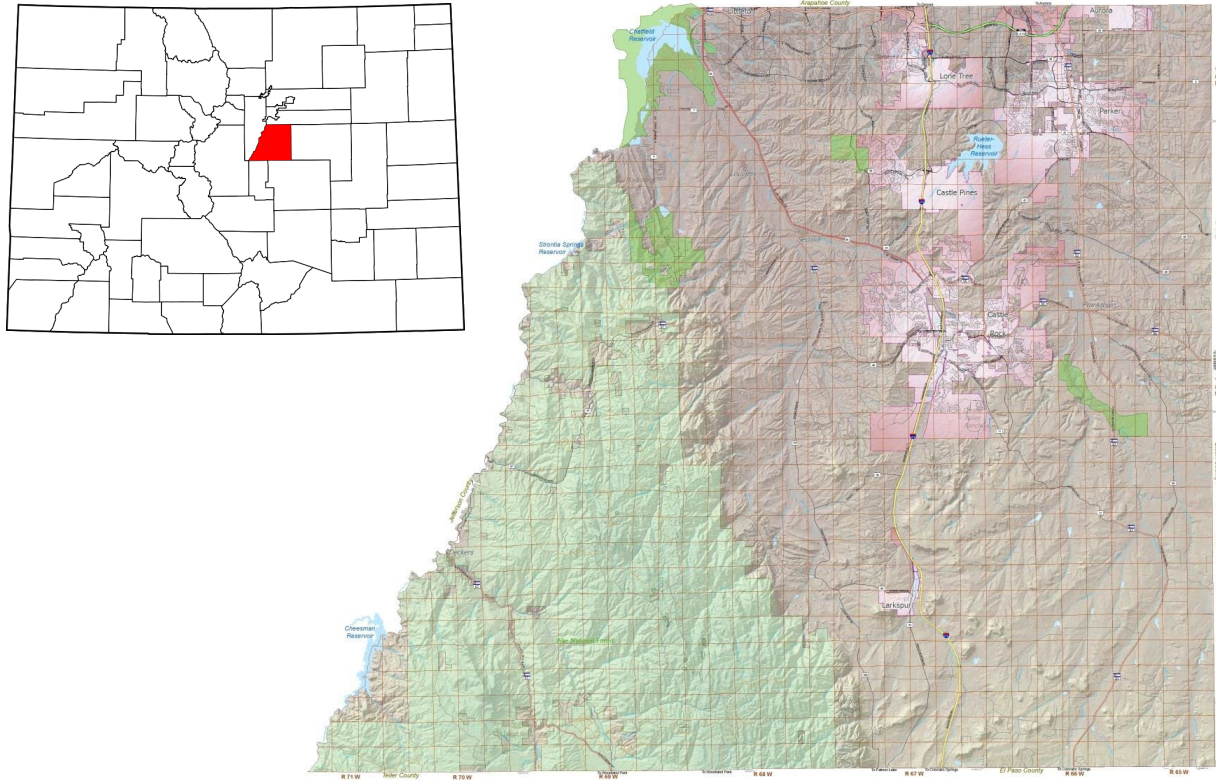
**SERVICE • COMPASSION • EXCELLENCE  
CARE • PROFESSIONALISM • DIGNITY • INTEGRITY • RESPECT**

## DCCO Organizational Chart



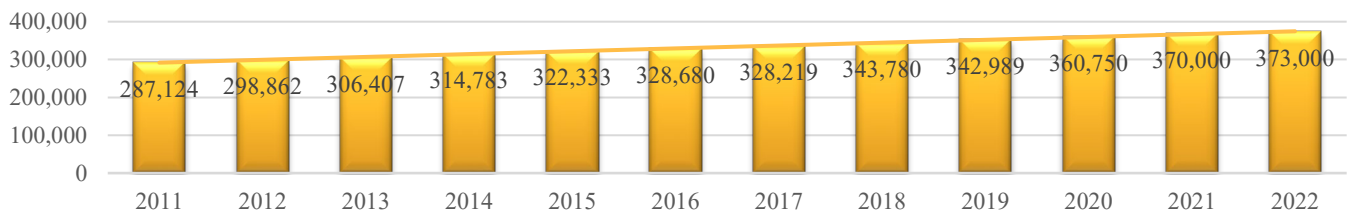
## Jurisdictional Boundaries

The jurisdictional boundaries of the Coroner's Office lie within the boundaries of Douglas County. Douglas County lies virtually in the geographic center of Colorado and is approximately 844 square miles in size. It's located between Colorado's two largest cities, Denver and Colorado Springs, and offers a wide array of urban and rural regions. Incorporated municipalities include Aurora, Castle Pines, Castle Rock (County seat), Larkspur, Littleton, Lone Tree, and Parker. Elevations range from 5,400 feet in the northeast to 9,836 feet at Thunder Butte in Pike National Forrest.



## Population of Douglas County

### Douglas County Population Estimates\*



\*2010-2015 Source CO State Demography Office. 2016-2022 Source Douglas County Community Development

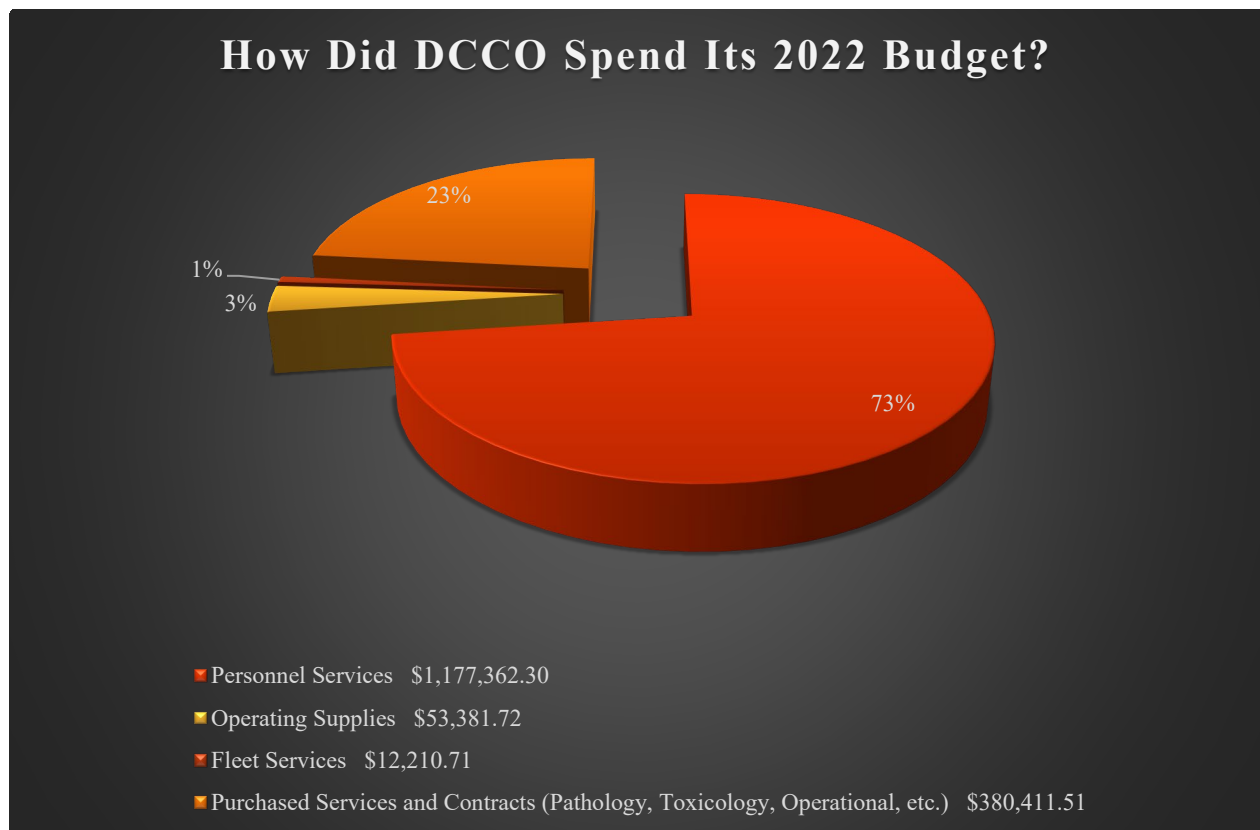
## Budget

### Funding

Funding for the Coroner's Office originates from the Douglas County general fund. In 2022, the county manager and commissioners approved a projected budget of \$1,621,268.00 for DCCO. This number represented a little over 1% of the total 2022 General Fund, which was \$14.4 million.

### Expenditures

Total expenditures for the year were \$1,623,366.20.



### Revenues

Occasionally, the office receives revenue for various operational and administrative functions. For example, in 2022 DCCO received funds for a suicide prevention grant issued by the state of Colorado in the amount of \$4250.

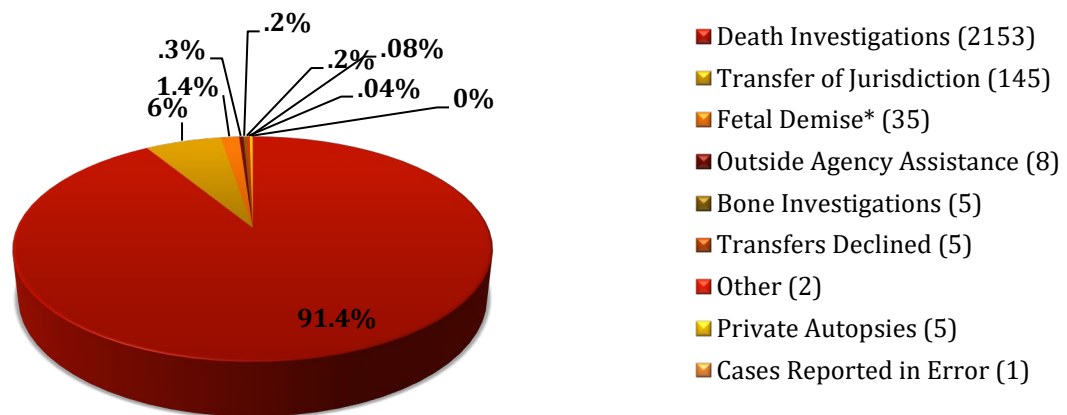
## Overall Case Load

The overall total caseload for 2022 was 2359, which included Death Investigations (2153), Fetal Demises (35), Bone Investigations (5), Outside Agency Assistance (8), Transfers of Jurisdiction (145), Transfer Declines (5), Unreported Cases (0), Other (2), Private Autopsies (5), and Cases Reported in Error (1).



\*Adjusted to DCCO caseload only

## 2022 Total Caseload Breakdown (Total: 2359)



\*A fetal demise is defined as "death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of human conception, occurring after the twentieth week of pregnancy, and does not include "induced termination of pregnancy" as defined by CRS §25-2-102.



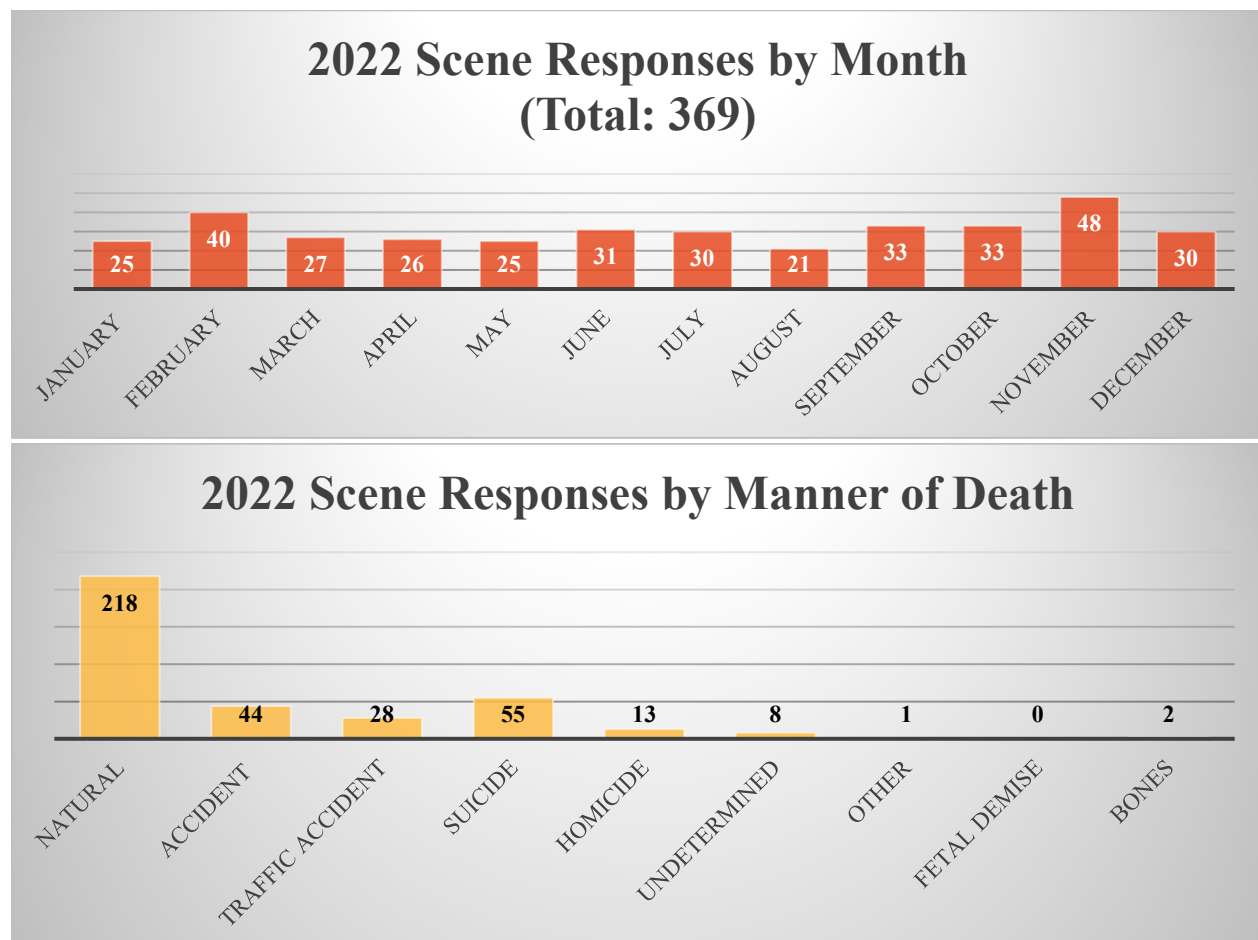
**2016 - 2022 Comparison**

|                           | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Overall Caseload</b>   | 1526 | 1373 | 1442 | 1634 | 2066 | 2303 | 2158 |
| Death Investigations      | 1252 | 1215 | 1308 | 1496 | 1841 | 2065 | 2153 |
| Fetal Demises             | 36   | 27   | 30   | 35   | 35   | 25   | 35   |
| Bone Investigations       | 4    | 4    | 2    | 3    | 11   | 3    | 5    |
| Outside Agency Assistance | 7    | 12   | 9    | 10   | 15   | 30   | 8    |
| Transfer of Jurisdiction  | 100  | 105  | 90   | 84   | 143  | 156  | 145  |
| Private Autopsy           | 125  | 7    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 5    |
| Transfers Declined        | 0    | 0    | 0    | 3    | 7    | 8    | 5    |
| Other**                   | 2    | 2    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 3    | 2    |

## Scene Responses

The Douglas County Coroner's Office responded to 369 death scenes which accounted for **17%** of all the jurisdictional deaths reported to the Coroner's Office in 2022. A scene response is typically made at the request of a Law Enforcement Agency however, the Coroner's Office also responds to calls at hospitals and care centers at their discretion, based on the circumstances reported surrounding the death. When Law Enforcement is involved in a scene investigation, the Law Enforcement Agency has jurisdiction of the scene, while the Coroner's Office has jurisdiction over the body and items directly relating to the death. A collaborative approach is used in these investigations to aid the Coroner's Office in determining the cause and manner of death, and the Law Enforcement Agency in determining if a crime has occurred.

After a scene investigation, the Medicolegal Death Investigator decides whether to transport the body to the Coroner's Office for further examination/investigation, or to release the body directly from the scene to a mortuary of the next-of-kin's choosing. The Coroner's Office may also transport a body to the office as a courtesy hold for the next-of-kin, while a mortuary selection is being made.

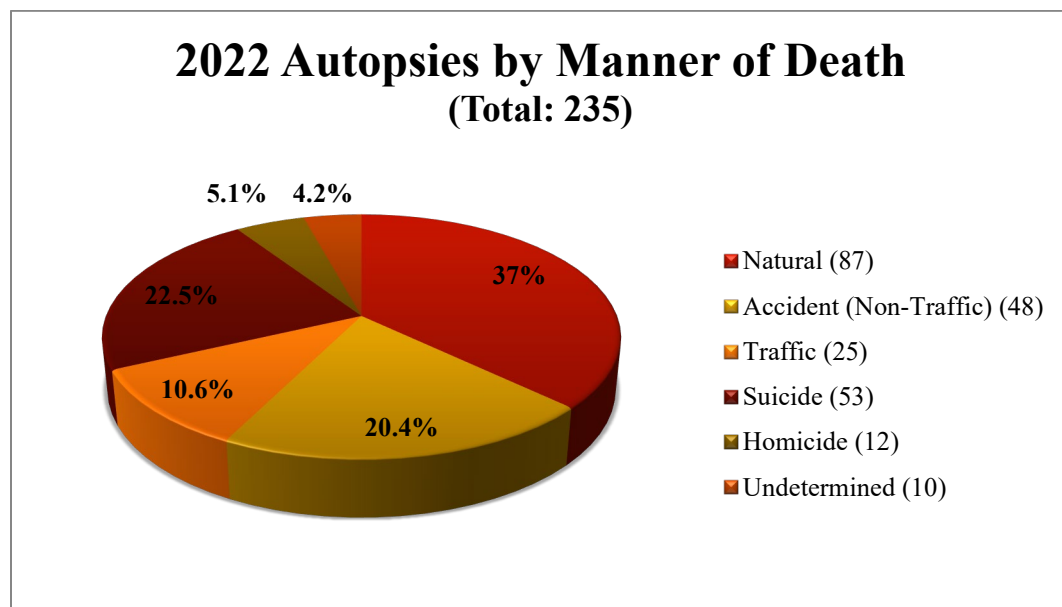
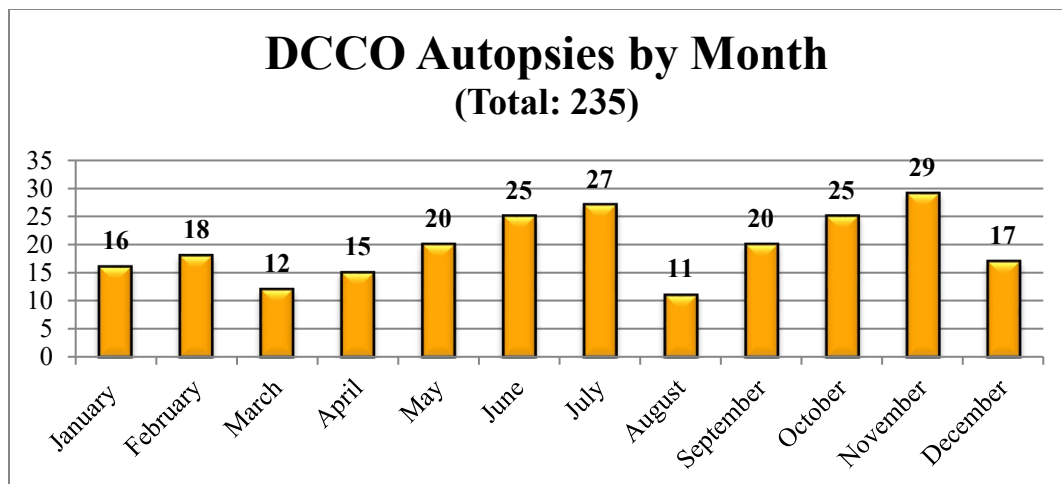


Of the 369 scene responses, 259 decedents were transported to the Coroner's Office, all 259 were transported by DCCO investigators.

## Autopsies

Of the 2158 cases the Douglas County Coroner's Office retained jurisdiction in 2022, 235 or **10.8%** of the cases required an autopsy to aid in the determination of the cause and manner of death. In most cases where an autopsy was performed, toxicology and/or histology studies were also performed. Toxicology testing screens for alcohol, illicit drugs, prescription medications, and other substances, while histology testing allows the board-certified forensic pathologist to study tissues on a microscopic level.

Autopsies are performed in deaths where there is a lack of an established medical history, most suicides, most traffic incidents, and deaths where there is possible criminal action. An autopsy may not be performed in the instance where an individual was hospitalized, and the medical record thoroughly documented injuries sustained.





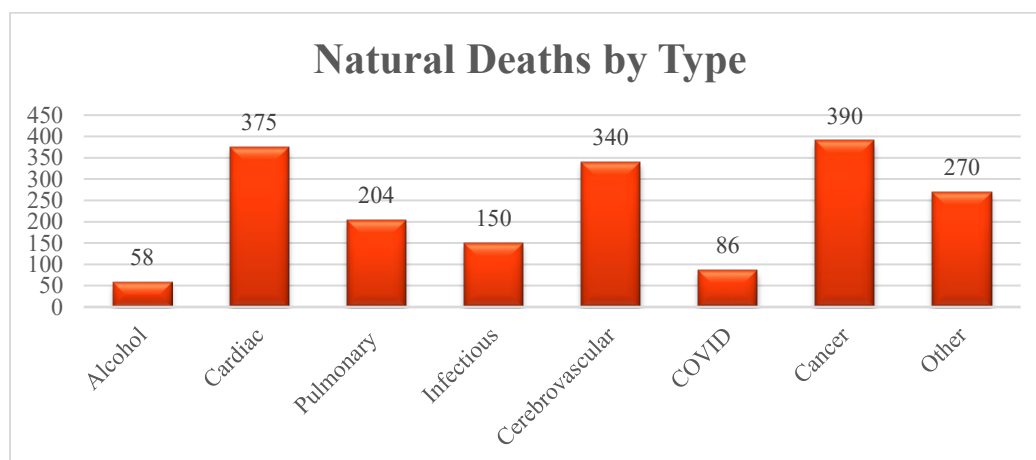
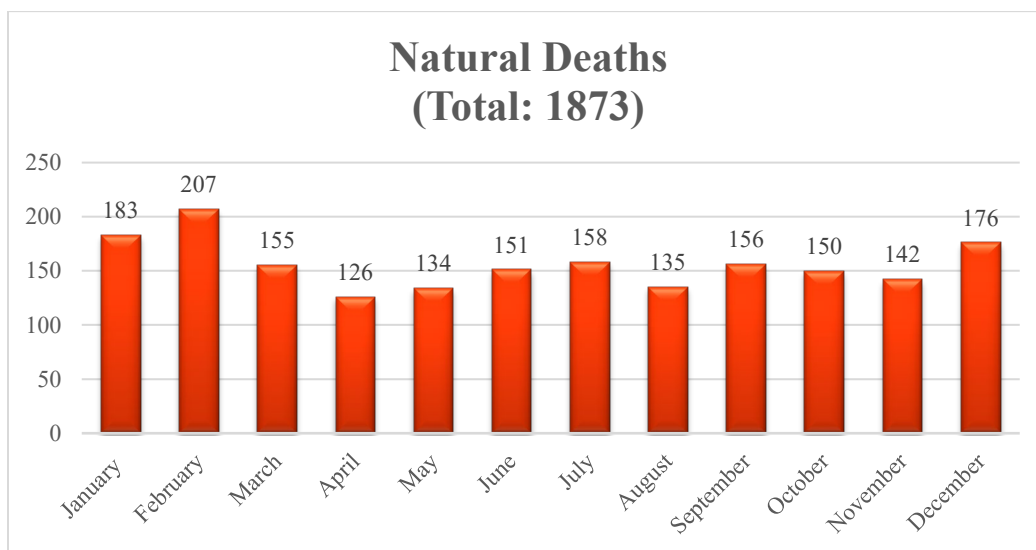
# Statistics by Manner of Death

## Natural Deaths

Natural deaths are classified as deaths occurring due to a natural disease and/or aging process. For statistical purposes, the natural deaths reported to the Douglas County Coroner's Office are broken down into deaths due to cardiac disease (i.e. cardiomyopathy or atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease), pulmonary disease (i.e. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), infectious disease (i.e. pneumonia or sepsis), cerebrovascular disease (i.e. dementia or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), cancer, or other disease (i.e. renal failure or complications of diabetes).

In many instances when a natural death is reported, jurisdiction of the case is released back to the decedent's physician who will issue the death certificate. Most deaths reported to the Coroner's Office are deaths due to natural causes.

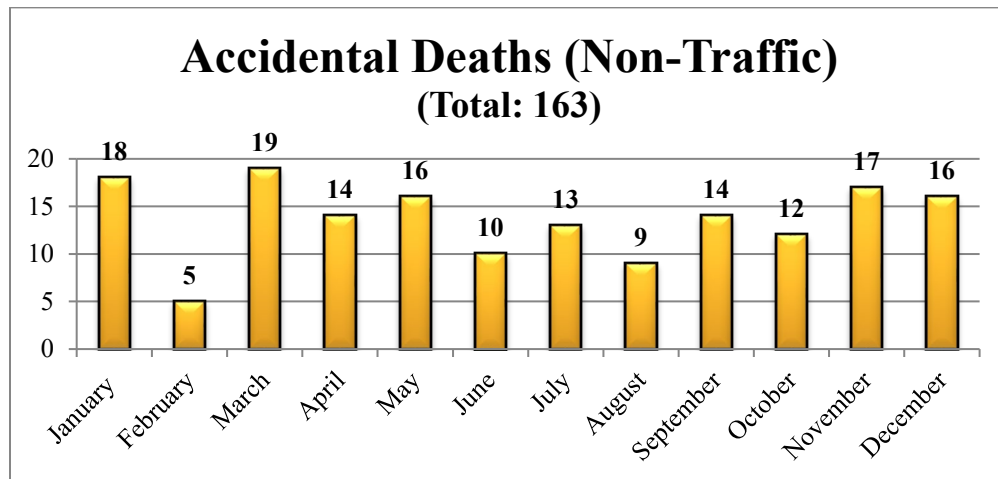
Natural deaths accounted for **79.4%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.



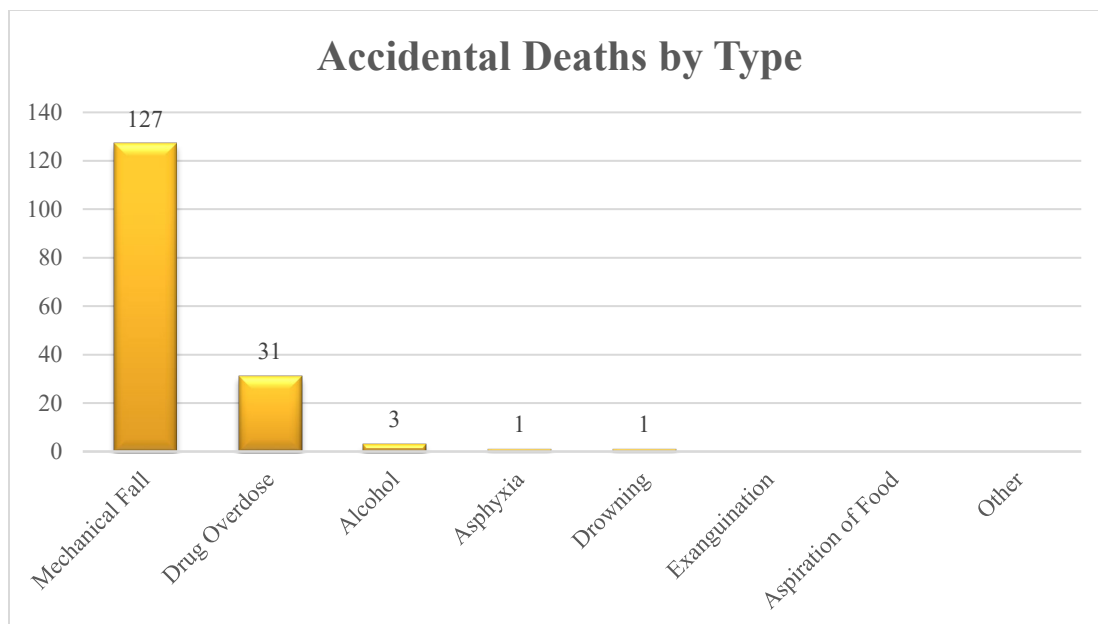
## Accidental Deaths

Accidental deaths are deaths that result from injury or poisoning that occurred without the intent for harm or to cause death.

Non-traffic accidental deaths accounted for **7.5%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.

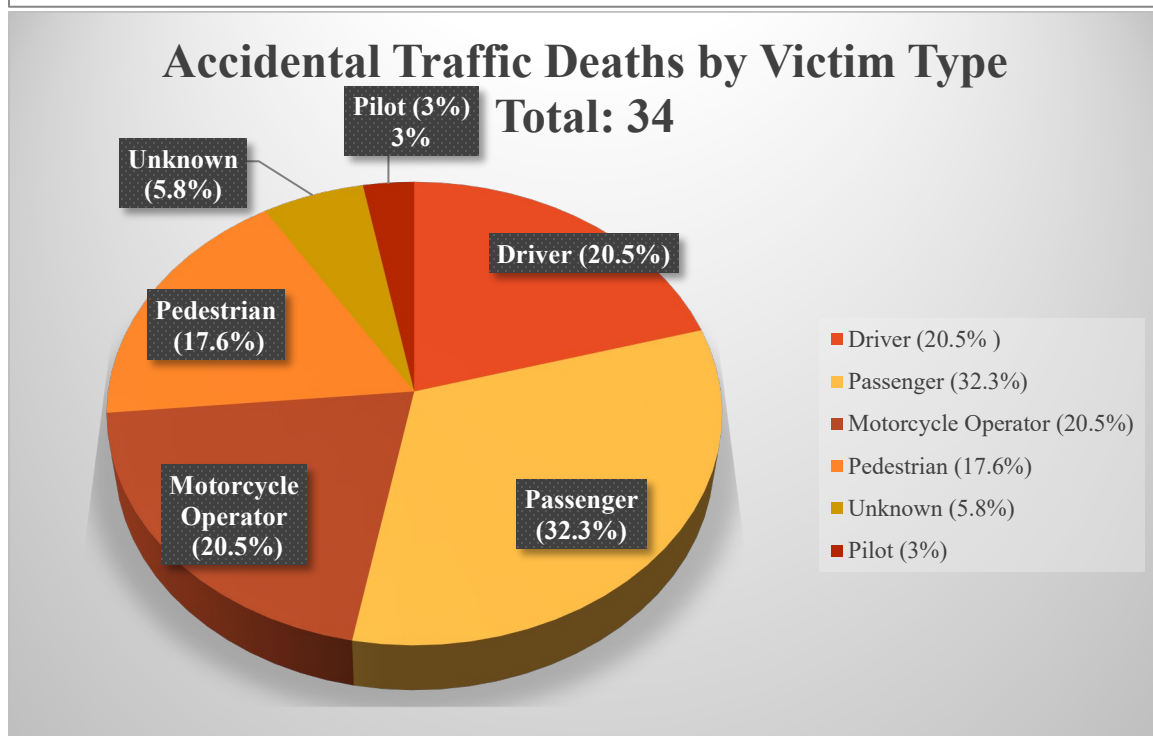
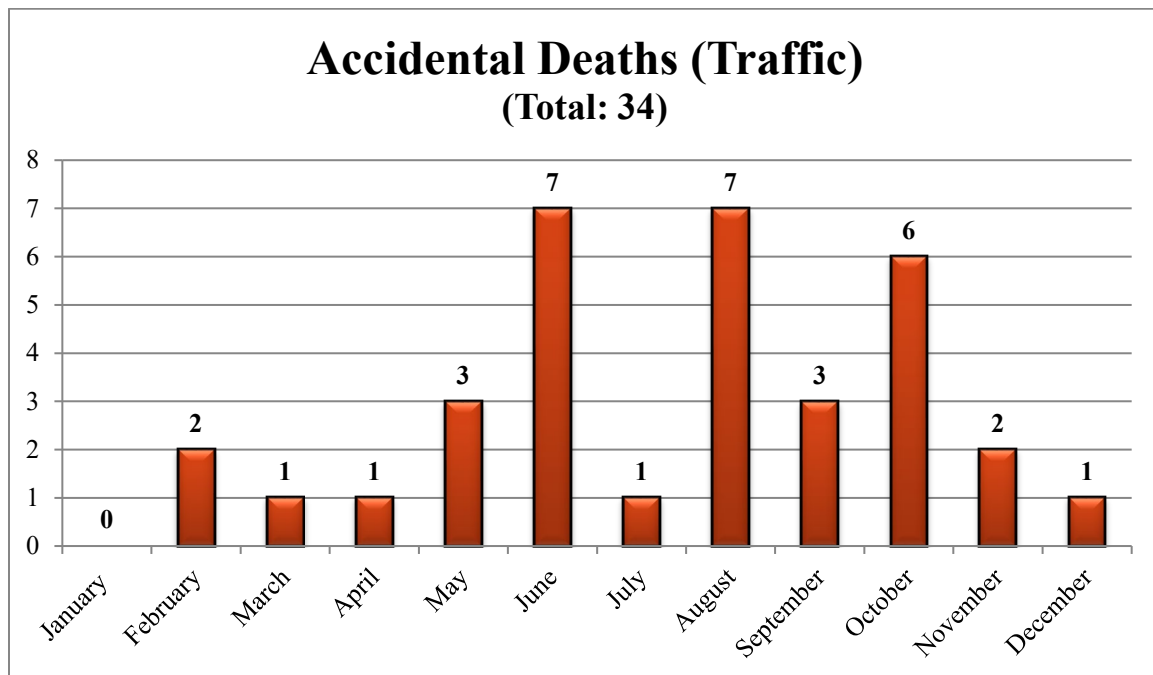


Of the non-traffic related accidental deaths reported to the Douglas County Coroner's Office, most of the deaths were related to complications of a mechanical fall, typically a fracture or head injury, or an unintentional drug overdose.



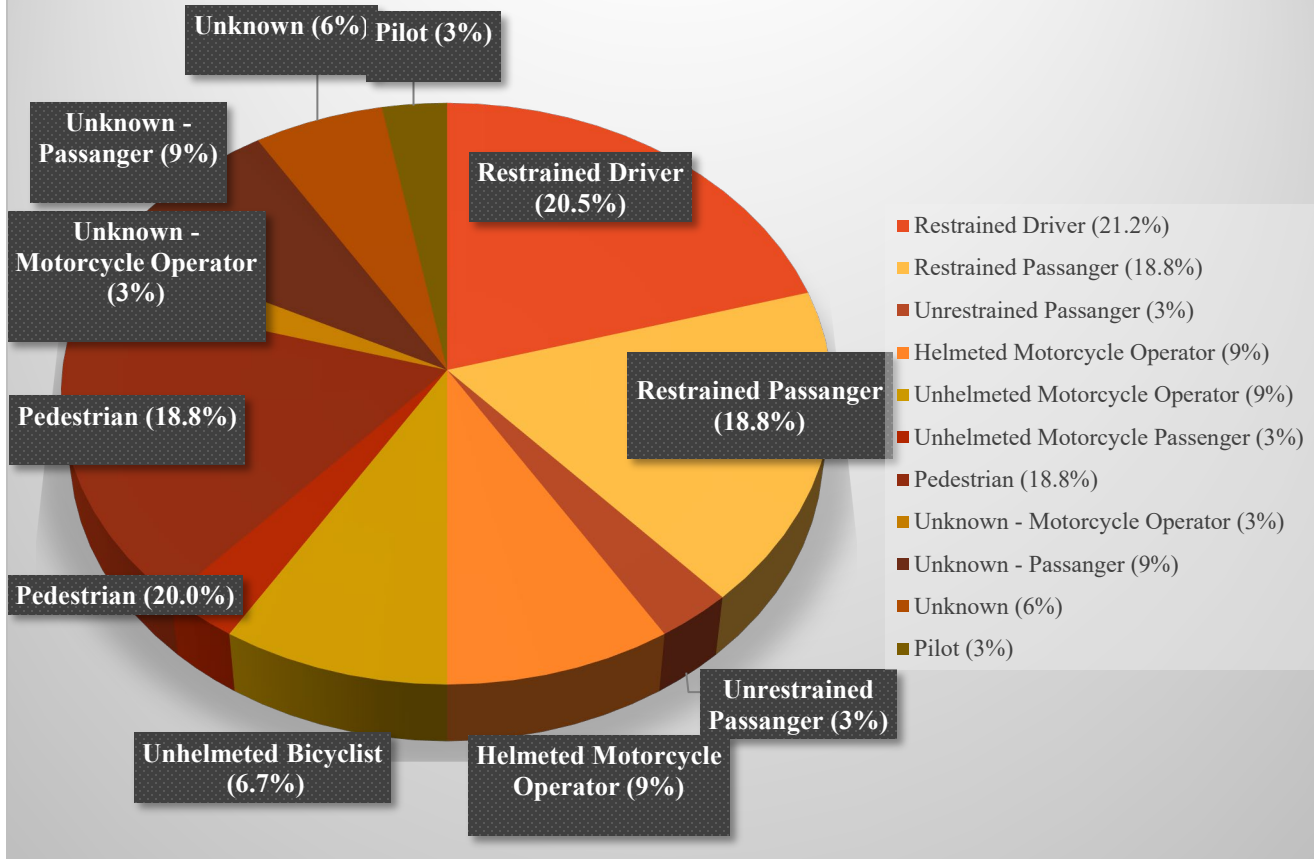
Traffic related accidental deaths include deaths in which the deceased was an occupant of a motor vehicle, motorcycle, tractor, bicycle, or a pedestrian involved in a motor vehicle-pedestrian incident.

Traffic related accidental deaths accounted for **1.4%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.

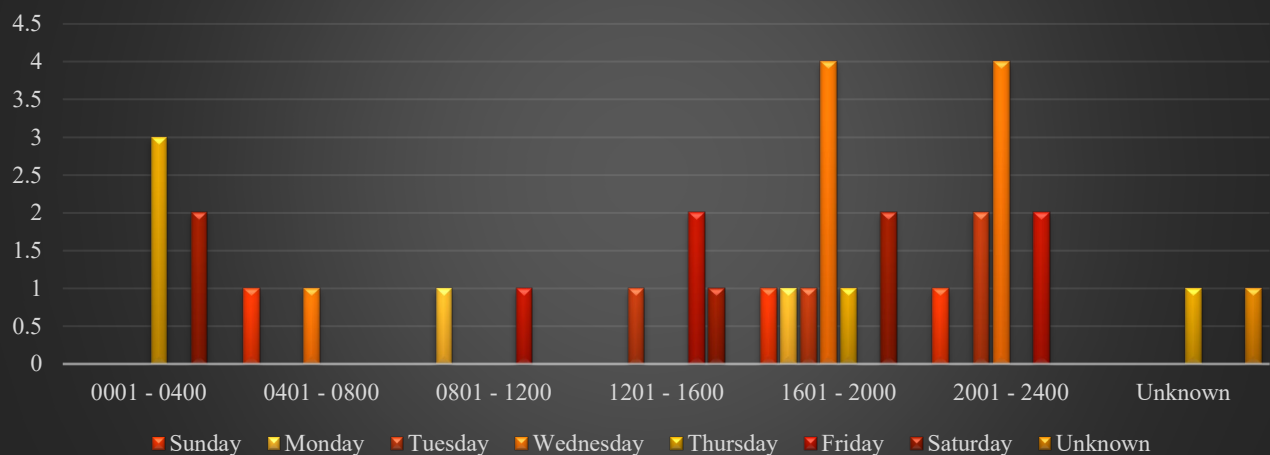




## Safety Equipment in Accidental Traffic Deaths Total:34



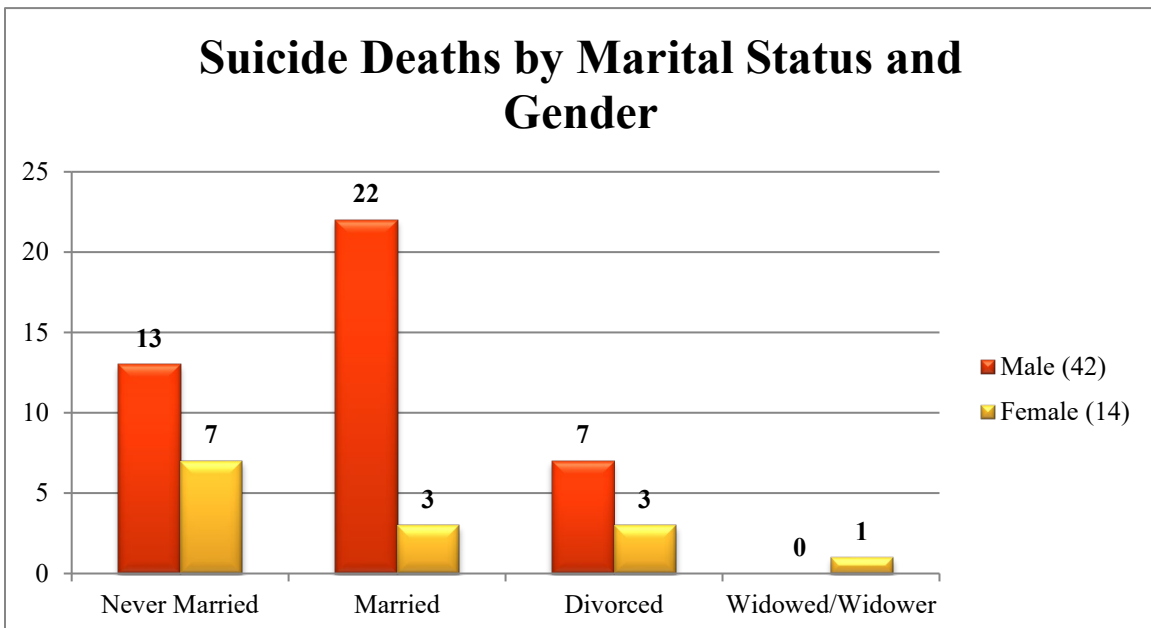
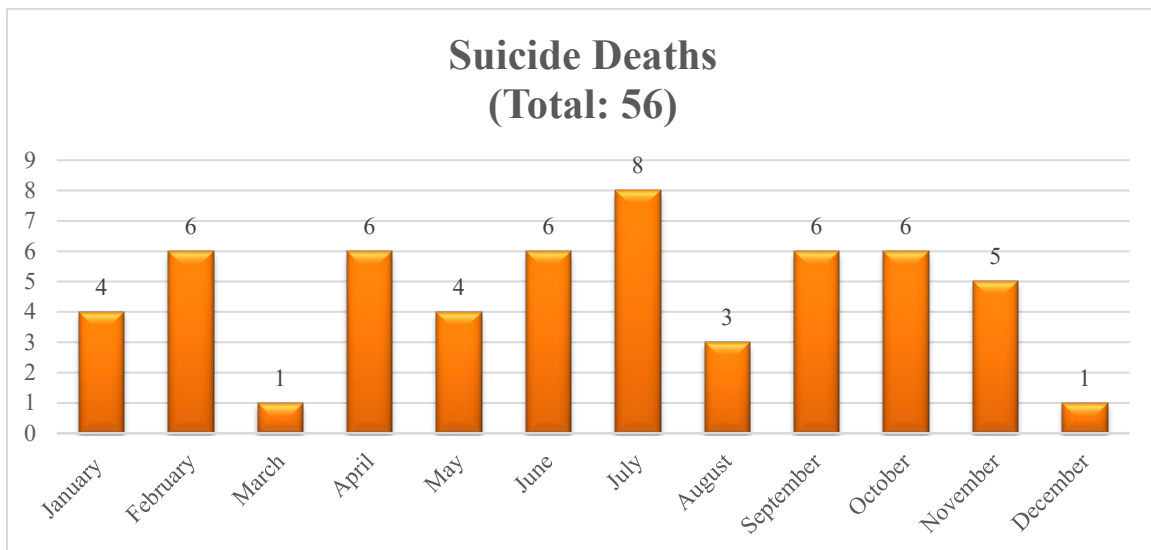
## Accidental Traffic Deaths by Day of Week and Time of Day Total: 34



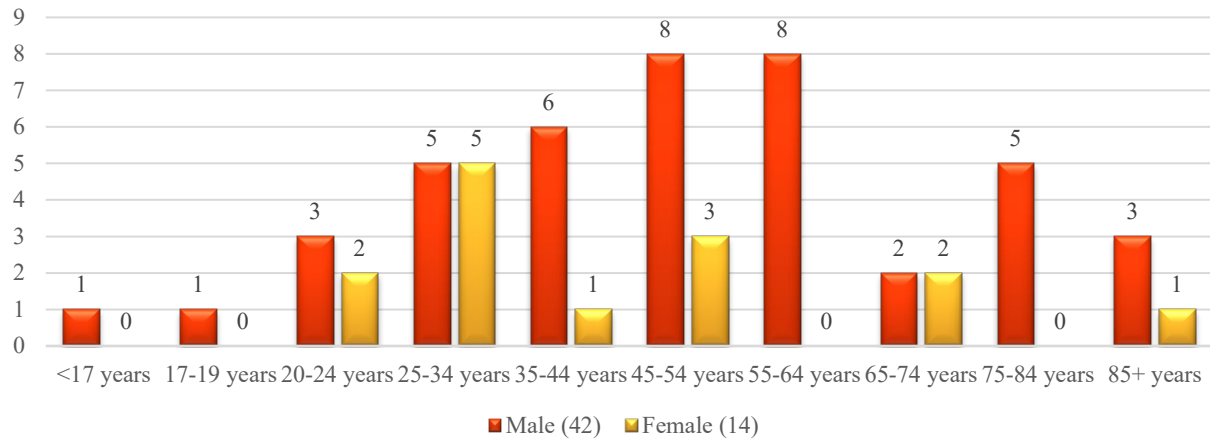
## Suicide Deaths

Deaths that are classified as suicide are those that occurred as a result of self-inflicted injury. In 2022, **75%** of the deaths were those of males, which is consistent with nationwide figures. The most common method of suicide in 2022 was firearm related (**46.4%**) followed by asphyxiation, most commonly due to hanging (**32.1%**).

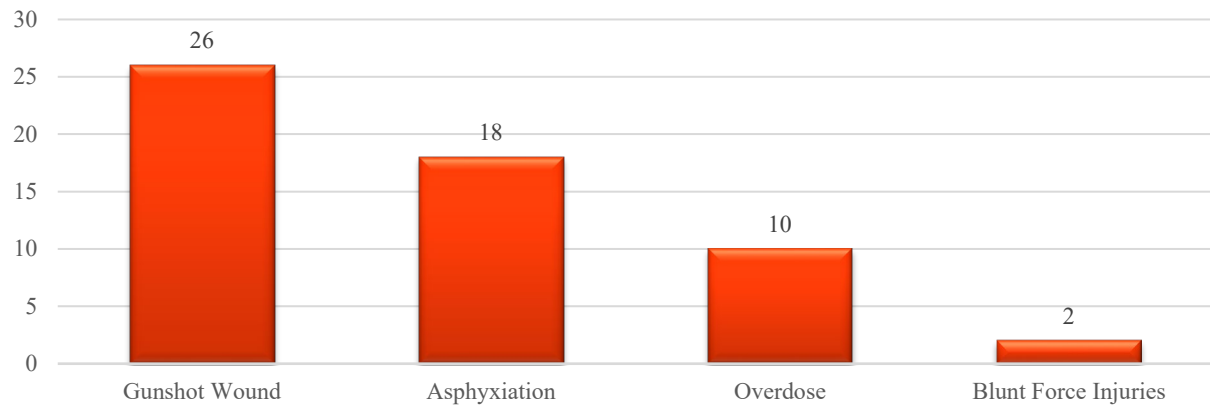
Suicide deaths accounted for **2.4%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.



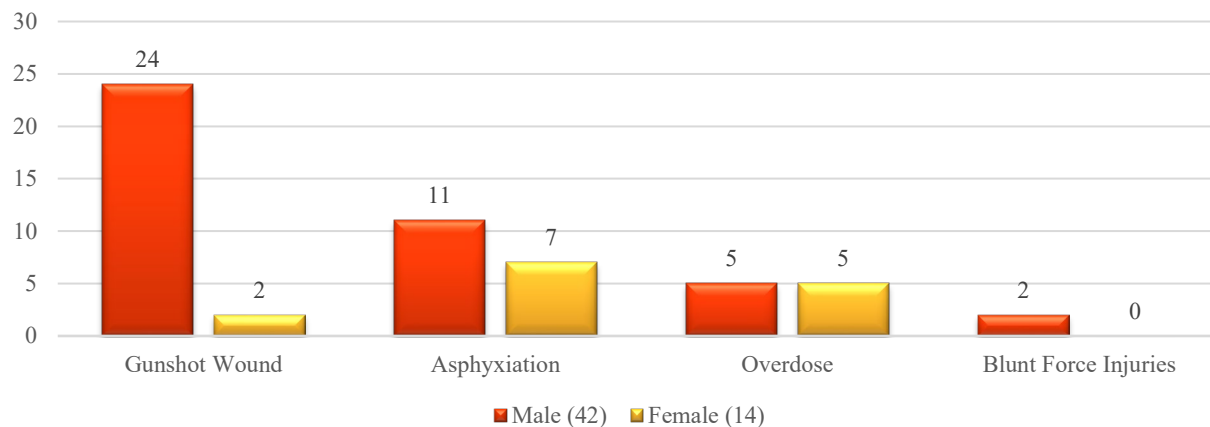
### Suicide Deaths by Age and Gender



### Suicide Deaths by Method



### Suicide Deaths by Method and Gender





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## Homicide Deaths

Homicide deaths are those deaths occurring as a result of the acts of another person or “death at the hand of another.” For purposes of classifying the manner of death as a homicide, there is no implied criminal intent.

Homicide deaths accounted for **0.5%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.

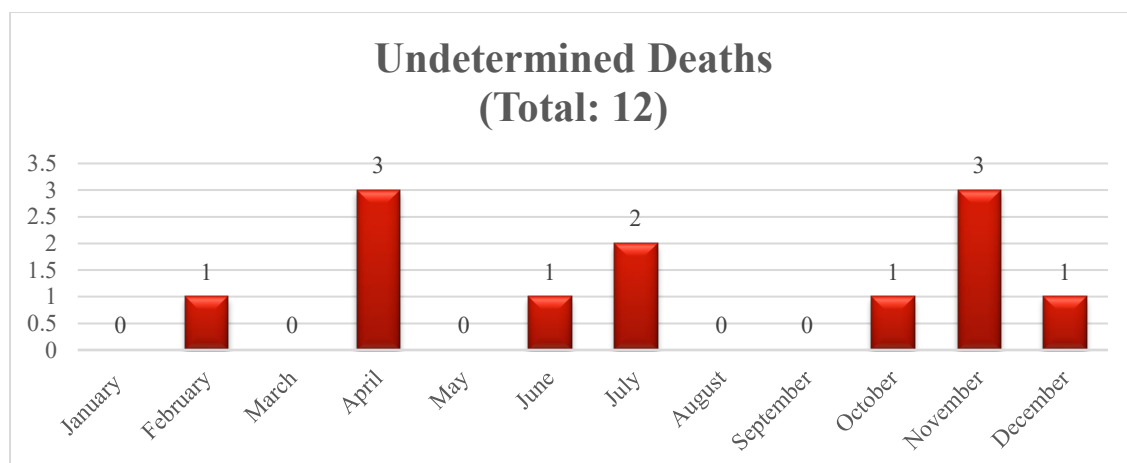


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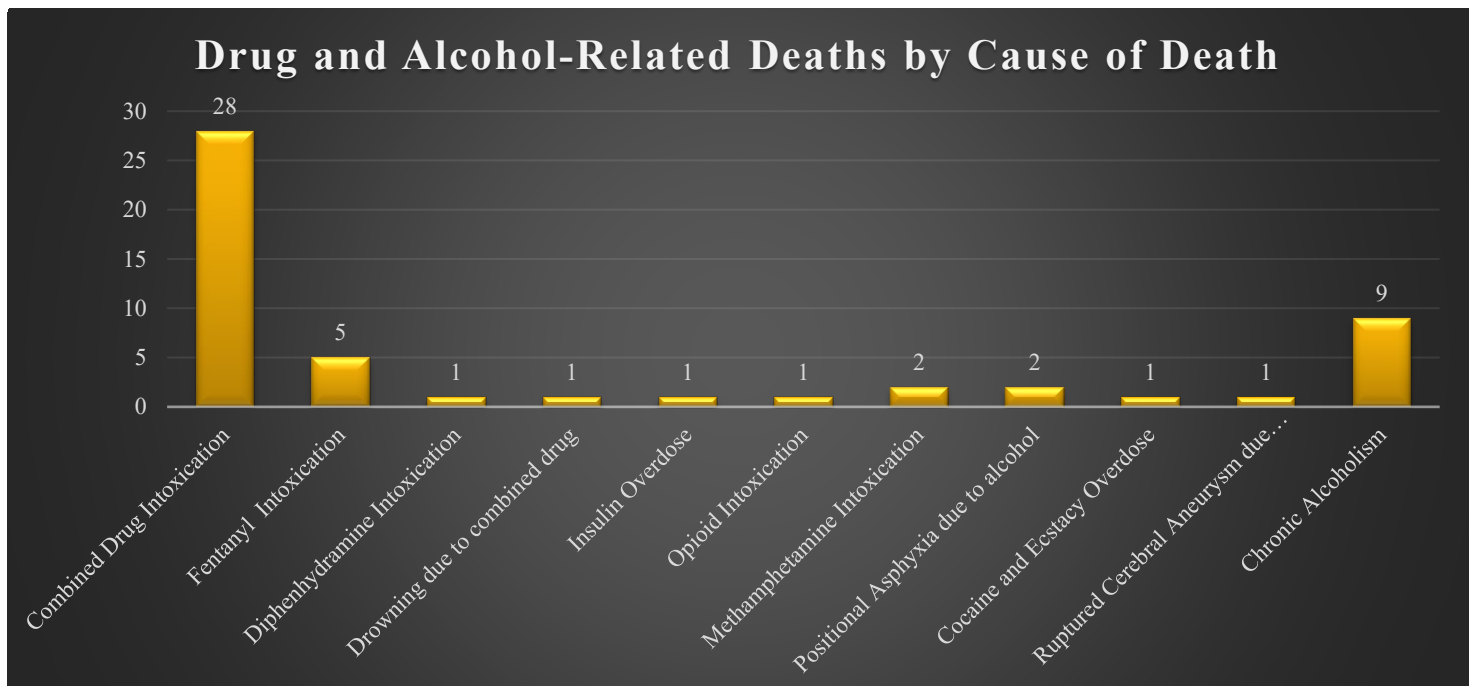
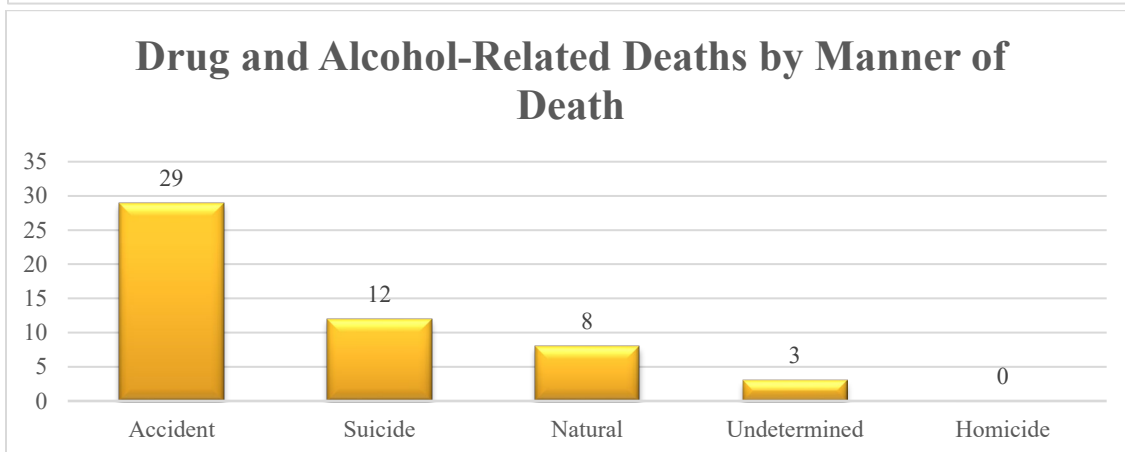
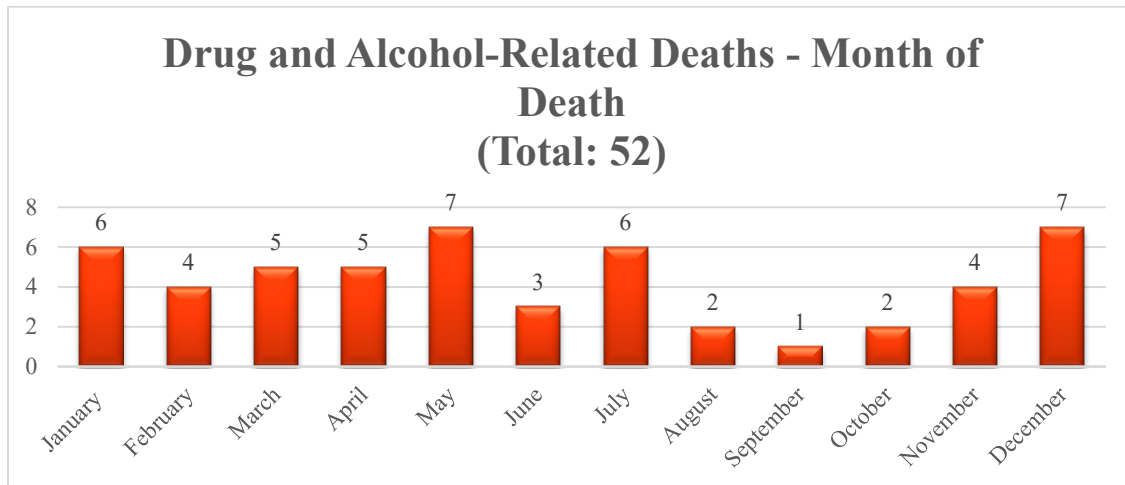
## Undetermined Deaths

Deaths that are classified as undetermined are those deaths in which, after a thorough investigation and consideration of all information available, one manner of death is no more compelling than another manner of death. There are some instances where the cause of death is apparent; however, the circumstances leading up to the cause of death are unable to be determined based on the evidence.

Undetermined deaths accounted for **0.5%** of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.



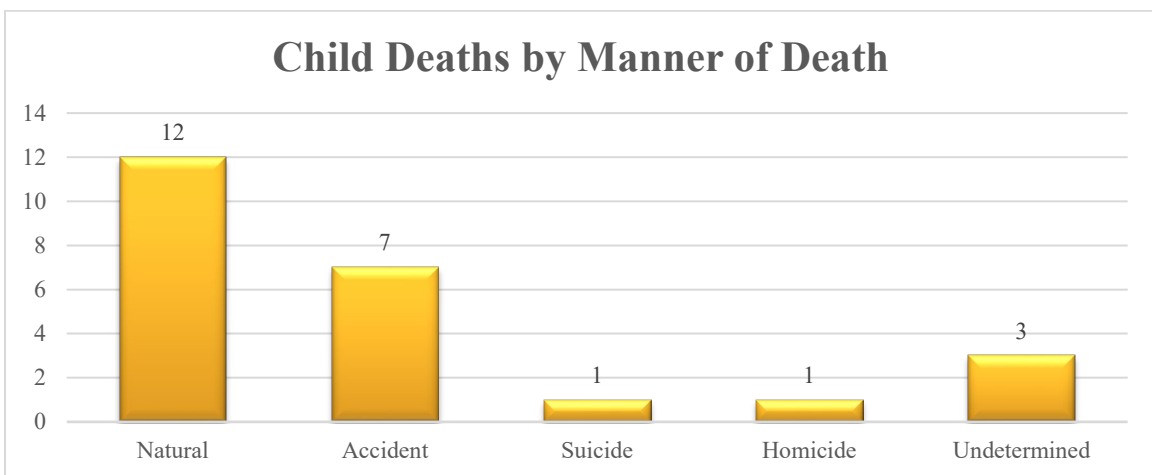
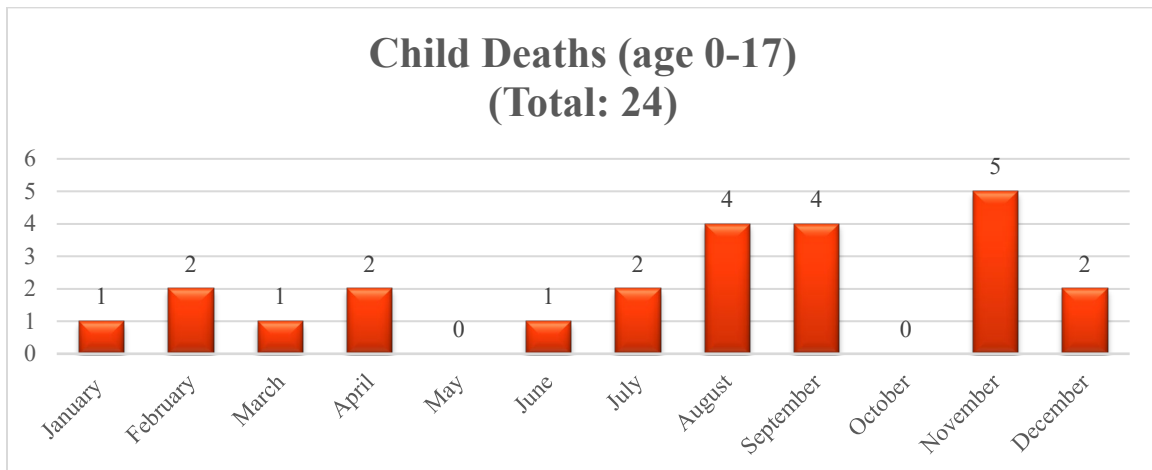
## Drug Related Deaths



## Child Deaths

Child deaths calculated below are deaths of individuals under the age of 18 years-old.

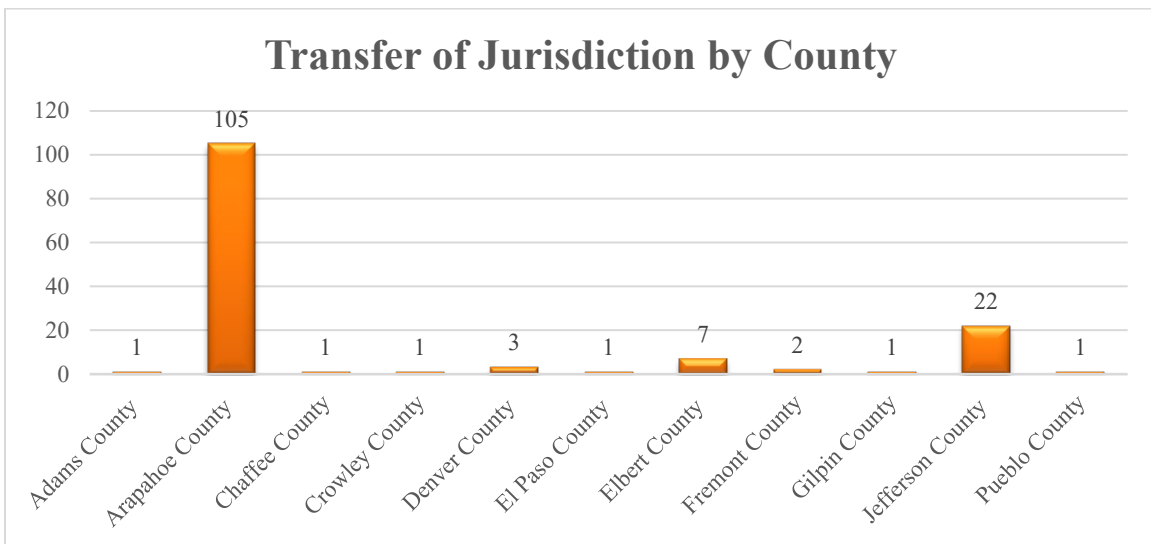
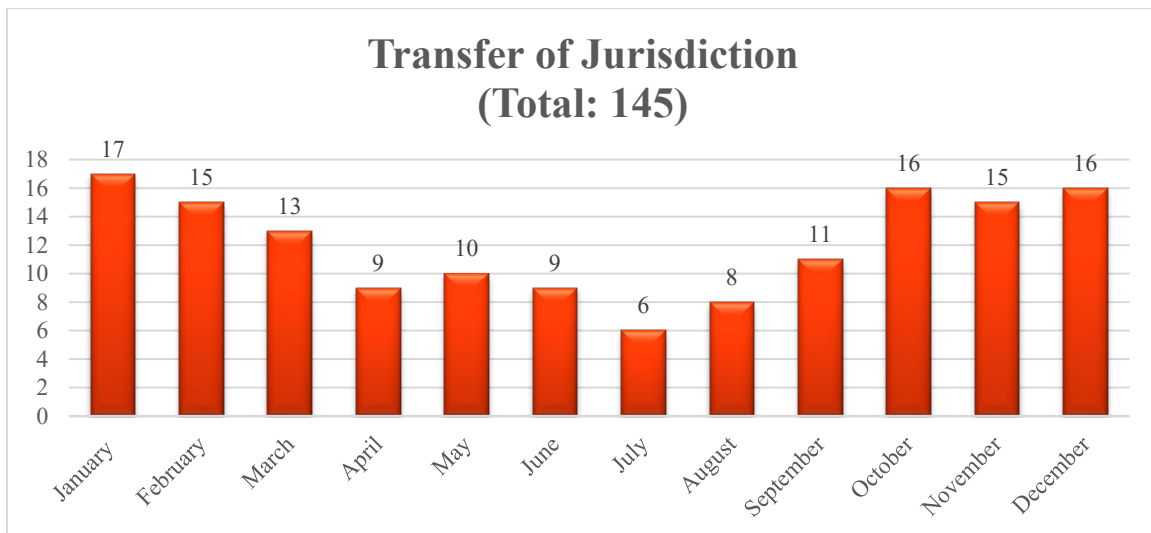
Child deaths totaling 24 accounted for 1% of the total DCCO caseload for 2022.





## Transfer of Jurisdiction

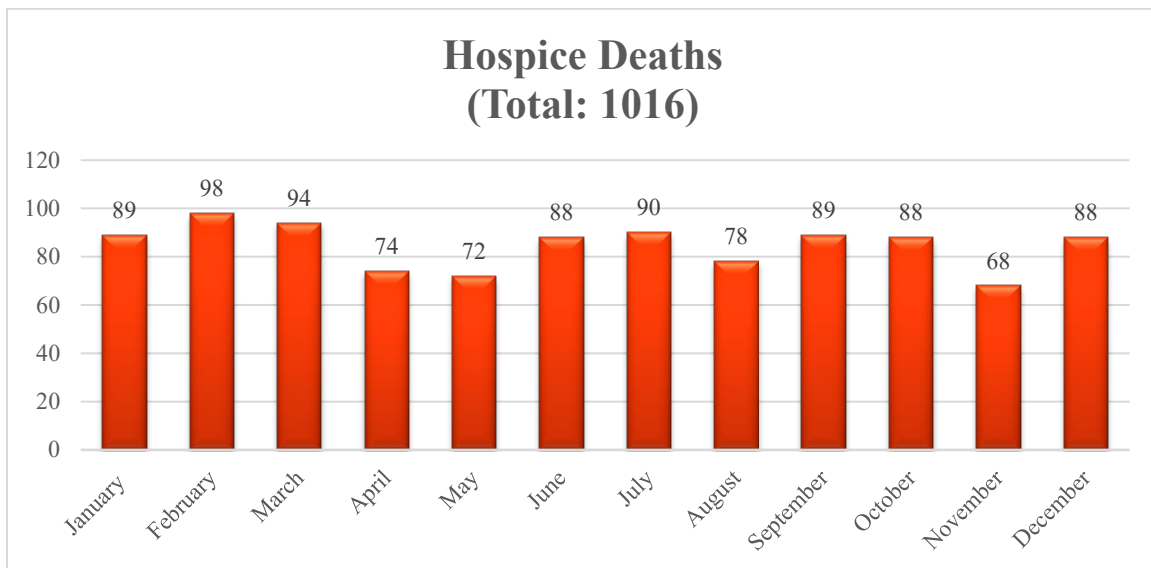
On occasion, a death occurs in Douglas County; but the initiating event to the death occurred in another jurisdiction. These deaths can include deaths where an individual is transported from a location, such as a residence, in another jurisdiction to a hospital in Douglas County or deaths that occur due to an injury that (s)he sustained in another jurisdiction. Transfer of jurisdiction of cases is permitted under Colorado Revised Statute §30.10.606.



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## Hospice Deaths

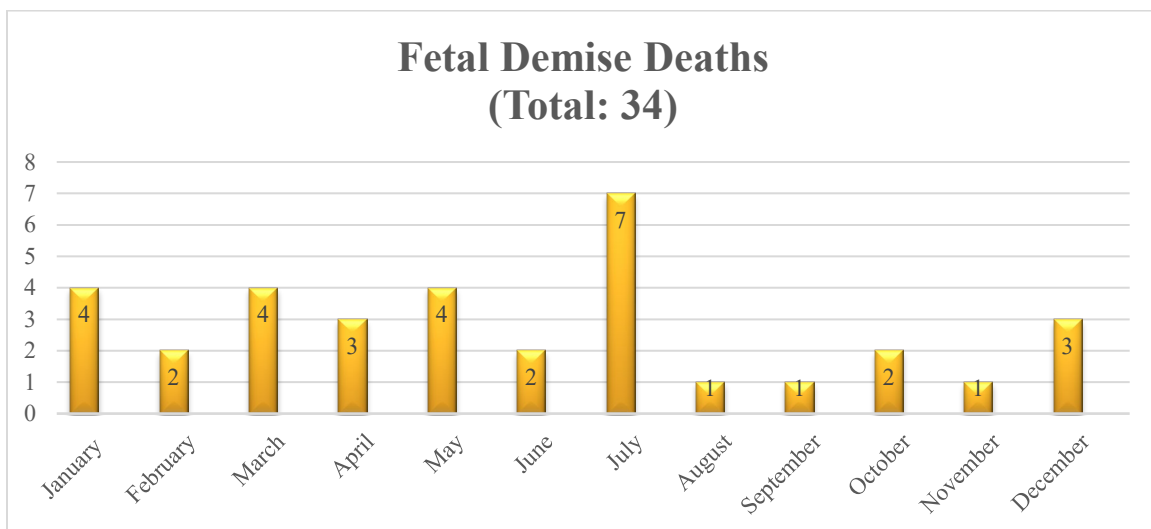
All hospice deaths that occur in Douglas County are reportable to the Coroner's Office. In 2022, 1016 deaths were reported by hospice agencies. Of the 1016 hospice deaths, 967 (95%) were natural hospice deaths and 49 (4.8%) were accidental hospice deaths. Hospice deaths accounted for 47% of all jurisdictional deaths reported to the Douglas County Coroner's Office in 2022.



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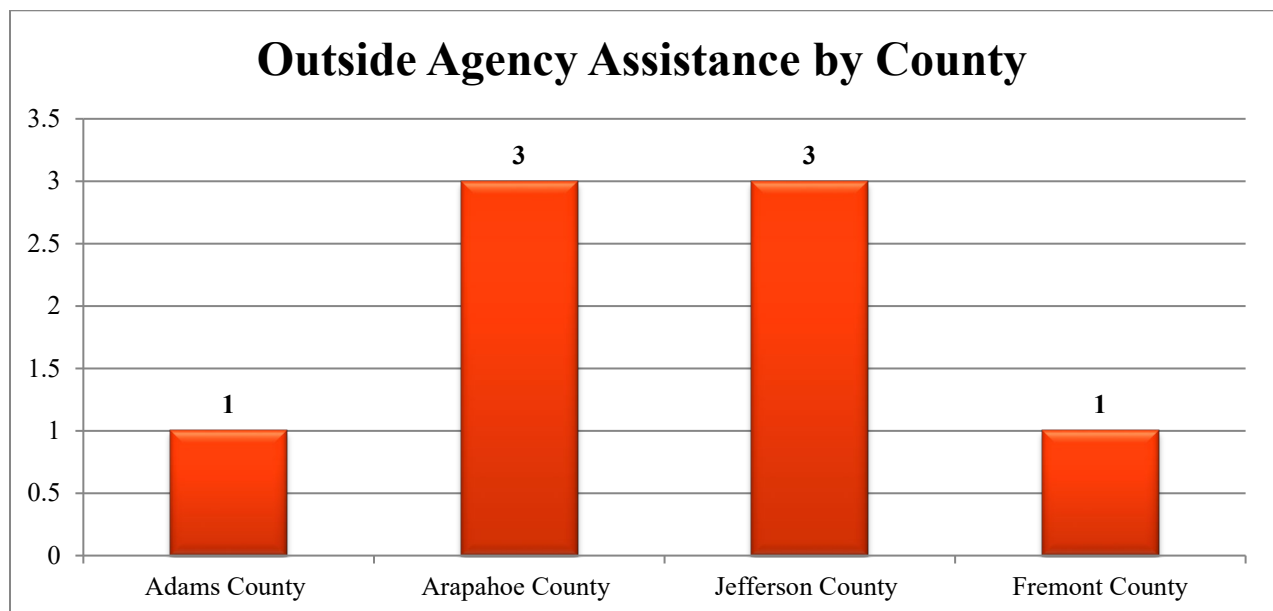
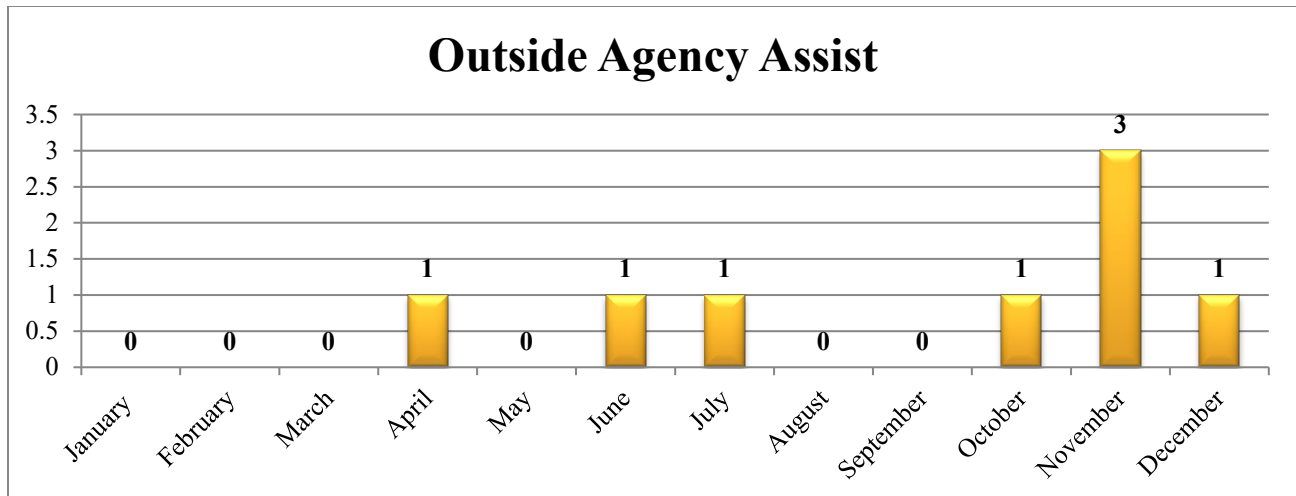
## Fetal Demise Deaths

All fetal demise deaths over the gestational age of 20 weeks that occur in Douglas County are reportable to the coroner's office. In 2022, 34 fetal deaths were reported by hospitals.



## Outside Agency Assistance

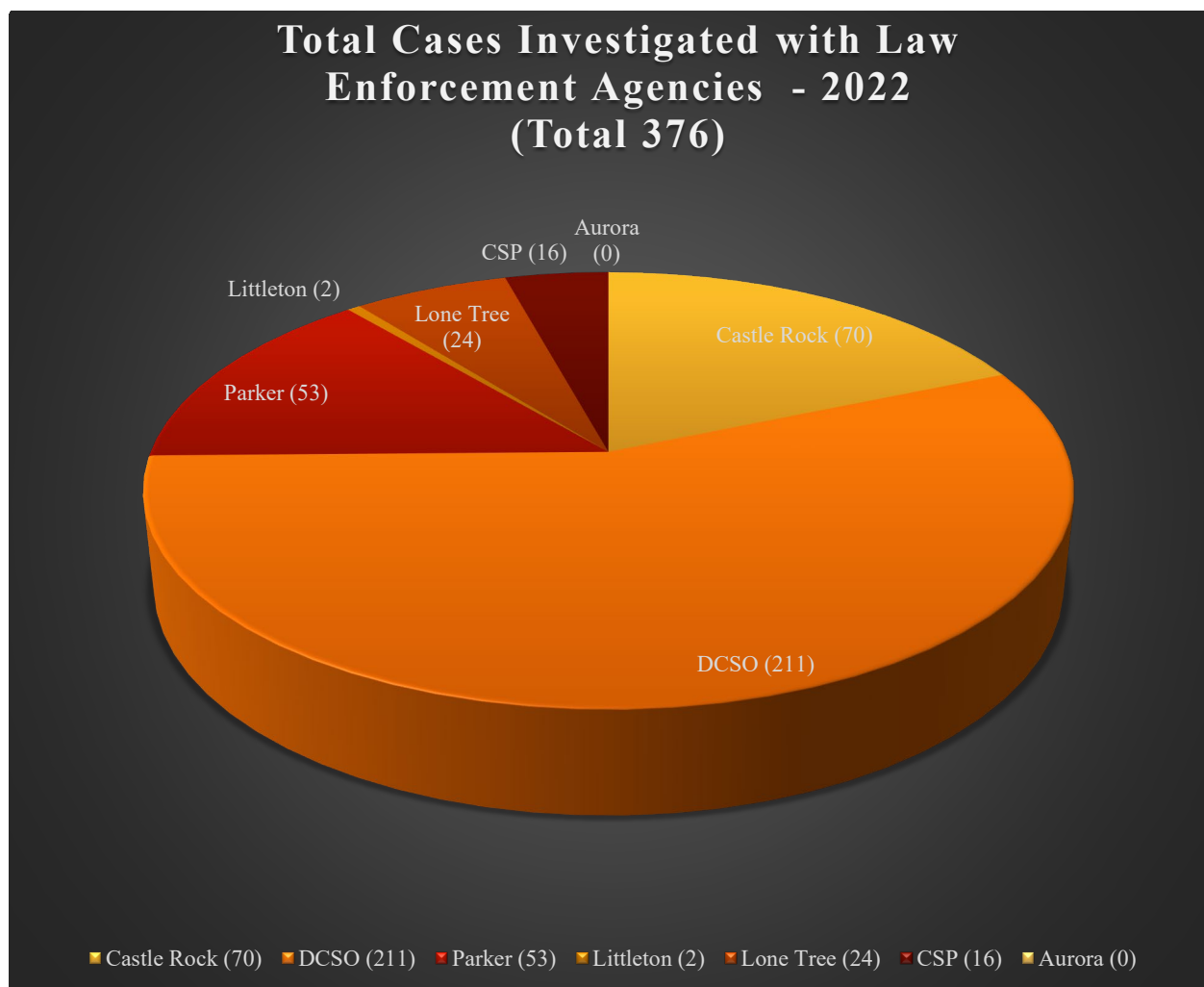
One of the responsibilities of the Coroner's Office is locating and notifying next-of-kin. The Douglas County Coroner's Office also assisted other agencies with performing death notifications for next-of-kin located in Douglas County for deaths that occurred in another jurisdiction. DCCO assisted outside agencies eight times in 2022.



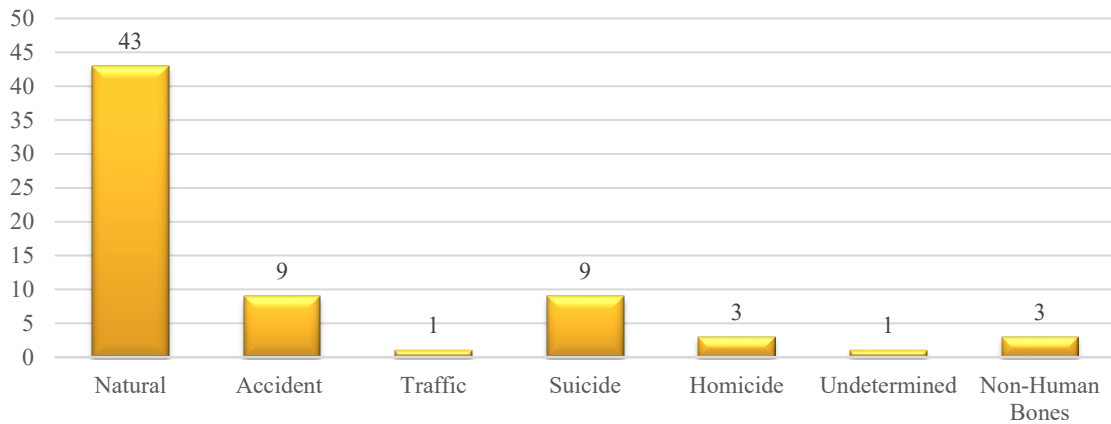
## Law Enforcement Agencies

The Douglas County Coroner's Office works in collaboration with Law Enforcement Agencies with jurisdiction in Douglas County. Law Enforcement Agencies in Douglas County include the Aurora Police Department, Castle Rock Police Department, Colorado State Patrol (CSP), Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO), Littleton Police Department, Lone Tree Police Department, and Parker Police Department.

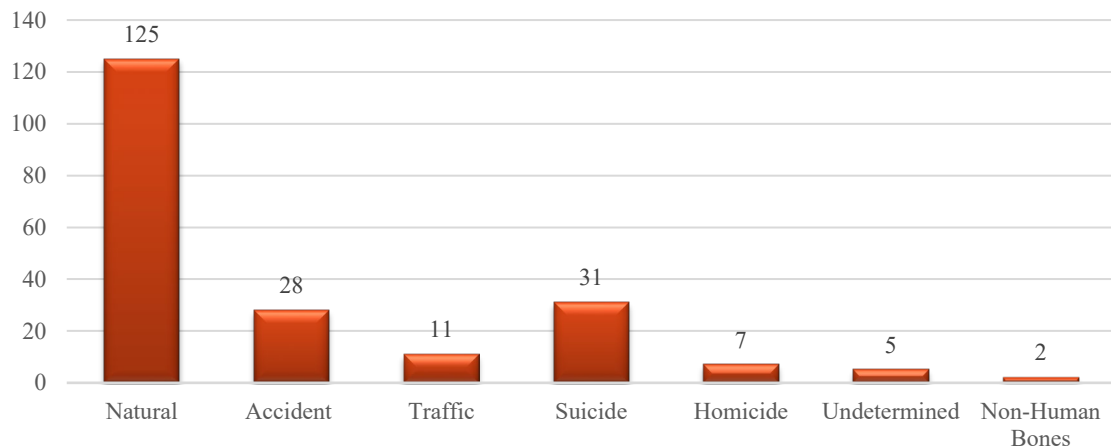
Of note: The total cases investigated with law enforcement may differ from the scene responses made by the Coroner's Office; due to some deaths having been delayed due to hospitalization following an incident or having occurred at a care facility where no response from the Coroner's Office was necessary.



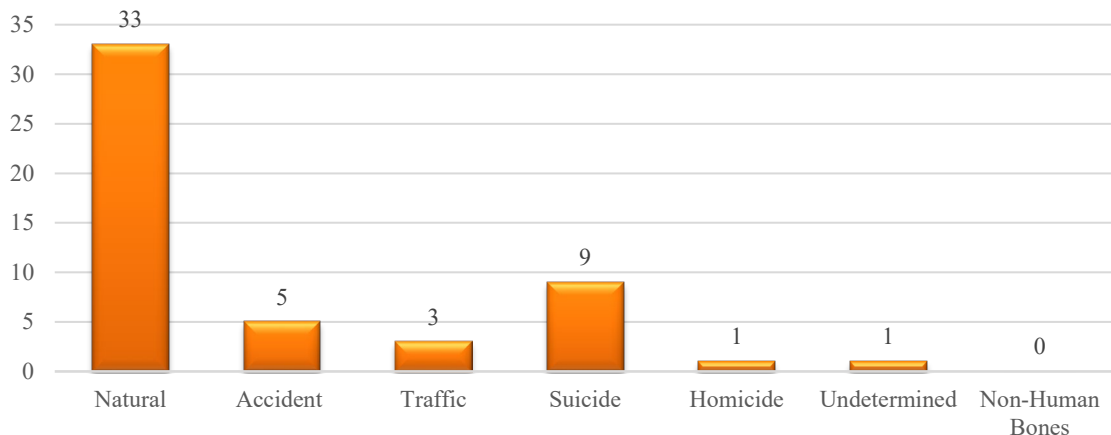
### Castle Rock PD - Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 69)



### DCSO Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 209)

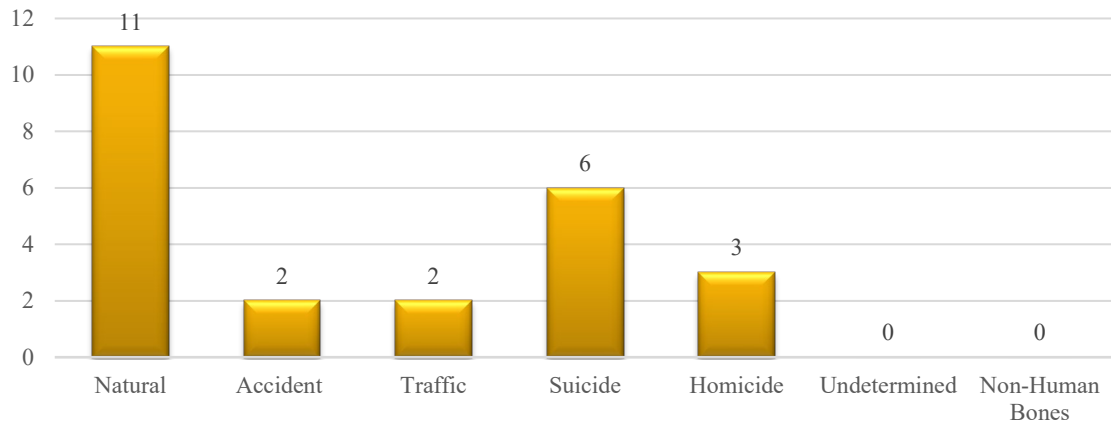


### Parker PD - Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 52)

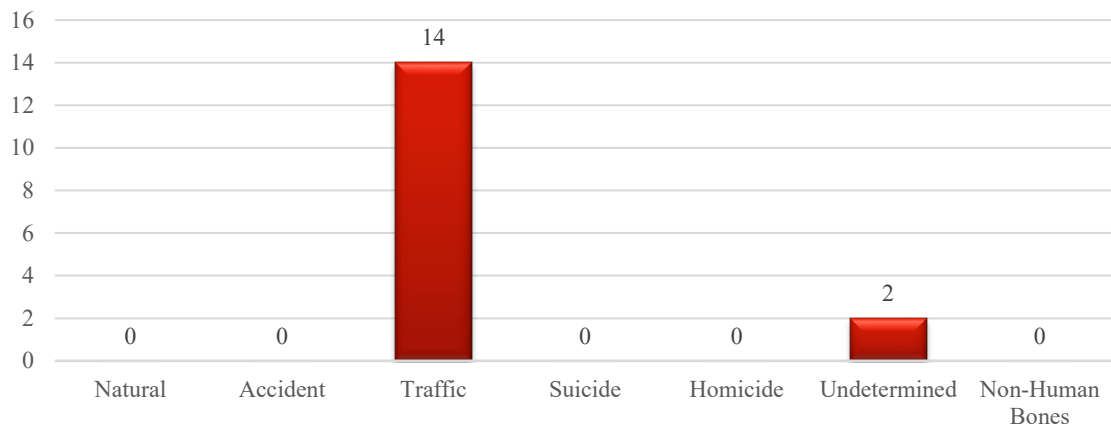




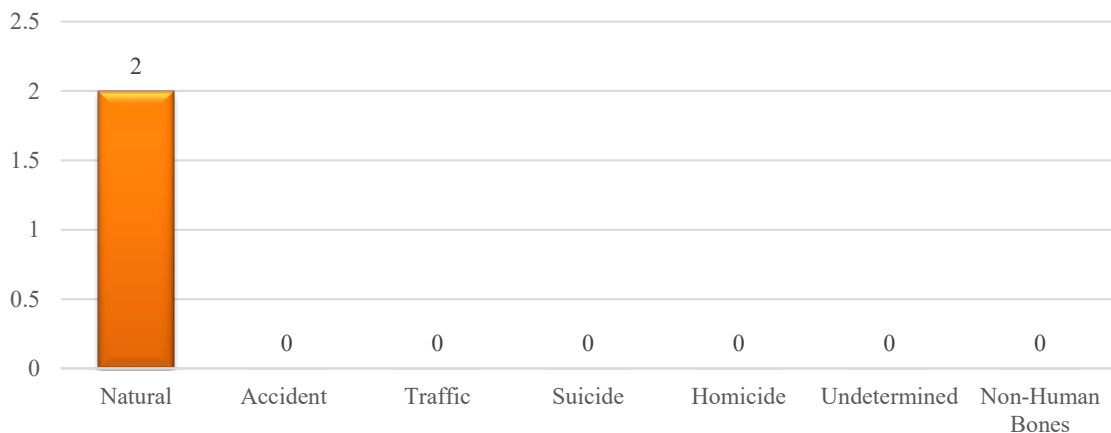
### Lone Tree PD - Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 24)



### CSP - Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 16)



### Littleton PD - Cases by Manner of Death - 2022 (Total: 2)



## Organ and Tissue Donation

The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act was passed in the United States in 1968, with subsequent revisions being made in 1987 and 2006. The Act has put in place a regulatory framework for the donation of corneas, tissues, and organs. An individual can provide first-person authorization to be a donor of organs, bone, tissues, and corneas prior to their death, by placing themselves on the donor registry. After death, an individual's next-of-kin can provide authorization for recovery if they so wish. **It is the goal of the Douglas County Coroner's Office to facilitate, whenever applicable, effective collaboration with the donation agencies in the Denver Metro Area of Colorado (Donor Alliance and Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank) to honor the wishes and rights of the deceased and their families.**

*We are committed to saving lives with tissue and organ donation.*

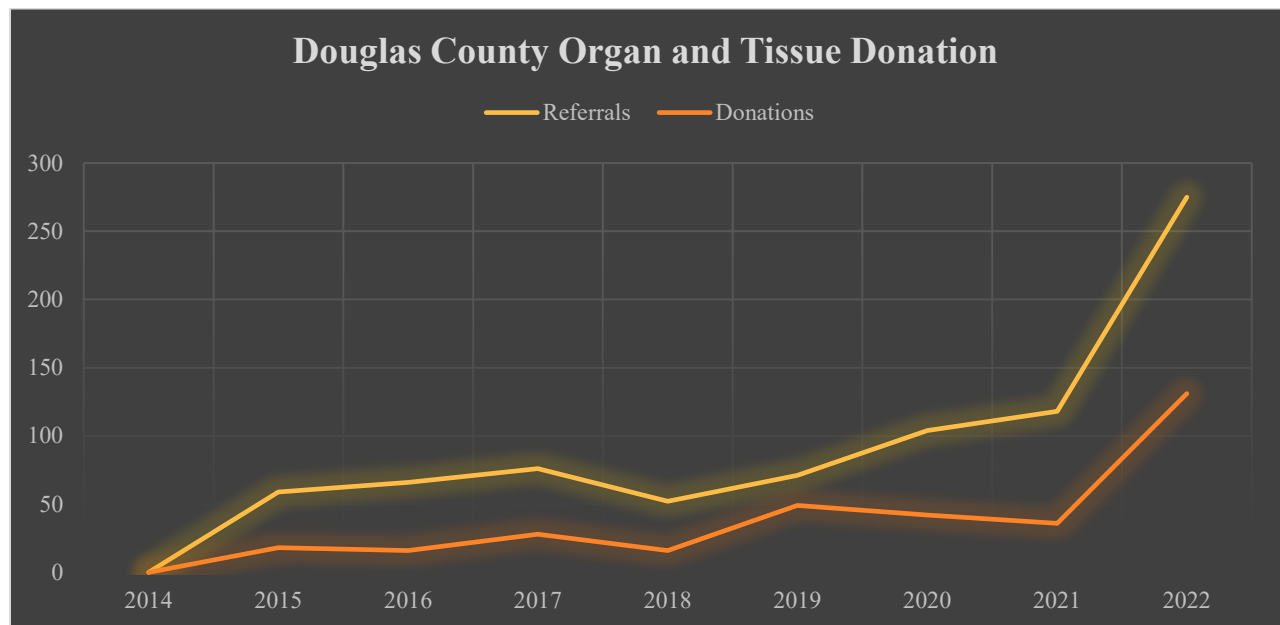
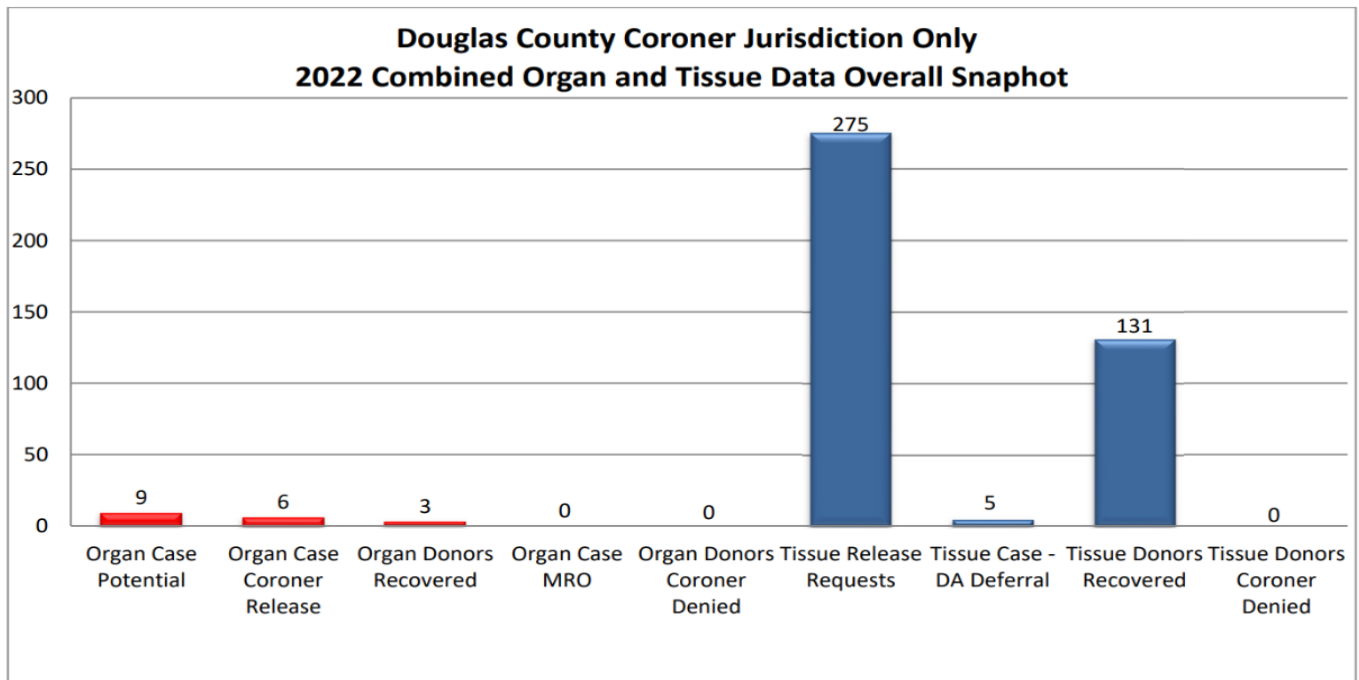
After approval for release by the Coroner's Office, referrals are made to the procurement agencies either from a hospital or directly from a Coroner's Office. The procurement agencies then work with the family of the individual to determine if the individual is medically suitable to be a donor.



## Douglas County Coroner 2022 Organ and Tissue Donation Data

### ***2022 Combined Organ and Tissue Donation Data Douglas County Coroner Jurisdiction Only - Overall Snapshot (includes all cases with Douglas County Coroner Jurisdiction)***

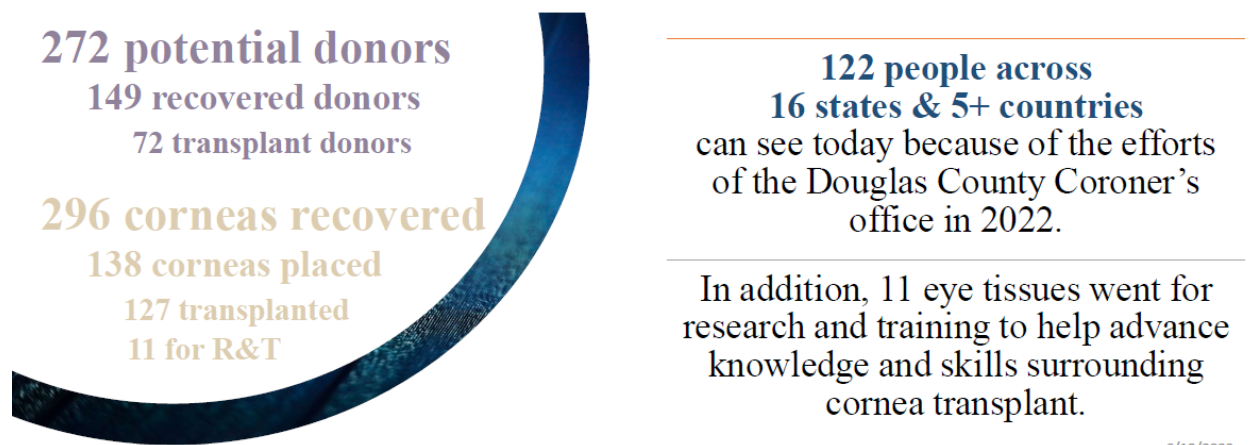
| <b>Organ Data</b>                                                                                                      |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Douglas County Coroner Breakout</i>                                                                                 |     |
| Total number of <b>potential</b> organ cases with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction                                  | 9   |
| Total number of <b>released</b> organ cases with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 9)                        | 6   |
| Total number of organ <b>donor</b> cases recovered with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 9)                 | 3   |
| Total number of organ cases with <b>medical rule-out</b> with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 9)           | 0   |
| Total number of organ donors <b>denied</b> with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 9)                         | 0   |
| Total number of organ donors with <b>partial organs denied</b> with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction                | 1   |
| <b>Tissue Data</b>                                                                                                     |     |
| <i>Douglas County Coroner Breakout</i>                                                                                 |     |
| Total number of tissue case <b>release requests</b> with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction                           | 275 |
| Total number of tissue cases with <b>Donor Alliance deferral</b> with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 275) | 5   |
| Total number of tissue <b>donor</b> cases with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (out of 275)                        | 131 |
| Total number of tissue cases <b>denied</b> by coroner with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction (*breakout as follows)  | 0   |
| Total number of tissue coroner rule-outs with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction                                      | 0   |
| Total number of tissue post autopsy time constraints with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction                          | 0   |
| Total number of tissue time constraints (facility access/other) with Douglas County Coroner jurisdiction               | 0   |





In 2022, the Douglas County Coroner's Office made 83 direct referrals to the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank (RMLEB) for cornea donation.

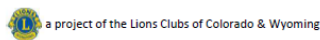
### DOUGLAS COUNTY : YEAR-END NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



6/19/2023



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### DOUGLAS COUNTY : OVERVIEW OF DEFINITIONS & TERMS

|                         |                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Potential Donor</b>  | Someone who has died, been referred to the Donor Information Line, AND passed the initial health screening for eye tissue donation |
| <b>Recovered Donor</b>  | A potential donor from whom a RMLEB recovery technician has recovered eye tissue                                                   |
| <b>Transplant Donor</b> | A donor whose eye tissues went for transplant                                                                                      |
| <b>Placed Tissue</b>    | Any eye tissue that has been used for either transplant, training, or research                                                     |

## **Unclaimed Bodies / Exhumations**

The Douglas County Coroner's Office had no unclaimed bodies in 2022. In addition, The Douglas County Coroner's Office had no exhumations in 2022.