

**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH
CORONER'S OFFICE**



ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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A Letter from the Coroner

To the Citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish:

Enclosed you will find the Coroner's Report for 2012. When I ran for Coroner in 2011, my platform was based on four fundamental goals for the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's office:

- Dignity for the Deceased
- Compassion for the Family
- Service to Law Enforcement
- Integrity of the Office

I promised you that I would work on your behalf to make the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office an office of which we can all be proud. As our first year comes to a close, I am pleased to report that we have made great strides in accomplishing our goals. The following are some of our accomplishments for 2012:

- I reorganized the office along functional lines of investigation and office administration
- I created the first ever Business and Strategic Plans
- I added coroner investigators and decreased administrative staff
- Our five investigators graduated from the St. Louis School of Medicine Medicolegal Death Investigation Course
- Our Coroner Investigators were Peace Officer Standards of Training (P.O.S.T.) trained and certified
- All staff were commissioned by the Secretary of State and received professional uniforms and badges
- We implemented investigative tools such as on-scene urine test kits and blood transfer devices
- We implemented electronic processing of death certificates
- We revised and enhanced the Disaster Preparedness Plan
- We provided expert testimony in the Louisiana Criminal Court System
- I enforced the indigent person cremation statute, reducing the outlay of tax dollars by \$13,895
- In accordance with the Louisiana Statutes, we maximized collection of revenue collecting \$218,225
- I introduced a new Regional Autopsy Program for the parishes surrounding East Baton Rouge Parish
- We donated 45,904 prescription drugs to St. Vincent De Paul Community Pharmacy
- I enlarged investigator's squad room
- We installed a security alarm system

- We constructed a family consultation room to conduct mental health assessments, transfer personal property and host meetings of a sensitive nature
- Using Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) grant money, we purchased and installed an additional walk-in cooler for use in the event of mass disaster
- In collaboration with East Baton Rouge Parish law enforcement agencies, we cleared 395 warrants
- I served on twelve boards and committees and identified 10 key business partnerships and 5 educational partnerships

While we accomplished much in 2012, there is more to be done in the coming years to make the Coroner's Office a model for other coroner's offices in the state, region and the nation.

I pledge to continue to give you a 100% effort and to keep abreast of the latest technology that we can implement to fulfill the promises I made when you saw fit to elect me. I understand that my staff and I are servants of this community and I pledge to be a good steward of your tax dollars.

Thank you for your support,

William "Beau" Clark, M.D.

East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner

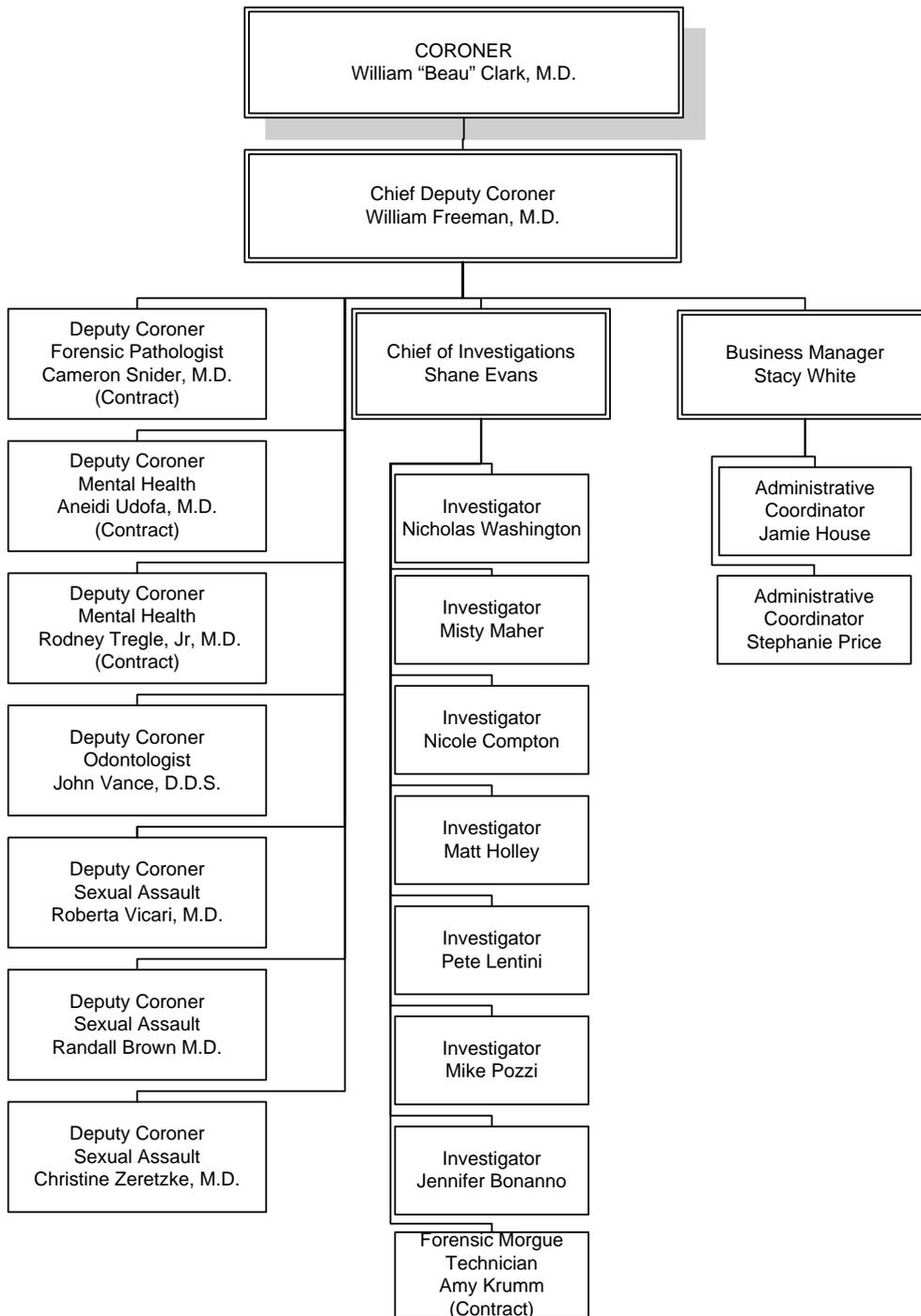
About the Coroner's Office

As of 2004, of the 2,342 death investigation offices in the United States, 1,590 are coroner's offices. Of those, only 82 serve jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people. Qualifications for coroners are set by individual states and counties/parishes in the U.S. and vary widely. In many jurisdictions, little or no training is required, even though a coroner may overrule a forensic pathologist in naming a cause of death. Because of the differences between jurisdictions, the terms "coroner" and "medical examiner" are defined differently from place to place. In some places, stringent rules require that the medical examiner be a forensic pathologist. In others, the medical examiner must be a physician, though not necessarily a forensic pathologist or even a pathologist. General practitioners, obstetricians, and other types of physicians with no experience in forensic medicine have become medical examiners. In the U.S., the terms "coroner" and "medical examiner" vary widely in meaning by jurisdiction, as do qualifications and duties for these offices. Local laws define the deaths a coroner must investigate, but most often include those that are sudden, unexpected, suspicious, violent, or have no attending physician. In some places in the United States, a coroner has other special powers, such as the ability to arrest the sheriff.

According to Louisiana Revised Statute 13:5701, in each parish, there shall be a coroner. Except for the parish of Orleans, he shall be elected at the gubernatorial election, shall serve for a term of four years, and shall take office and begin his term on the fourth Monday in March following election. The coroner shall be a conservator of the peace. Louisiana Revised Statute 13:5704 states, the coroner shall be a physician licensed by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners to practice medicine in the state of Louisiana. This requirement shall be waived in any parish in which no licensed physician qualifies to run for the office. The coroner shall be a resident of the parish. However, a licensed physician who is not a resident of the parish but who maintains a full-time medical practice at a principal medical office facility in the parish may qualify for and hold the office. Each coroner may appoint one or more deputy or assistant coroners to perform his duties, who need not be residents of the parish. However, any person appointed as a deputy or assistant coroner, who is not a resident of the parish, shall be a licensed physician. They shall possess the same qualifications as the coroner and be paid by the coroner appointing them or by arrangement with the parish governing authority if the coroner is on a salary basis. A person may serve as a deputy or assistant coroner on a part-time basis in more than one parish. The tenure of the appointment shall be determined by the appointing coroner but shall not be longer than the coroner's term of office. The coroner shall be responsible for the acts of his deputy or assistant coroners. The coroner may appoint any necessary secretaries, stenographers, clerks, technicians, investigators, official photographers, or other helpers. The salaries of these employees shall be paid by the coroner out of his fees or by arrangement with the parish governing authority if the coroner is on a salary basis.

The East Baton Rouge Coroner's Office is a governmental agency whose jurisdiction includes mental health investigation, medicolegal death investigation, forensic pathology services, and sexual assault investigation in collaboration with Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center. The Coroner's Office is a state constitutional office and is funded by the East Baton Rouge City-Parish Government. William "Beau" Clark, M.D. was inaugurated as Coroner on March 26, 2012 and is elected to a four year term.

Organizational Chart



Accomplishments

Organizational Improvements

Human Resource Management

One of the most important improvements made to the organization was increasing the number of full-time employees who investigate death. Upon taking office, there were three full time investigators, and within five months the number of investigators increased to seven, decreasing scene response time and increasing quality.

We retained a Human Resources Consultant and conducted an extensive assessment to increase compliance within the existing human resource model. The employee handbook and employee job descriptions were revised to achieve compliance with employment law and best practices and disseminated. A Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exemption analysis was conducted on each job description and appropriate changes were completed to achieve compliance. The Annual Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement and necessary labor law posters were appropriately posted throughout the office. Legally compliant employee personnel files were constructed for active and inactive employees as well as independent contract staff. An enhanced comprehensive organizational chart was developed and disseminated. On-boarding, separation and inventory logs were developed and implemented for employee tracking.

Electronic versions of enrollment materials were distributed to employees. An electronic version of a Human Resource Employee Master Information file was developed; a Human Resource Information System is being developed and implemented in 2013. A U.S. Department of Homeland Security Employment Eligibility Verification analysis was conducted and the necessary changes were made to comply with federal and state regulations.

An Employee Performance Management and Evaluations process was developed and will be implemented January 2013. Dr. Clark began hosting routine bi-weekly staff meetings in April and by December hosting monthly meetings.

By the end of December 2012, five employees had attended the St. Louis School of Medicine Medicolegal Death Investigation Course. The remaining investigative employees are scheduled to attend in 2013. In addition, investigators have received Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) training and are certified.

All staff received professional uniforms and investigative staff received badges and Louisiana Commissions through the Louisiana Secretary of State.

Business Management

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office Business Plan was completed in November, 2012 and the Strategic Plan was completed in December, 2012.

Beginning in April, 2012, monthly management and investigation reports were developed and implemented. These reports include benchmarking which allow the executive team to analyze outcomes.

Information technology, including computer hardware, have been inventoried and updated to provide to the staff with the tools and resources needed to successfully perform their duties.

Financial Management

A Fee Schedule was established and implemented utilizing Louisiana Revised Statutes as reference.

The original 2012 budget was reviewed and analyzed. An addendum budget and capital needs request were prepared. Revised revenue projections were prepared for 2012. The budget was analyzed every month for current and year to date expenditures and revenue.

The final approved 2012 budget was \$1,504,250. A budget supplement was approved mid-year for \$100,000 to purchase three new vehicles, install a security system and purchase necessary investigative and pathological supplies. The change in administration accounts for the difference in budgeted compared to actual expenses for 2012. The final 2012 expenditures totaled \$1,750,743.

Revenue collections in excess of general City Parish funds totaled \$218,225.

Investigations

A draft Investigative Policy and Procedure manual was developed and will be implemented in 2013. Investigative tools such as blood transfer devices, on-scene urine test kits, a property drop box and secure safe room were added to manage quality, security and timeliness.

The office implemented the Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System. This system is used to expedite the processing of death certificates for the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish. Dr. Clark advocated for its use by funeral homes and related healthcare professionals.

The Disaster Preparedness Plan was reviewed, revised, and enhanced. The plan was successfully implemented during Hurricane Isaac.

Appropriate and necessary Personal Protective Equipment was purchased for the investigative staff.

Per Louisiana law, Dr. Clark has taken an active role in providing expert testimony in cases presented in the Louisiana court system.

Upon Dr. Clark's analysis of the existing process for handling the disposition of paupers and examination of Louisiana Law directing those efforts, Dr. Clark modified the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office pauper cremation process. The current procedure allows for reimbursement of taxpayer dollars when any person chooses to claim the cremated ashes of a pauper. This provides friends and family with a means to recover their loved one's ashes,

while still protecting taxpayer interests and also ensuring that true paupers are handled with dignity and respect. Unclaimed ashes are spread at the Historic Magnolia Cemetery in Baton Rouge in a specially designated area during a solemn ceremony attended by the Coroner and his staff.

In June of 2012, a Forensic Pathologist was contracted to conduct all autopsies performed at the East Baton Rouge Parish Medical Forensic Facility. One independent Forensic Morgue Technician assists the Forensic Pathologist in preparing and performing autopsies. Clinical interns are utilized to assist as needed and receive education and introduction to forensic science. A transcription service was implemented to decrease the time from autopsy to completed report.

The Regional Autopsy Program was started in June. The program is intended to serve the parishes surrounding the Capital Area and provides a local fee for service in a timely manner to surrounding municipalities. This program provides a service to other parishes.

Part of the investigative process is to collect, inventory and review prescription medications for clues to the decedent's chronic diseases. The medications are subsequently donated to the St. Vincent De Paul Community Pharmacy and distributed to the community to prevent chronic disease.

Public Relations

Dr. Clark presented education and information to the following Community Partners in 2012, which was related to the Coroner's Office and its jurisdiction:

- o East Baton Rouge Parish home health agencies
- o East Baton Rouge Parish hospice agencies
- o East Baton Rouge Parish acute care hospitals
- o East Baton Rouge Parish mental health facilities
- o East Baton Rouge Parish funeral homes
- o Rotary Club of Zachary
- o Louisiana Homicide Investigators Conference
- o Louisiana State University
- o Annual Industrial Fire, Safety, and Security Conference
- o East Baton Rouge Parish Chamber of Commerce
- o Sexual Trauma and Assault Response Center "Walk A Mile in Her Shoes"
- o "Spotlight on 5 with Councilwoman Ronnie Edwards" on Metro 21 television

Community Programs and Partnerships

Board and Committee Participation

Dr. Clark actively participates or appoints a representative for the following local, regional and statewide boards and committees:

- Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA), Coroner's Committee
- Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank
- Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center (STAR)
- State of Louisiana Child Death Review Panel
- State of Louisiana Regional Maternal and Child Health, Fetal Infant Mortality Review and Child Death Review Case Review Team
- Baton Rouge Crisis and Intervention, Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS)
- Capital Area Adult Behavioral Health Addiction Recovery Unit Meeting
- Baton Rouge Victims Crime Unit
- The East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness
- State of Louisiana Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Coalition for Region 2 Hospitals
- President-Elect of the Capital Area Medical Society
- Member of the Louisiana State Medical Society

Key Business Partnerships

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office partners with the following entities to initiate and improve relationships to better serve the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish:

- Local, regional and statewide law enforcement agencies
- Local, regional and statewide public safety agencies
- Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Vital Statistics
- Capital Area and surrounding parish funeral homes
- East Baton Rouge Parish acute care hospitals
- East Baton Rouge Parish hospice agencies
- East Baton Rouge Parish nursing homes
- East Baton Rouge Parish Mental Health Advocate
- Accidental Death Support Group
- Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE)

Educational Partnerships

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office partners with the following institutions to educate students in the area of death investigation and forensic science:

- Louisiana State University Emergency Medicine Residency Program
- Louisiana State University Pre-Medicine Program
- Our Lady of the Lake College Internship
- Central High School Sports Medicine Program
- East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services Program
- Baton Rouge Community College

Capital Improvements

Building improvements included construction of a private family conference room to conduct mental health assessments, transfer personal property and host meetings of a sensitive nature.

The investigative squad room was enlarged to accommodate the increased investigative staff and the necessary equipment. This enabled the office to have a private waiting area outside of the administrative offices to host family conferences or related meetings.

The East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office received additional storage and cooling equipment from Lane Regional Medical Center as a part of the Health and Human Services Grant which funded Hospital Preparedness. The Louisiana Hospital Association, on behalf of Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, administered and distributed the grant funds to Lane Regional Medical Center in Zachary. Lane received \$40,000 to assist the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office to prepare for mass disaster events by increasing the storage capacity and expanding cooling equipment. The largest portions of the funds were used to purchase and install an additional walk-in cooler. This purchase increases the number of walk-in coolers to three, which increases storage capacity from 12 to 40 decedents.

Remaining funds from the Louisiana Hospital Association grant were used to purchase two automatic Stryker stretchers which allow the Coroner's Investigators to quickly and easily transport decedents, the ability to efficiently manipulate decedent racks with the use of an electric lift and to increase the storage capacity by purchasing additional racks and trays. One existing stretcher received the necessary maintenance to keep the equipment in working condition.

Three new vehicles added to Coroner's vehicle fleet - one investigator van, one utility vehicle sprint truck, and one administrative pool car. Three non-functional vehicles were forwarded to East Baton Rouge Parish surplus and were subsequently auctioned. All new vehicles were outfitted with proper markings, emergency lights and sirens.

The following improvements were installed to enhance security for the facility:

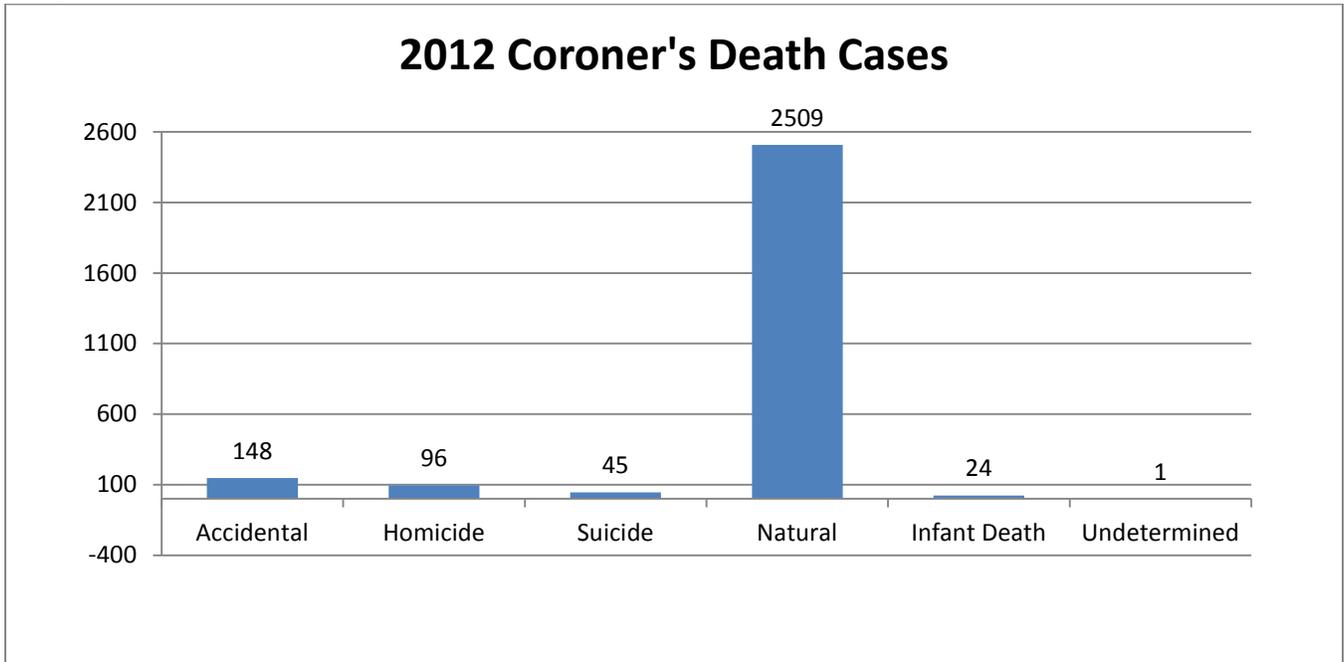
- Security alarm system was installed throughout the facility
- Cooler alarms and monitoring system
- Remote garage door openers in all investigator vehicles

Statistical Information

Death Investigations

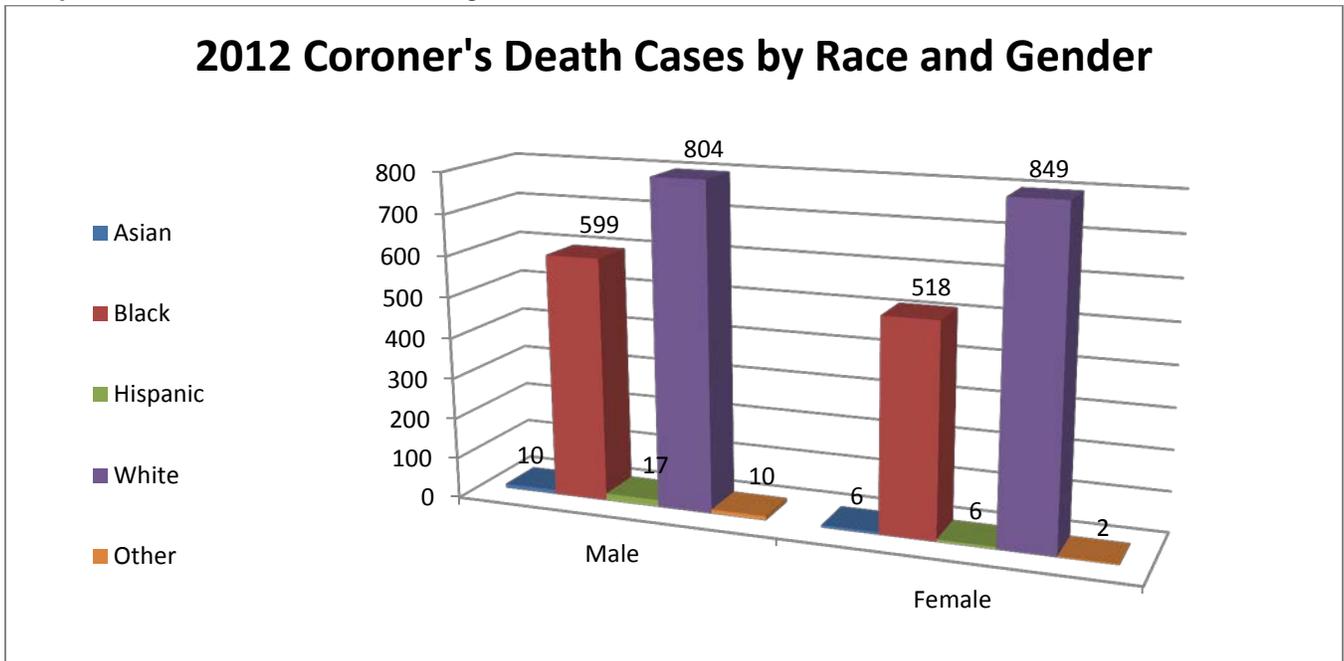
	Total
Number of Coroner's Death Cases	2824
Number of Bodies Transported	279
Number of Scene Responses	598
Number of Nursing Home Notifications	594
Number of Toxicology Analysis Performed	248
Number of Histology Analysis Performed	440
Number of Cremation Permits Issued	655
Number of Pauper Cremations Facilitated	77
Number of Unidentified Bodies	0
Number of East Baton Rouge Parish Autopsies	186
Number of Regional Autopsy Program Autopsies	24
Number of Exhumations	1
Total Organ and Tissue Donations	145
Total Cornea Donations	8
Total Prescriptions Donated	45,904
Total Number of Warrants Cleared	395

Graph 1: 2012 Coroner's Death Cases

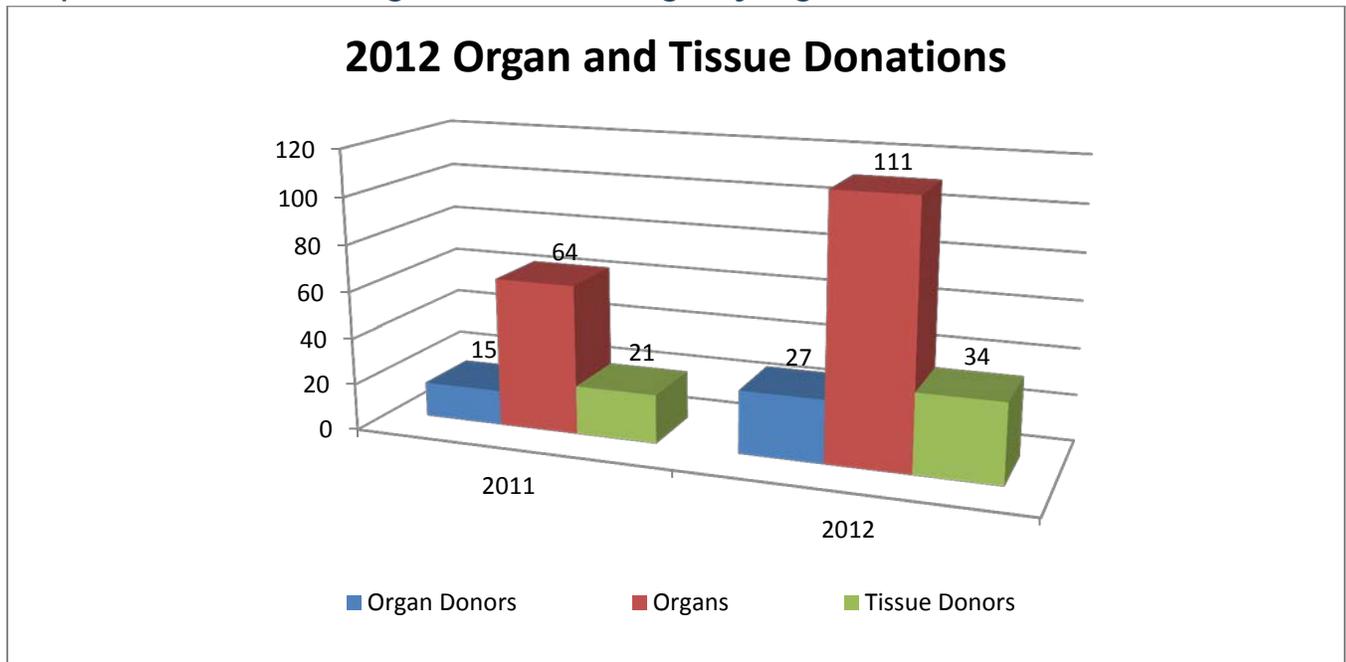


Compared to 2011 data, there were 400 more natural deaths and 25 more accidental deaths investigated in 2012. Homicides increased in 2012 by 6, infant deaths and suicides increased by 2 each. The number of undetermined cases was unchanged from 2011. Overall, the Coroner's Office investigated 435 more deaths in 2012.

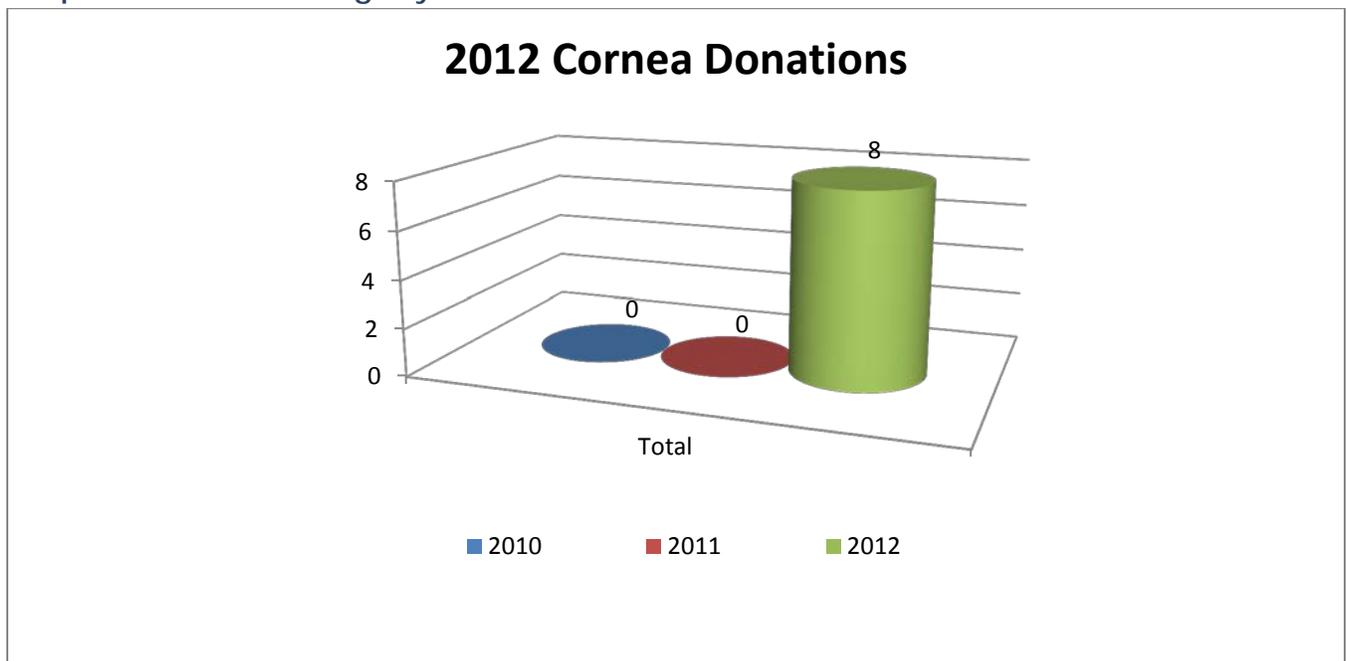
Graph 2: 2012 Coroner's Cases by Gender and Race



Graph 3: 2012 Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency Organ and Tissue Donations

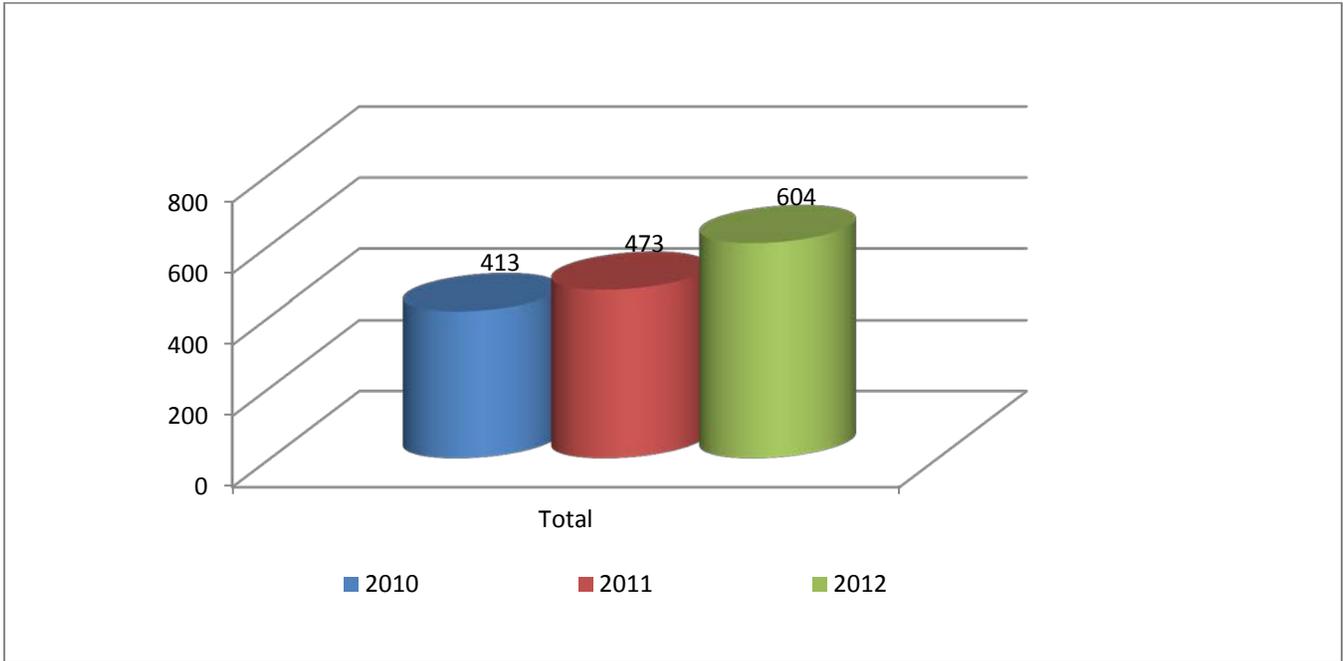


Graph 4: 2012 Baton Rouge Eye Bank Cornea Donations

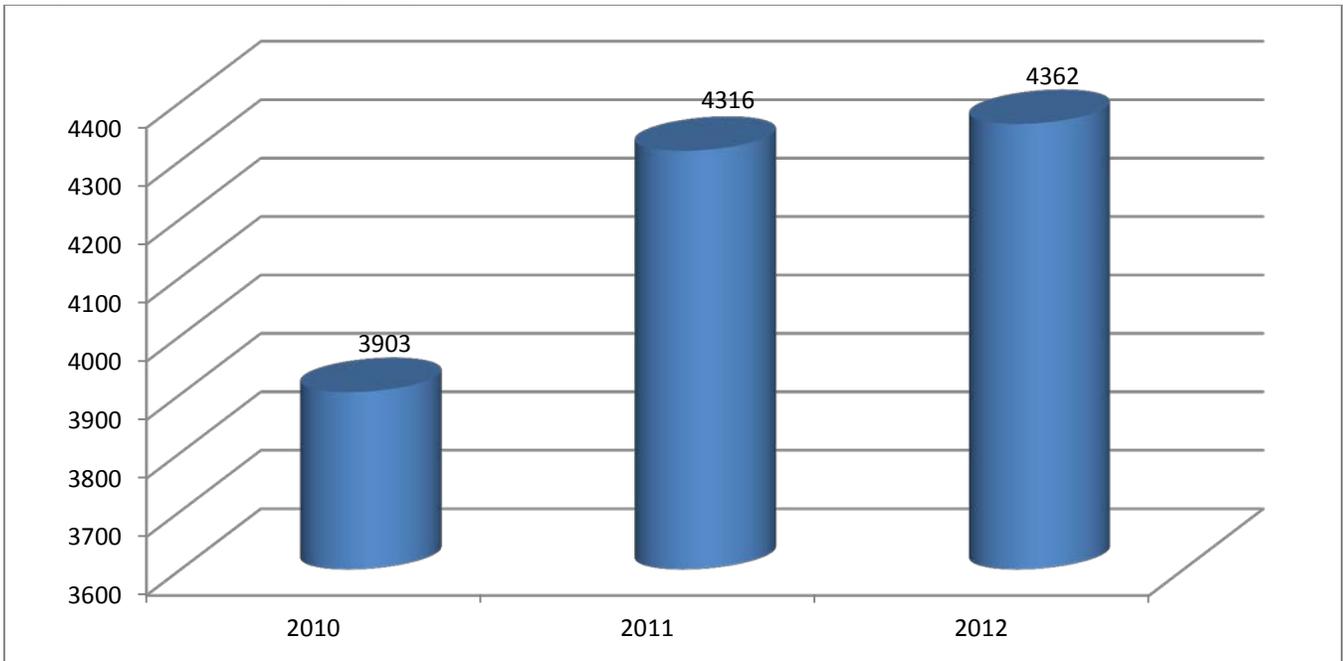


Mental Health

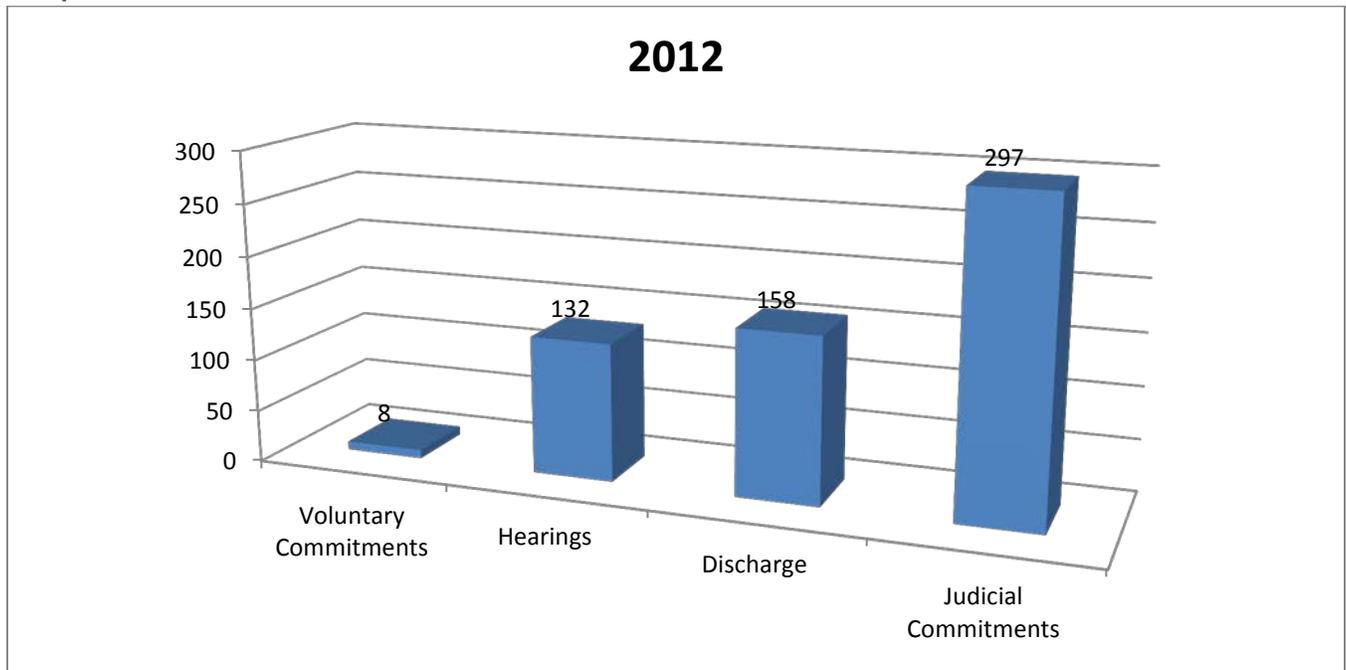
Graph 5: Order of Protective Custody



Graph 6: Coroner Emergency Certificate

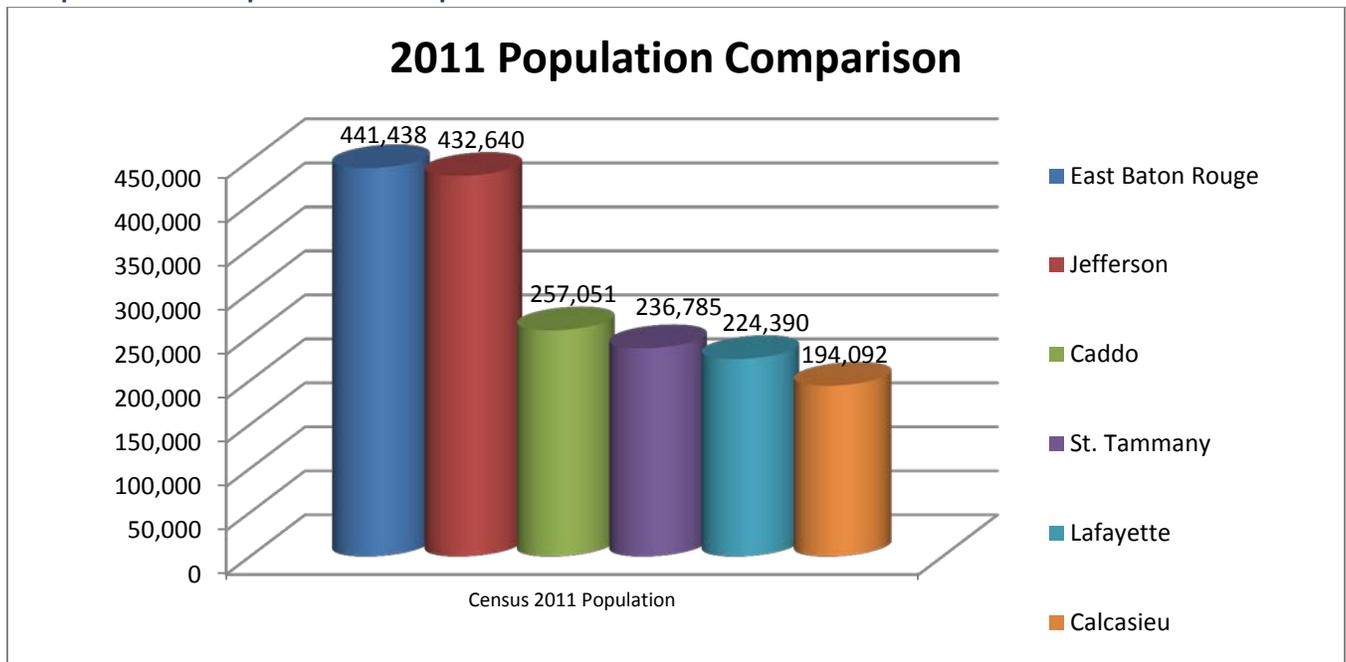


Graph 7: Mental Health Advocate



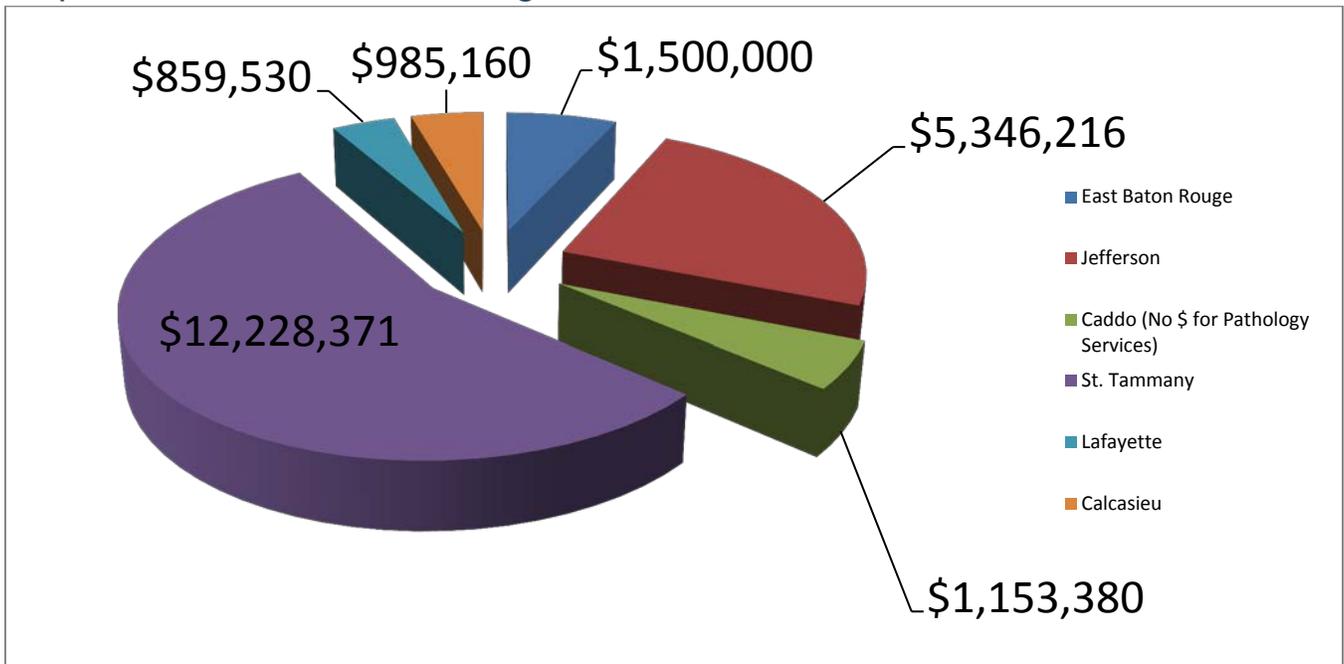
Parish Comparisons

Graph 8: 2011 Population Comparison



East Baton Rouge Parish is the most populated parish in the State of Louisiana.

Graph 9: 2011 Coroner's Annual Budgets



Graph 10: 2011 Funds per Citizen

