



Baldwin County Coroner's Office Annual Report FY 2019-2020

The Baldwin County Coroner's Office (BCCO) covers over 2000 square miles of Baldwin County and serves some 228,000 residents as well as 6.5 Million Tourists annually. Coroner, Dr. Brian Pierce appointed 5 Deputy Coroners to assist him with his duties and the County Commission provides 2 administrative assistants. Phones are answered 24 hours/day, 365 days a year. The Coroner's office handled 562 Cases in the FY 2019-20, which represented an increase of 17% from the previous year.

The year 2020 had a series of challenges, not to mention Nationally; the Covid-19 Pandemic and Regionally; Hurricane Sally. While each of these provided some notable stress, they also provided an opportunity for growth. I am proud of the way my Team dealt with the stress and made each obstacle a learning experience.

The following report includes statistical analysis of the deaths that occurred in Baldwin County from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020.

The primary purpose of the Coroner's Office is to investigate unattended, unexplained, violent and accidental deaths as set forth in the Constitution of Alabama Title 11, Chapter 5. Our Mission Statement is as follows:

Mission Statement

To accurately determine the cause and manner of death, of individuals that die within Baldwin County; through a fair, ethical, and competent investigation of death; performed by qualified and trained individuals, in accordance with the accepted medicolegal death investigation professional standards; ensuring the integrity of the investigation.

To establish and maintain cooperative, professional relationships with law enforcement, funeral homes, and other community members.

To assist the bereaved in the loss of a loved one.

To earn and hold the trust and respect of the citizens that we are privileged and honored to serve.

The following situations regarding death, that are to be reported to the Office of the Coroner:

Disease which may be hazardous or contagious or which may constitute a threat to the health of the general public

- From external violence, an unexplained cause, or under suspicious circumstances
- Where no physician is in attendance, or where, though in attendance, the physician is unable to certify the cause of death
- From thermal, chemical, or radiation injury
- From criminal abortion
- While in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- When the death was sudden and happened to a person who was in good health
- From an industrial accident or any death suspected to be involved with the decedent's occupation
- When death occurs in a hospital less than 24 hours after admission to a hospital or after any invasive procedure
- Any death suspected to be due to alcohol intoxication or the result of exposure to drugs or toxic agents
- Any death due to neglect or suspected neglect
- Any stillbirth of 20 or more weeks gestational age unattended by a physician
- Any maternal death to include death of a pregnant woman regardless of the length of the pregnancy, even where the cause of death is unrelated to the pregnancy
- Any death of an infant or child where the medical history has not established a significant pre-existing condition

FY 2019-20 the Office of the Coroner had the following Staffing:

Dr. Brian Pierce DC, D-ABMDI: Coroner

Investigations

Administration

Troy Dyess: Chief Deputy Coroner

Brandy Byrd: Administrative Support Specialist III

Daren Montgomery: Deputy Coroner

Shanna Bonner: Administrative Support Specialist I

Nick Miller: Deputy Coroner

Stan Vinson: Accreditation Consultant

Tim Allen: Deputy Coroner in Training

Tim Cooper: Deputy Coroner in Training

FY 2019-20 Deaths in Baldwin County: **2141**

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Coroner Cases | 562 (27 % of the Total Baldwin County Deaths) |
| Non-Coroner Cases | 57 |
| Hospice Cases Reported | 662 |
| Total (Cases Reported) | 1281 |

Breakdown of Coroner Cases

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Natural | 404 | |
| Drug Deaths | 49 | |
| Suicides | 42 | *4 drug related |
| Blunt Force | 37 | *MVA/ Fall from Height/ |
| Drownings | 9 | |
| Homicides | 7 | |
| Fire Deaths | 2 | |
| Other | 9 | |
| Undetermined | 3 | |
| Total | 562 | |

Cases sent for Autopsy 215 (39% of Coroner Cases)

Medical Record Review Only 347 (62%)

| Gender | Males | Females |
|--------|----------|----------|
| | 384(69%) | 178(31%) |

| Race | Caucasian | Black | Hispanic | Other |
|------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
| | 474(85%) | 71(13%) | 11(2%) | 6(1%) |

Total Motor Vehicle

Accidents: 27

Motorcycle Accidents: 8

Car Accidents: 19

Seat Belt Yes: 2

No: 8

Unknown: 9

Alcohol Only Involved: 3

Drugs Only Involved: 5

Alcohol and Drugs Involved: 5

No Alcohol or Drugs: 14

Total Suicides: 42

GSW: 28

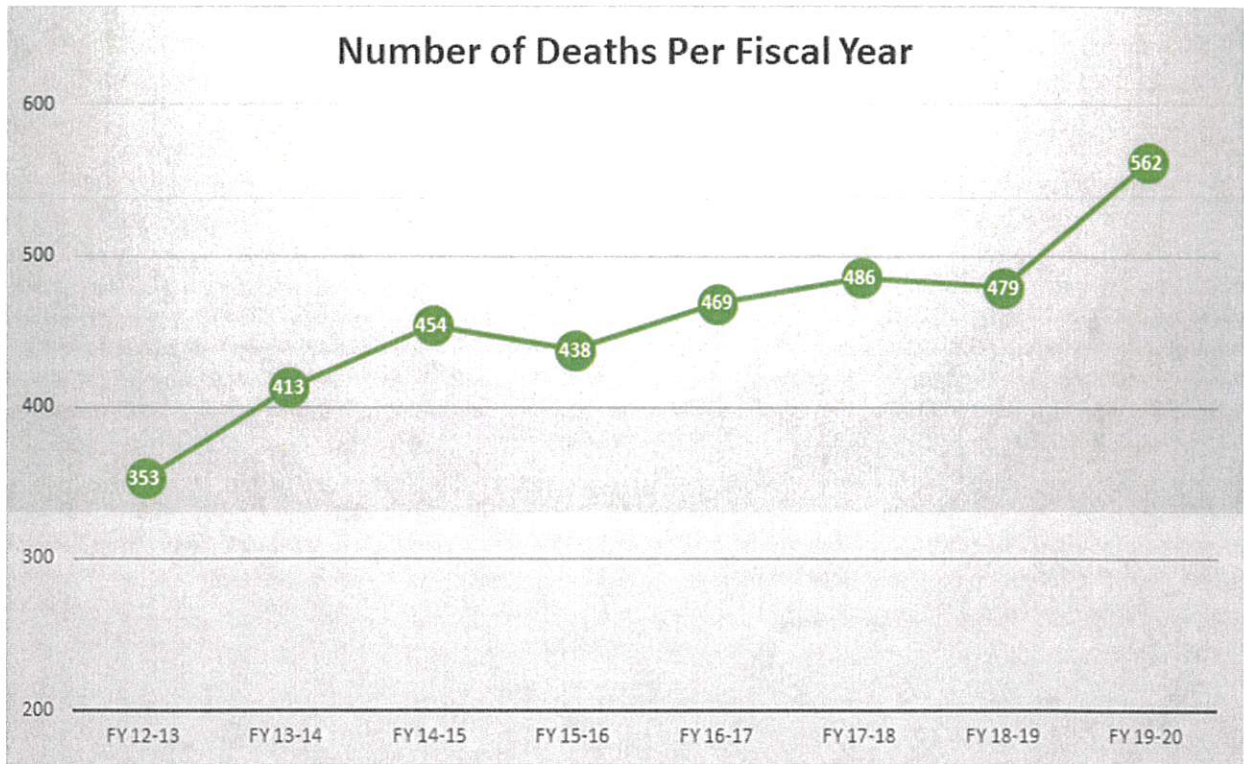
Hangings: 8

Drug Overdose: 4

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: 1

Blunt Trauma of Head and Neck: 1

| | Males | Females | Total |
|----------|-------|--------------|------------|
| Age 0-19 | 14 | 7 | 21 |
| 20-39 | 52 | 13 | 65 |
| 40-59 | 103 | 34 | 137 |
| 60-80 | 171 | 83 | 254 |
| >80 | 45 | 40 | 85 |
| | | TOTAL | 562 |

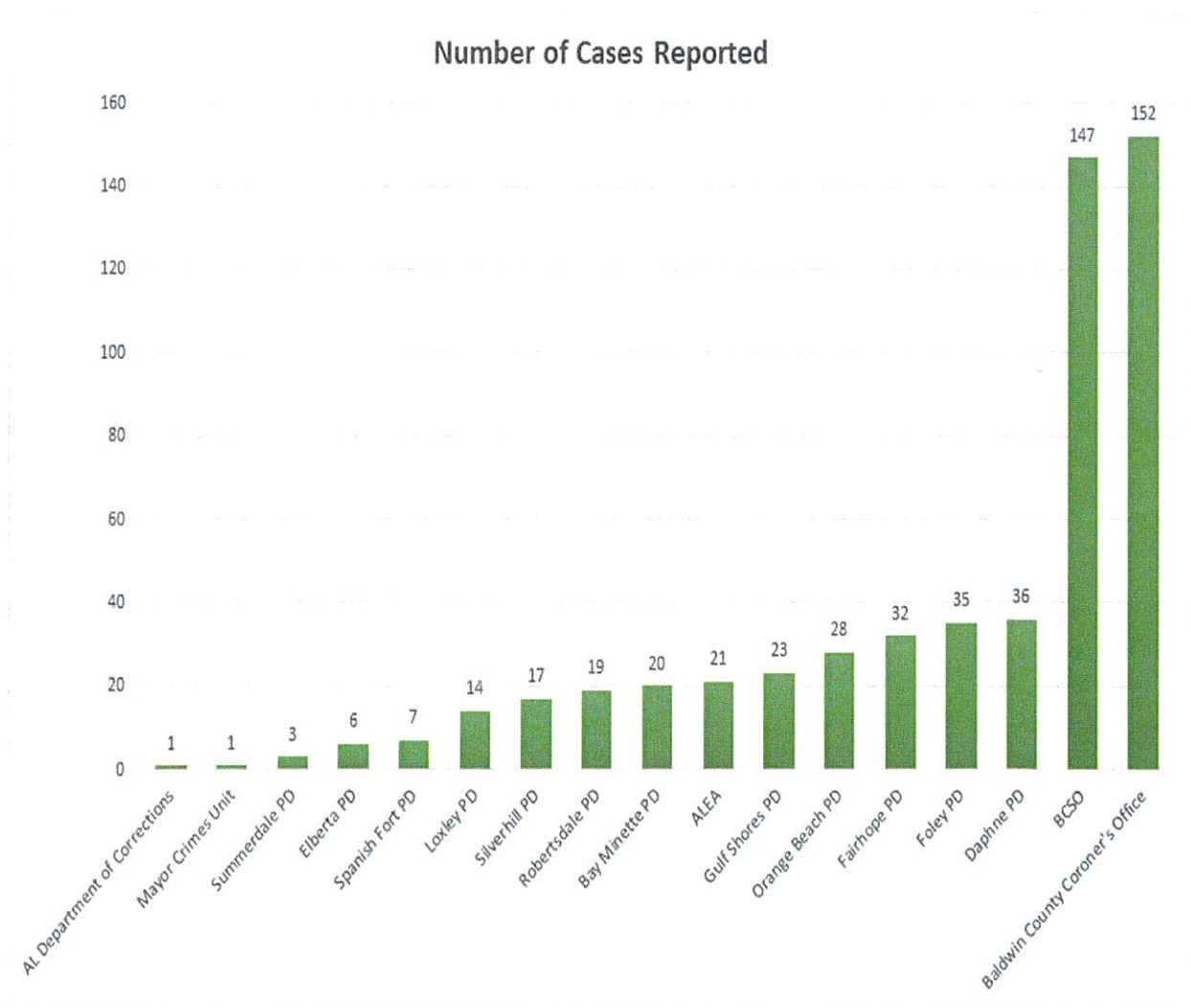


** 59 % increase over past 8 years.

October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020

*562 Cases

Death Investigation by Agency



The Baldwin County Coroner's Office assisted 16 agencies with investigations of death that occurred in Baldwin County. The Office also handled 152 death investigations that had no Law Enforcement involvement.

The office continued to maintain a 1-hour response time as well as a timely progression of Death Investigation, resolving most cases in less than 90 days. Additionally, the following goals were achieved:

1. Deputy Coroners were moved from Contract status to SARPC, as Temporary Employees, thus affording them workers compensation protection.
2. Developed a Training manual for Deputy Coroners and a pathway for National Certification in Death Investigation.
3. Added 2 additional Deputy Coroners in Training, allowing for multiple on call Coroners to cover the land mass of Baldwin County.
4. Added additional storage space by purchase of a Conex Container.
5. Improved the privacy of loading and unloading with Privacy Fencing.
6. Signed a Facility Use agreement with the Legacy of Hope to assist families with tissue donation.

Continued assistance with Law Enforcement, the District Attorney and the Alabama Department of Forensic Science (ADFS) office is essential for these cases to be adjudicated timely, accurately and without bias.

The BCCO spent \$374,486.64 of its \$410,382.00 dollar budget, resulting in an average cost of \$666.35 per death investigation.

The BCCO was responsible for taking custody of 372 bodies, of which 215 were sent to ADFS, in Mobile, AL, for autopsy then released/returned to a funeral home of the family's choice.

The BCCO transported and housed 157 bodies for families from out of state or for cases needing a medical record review.

Transportation costs for the 2020 FY was \$104,225.00, up from \$90,400.00 in 2019. Likely a direct result of the increased case load. However, the County should have re-cooped 69% or \$72,100.00, from Cities and Towns that had deaths requiring transportation to ADFS.

The Coroner's office responded to 172 death scenes for investigative purposes. Typically, when Coroners respond to a scene, an autopsy is warranted. Each case is different but often scene investigation will result in at least an external exam and toxicology.

This past year the Coroner's Office could identify 100 % of the cases, leaving us no case with an unidentified body. The Coroner's office assisted the Council on Aging with 9 County Cremations.

The BCCO along with the Baldwin County Commission, signed a Facility Use Agreement with the Legacy of Hope. This will allow the County to receive revenues from the Coroner's assistance

with tissue donations. The BCCO assisted with 91 Tissue harvests in 2020. The BCCO assists the organ recovery teams whenever it is feasible to honor the subject's or family wishes. We do, however, guard the public trust and should further investigation be warranted for pending charges, the request to harvest may be denied by the Coroner's Office.

As we move into 2021, the office will continue to maintain its response time of 1-hour county wide. Rigorously advance its educational status of its investigators as well as the public as to the scope of work performed by the Office of the Coroner. We should achieve Accreditation as soon as we can receive an onsite audit of the Coroner Facilities.

We will continue to assist the Baldwin County Narcotic Homicide unit by providing rapid drug testing for Drug related cases.

We will work diligently toward achieving the Strategic Goal put forth by the County Commission at the recent Planning meeting: **"For Baldwin County to experience a Coroner's Office that is prepared to serve its functional population and is prepared for a Mass Fatality Incident"**. As Baldwin County grows, so should our ability to serve it.

I would respectfully submit this FY 2020 report to the Commission, along with the attached spreadsheet.

****Point of Interest: The Increase number of deaths seen by the Coroner's office for FY-19-20, did not seem to be directly related to the Covid Pandemic, but rather indirectly due to delayed medical care. The County also experienced over 153 % increase in Drug Deaths, from FY 18-19 (21 Drug Related) to FY 19-20 (53 Drug Related).**

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Pierce, DC, D-ABMDI

Coroner of Baldwin County

01-27-2021

Baldwin County Coroner
 18126 B Co Rd 54
 P.O. Box 2647
 Robertsdale, Alabama 36567

MONTHLY LOG

| Month/Year | Total Coroner Cases | Natural Deaths | Pending Deaths | Infectious Deaths - Accidents | Drug Deaths - Suicides | Drug Deaths - Accidents | Accidental Death | Violent Deaths - Suicide | Violent Deaths - Blunt Force Injuries | Violent Deaths - Homicide | Violent Deaths - Drownings | Violent Deaths - Fire Deaths | Cases sent for Autopsy | Undetermined Deaths | Total Cremation Permits | Indigent Burial / Cremation | Death Certificates Filed |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| October 2019 | 32 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 18 | 0 | 92 | 3 | 32 |
| November 2019 | 50 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 26 | 1 | 86 | 0 | 50 |
| December 2019 | 61 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 121 | 0 | 58 |
| January 2020 | 32 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 94 | 0 | 29 |
| February 2020 | 44 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 84 | 1 | 41 |
| March 2020 | 43 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 104 | 1 | 37 |
| April 2020 | 29 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 84 | 0 | 28 |
| May 2020 | 57 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 85 | 1 | 53 |
| June 2020 | 51 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 0 | 114 | 1 | 47 |
| July 2020 | 55 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 16 | 1 | 124 | 1 | 47 |
| August 2020 | 59 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 1 | 117 | 1 | 54 |
| September 2020 | 49 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 115 | 0 | 46 |
| Totals | 562 | 404 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 49 | 9 | 38 | 37 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 215 | 3 | 1220 | 9 | 522 |