



# **2025**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

PREPARED BY: MICHAEL R RATLIFF, CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

## Office of the Coroner Ross County, Ohio

### Jurisdiction Served and ORC Statues

We provide twenty-four hour/ seven days a week death investigation for Ross County with a total staff of 8; 1 coroner, 1 deputy coroner, 1 chief investigator and 5 investigators. We serve an increasing population of 78, 064 according to the 2010 census and responsible for coverage of 693.02 square miles. Ross County is the second largest county in Ohio, after Ashtabula County.

The coroner and all appointed staff have authority through the Ohio Revised Code, Section/Chapter 313:

Chapter 313: CORONER

***\*The Ross County Coroner's Office is accredited with the International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners.***



## **Ross County Coroner's Office Mission Statement**

*The mission of the Ross County Coroner's Office is to serve and protect the health and safety of the community by maintaining the highest standard of professionalism and integrity in determining the cause and manner of death. We are dedicated as a team to conduct independent investigations with the intent to ensure that the circumstances surrounding the death are understood and explained. We seek to enhance the health, safety and well-being of the citizens and guests of Ross County.*

*“We speak for those who can no longer speak for themselves”*

# Message From Benjamin Trotter, DO

## Ross County Coroner:

Annual Report

The Coroner's Office continues our unwavering dedication to the people of Ross County. We continue to stabilize our department with the addition of new staff and creating partnerships with our support groups. The people of Ross County will always be our focus and we will continue providing compassionate care during their personal time of need.

The Ross County Commissioners continue to support our drive to be a comfort and resource to anyone needing aid from our department. With their support, we work to find resources for our community members. We work with organizations across the state to make sure that every family has the care and treatment they deserve. The day-to-day work load of our office has not changed. We are providing a level of service at, or above, the national standard for death investigation. Our community deserves the best service available, and our office is supported to make sure we provide it.

This level of service would not be achievable without the amazing group of people who work for our office. Mike Ratliff continues to provide the leadership and experience to our group. His years of service provide us with the foundation of knowledge needed to maintain the standard of service we provide. His impending retirement is going to leave a void within our close group. He does the work of several people and makes it hard to fill his shoes. We continue to focus on growing our team to continue his work. The team remains strong with Mark Gray, Scotty LeGard, Scottie Cyrus, Alan Gossman, Nate Freeman, Chris Sabin and Dr. Amy Luckeydoo still providing service to our community. Without them, it would be impossible for our office to maintain the high level of service we provide.

Our office will always stay focused on the development of team members so that we can continue to protect the people of Ross County. We will always be a resource to the people of Ross County in matters associated with the death of a family member. Our commitment is to never stop working for our community.

Thank you for your continued support,

Ben Trotter DO FACEP  
Ross County Coroner



## 2025 Ross County Coroner Stats

Total Requests for Investigation –651

Cases Deferred to PCP/Attending-222 Drug Related-1

Hospice Deaths –179

Nursing Home Deaths –139

Other- 6

### Coroner Cases / Manner of Death

Cases-106

Natural-37		Drug Related-3		LE Involvement/In-Custody- 1
Accidental-53	Drug OD-21	Drug Related-2	MVC- 10	LE Involvement/In-Custody
Suicide-11	Drug OD-	Drug Related-		LE Involvement/In-Custody-2
Homicide-2		Drug Related-1		LE Involvement/In-Custody-2
Active/Pending-2				LE Involvement/In-Custody- 1
Undetermined-1	Drug OD-	Drug Related-		LE Involvement/In-Custody-

Total Autopsies- (50) Montgomery County (48) FCCO/ORC (1) OSU Anthropology (1)

Total Toxicology (72) Tox Only (26) NMS (27) MCCO Lab (45)

Scene Responses/External Exams- (80) Scene Removals/Transports (64)

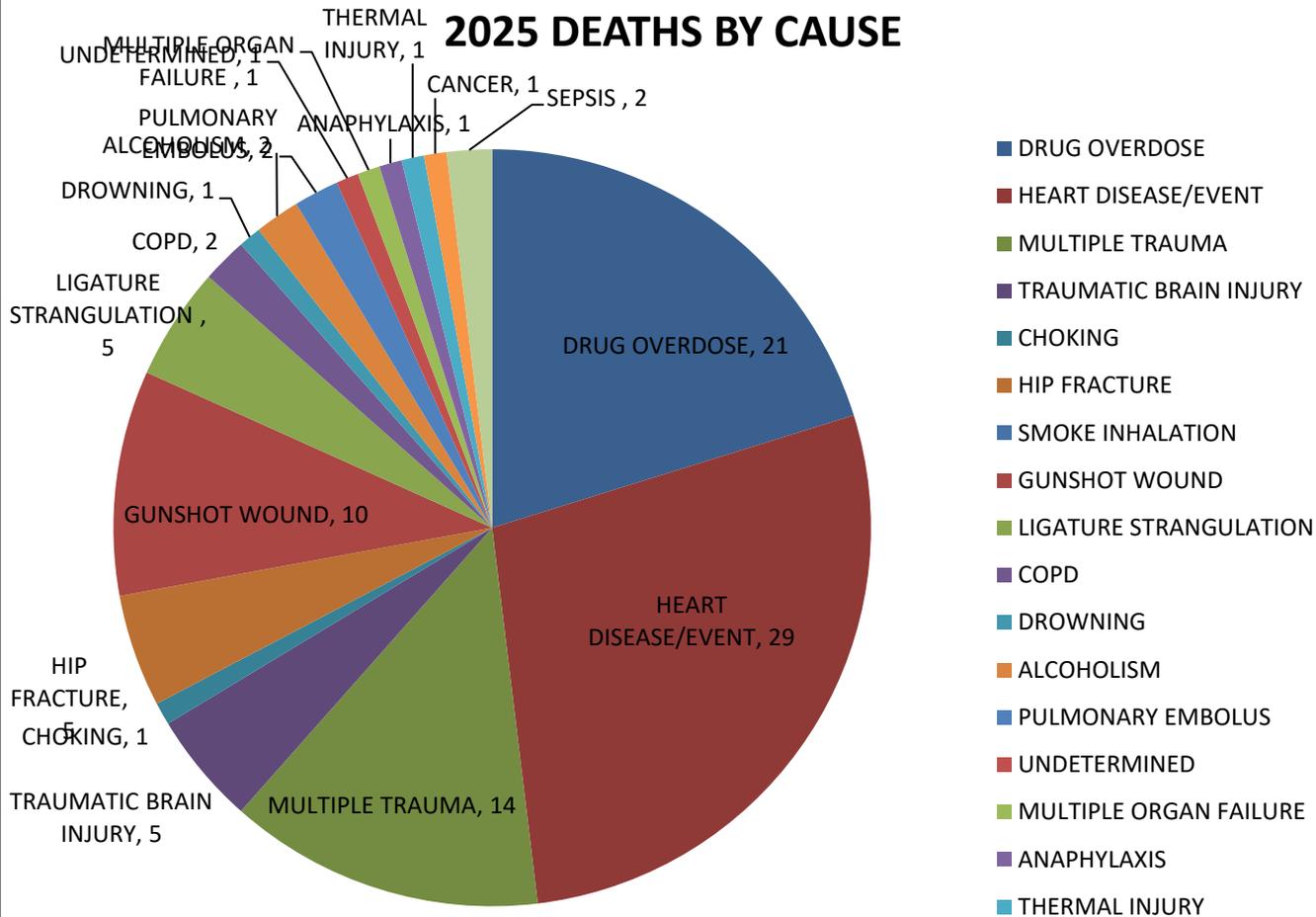
Advanced Decomps (17)

Unclaimed/Indigent- (10) Unidentified Bodies-( ) Exhumations-()

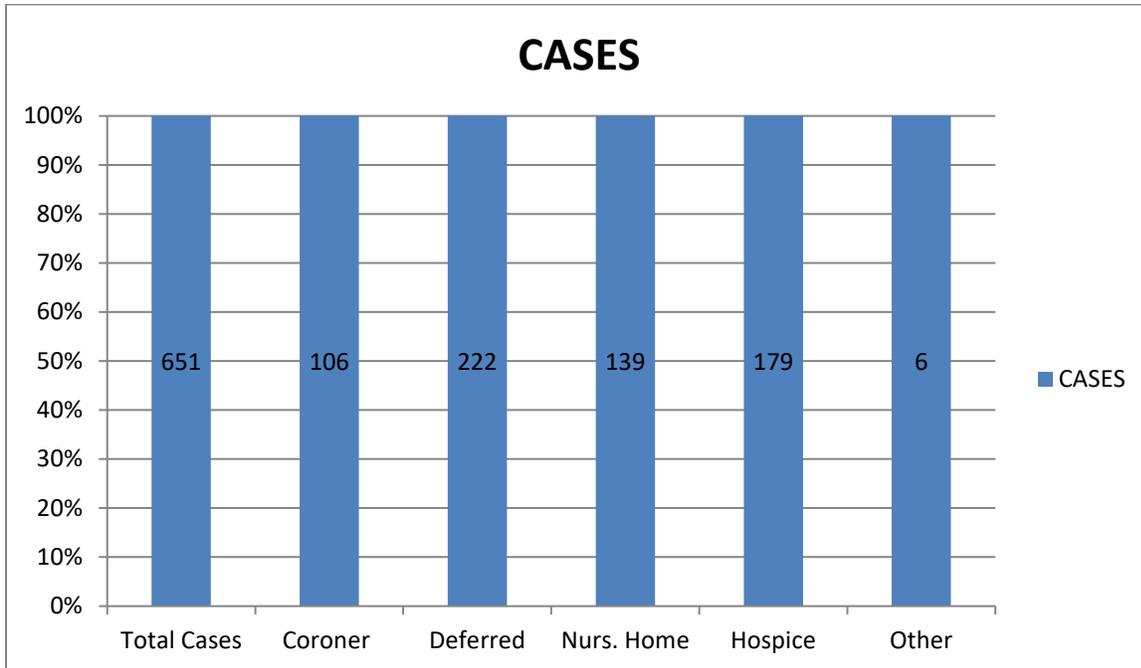
Cremation Authorizations (7) Initial Death Notifications (6)

Organ/Tissue Donation- (1) Eye Donations- ( ) Body Donations(2)

# 2025 DEATHS BY CAUSE



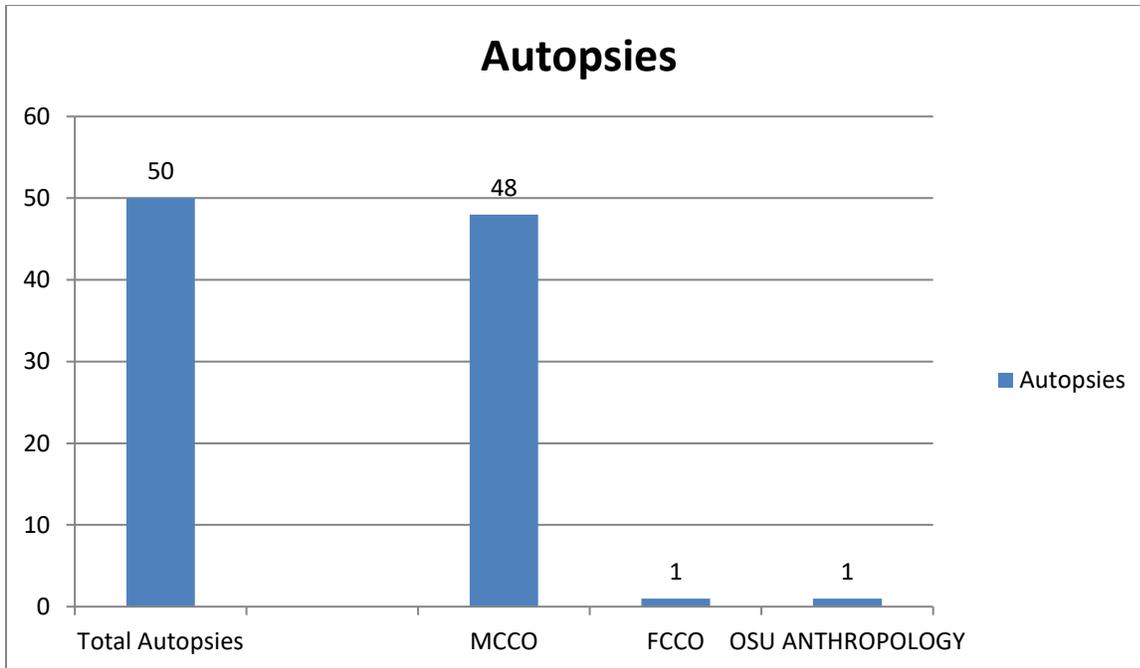
## Types Of Cases





## 2023-2025 CASE STATS COMPARISON

	2023	2024	2025
<b>TOTAL CASES</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>651</b>
<b>DEFERRED</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>HOSPICE</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>NURSING HOME</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CORONER CASES</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>NATURAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>ACCIDENTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>DRUG OVERDOSES/Related</b>	<b>50/11</b>	<b>36/10</b>	<b>21/6</b>
<b>SUICIDES</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOMICIDES</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>UNDETERMINED</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PENDING</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>AUTOPSIES</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>TOXICOLOGY CASES</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>SCENE RESPONSES</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>REMOVALS</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>UNCLAIMED/INDIGENT</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ADVANCED DECOMP</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>IN CUSTODY DEATHS</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>



**Cost to County Per Case/Autopsy**

(Forensic) Montgomery County= \$1850.00 plus transport

Franklin County= \$1500

OSU- Varies

\*Per ORC County financially responsible for incidents that occur in Ross County but patient is transported to another county and dies.



## AUTOPSY AND TOXICOLOGY YEARLY COMPARISON

YEAR	#CONTRACT	#ORC	MEDICAL	TOX ONLY
2009	16	2	43	27
2010	12	8	35	20
2011	17	10	31	23
2012	12	8	37	29
2013	15	7	28	11
2014	24	5	0	36
2015	36	8	0	47
2016	28	8	0	69
2017	30	2	*1	44
2018	24	3	0	61
2019	29	2	0	55
2020	30	2	0	74
2021	42	2	0	67
2022	33	3	x	69
2023	24	0	x	56
2024	39	1	x	41
2025	49	1	X	26

**Contract**= autopsies on cases we have jurisdiction and request.

**ORC**= autopsies our county is responsible for on individuals that die in neighboring counties but the incident occurred in Ross County

**Medical**= autopsies that were done at Adena per our request

\*Performed at OSU and paid for by Adena

**Tox only**= cases that toxicology was done but no autopsy



## DRUG OVERDOSE DEATH COMPARISON CHART

YEAR	OD DEATHS	DRUG RELATED	HEROIN (Included)	FENTANYL (Included)	OTHER OPIATES (Included)	Carfentanil and Other Fentanyl Analogs	METH	XYLAZINE
2009	19	n/a	0	N/A	14			
2010	19	n/a	2	N/A	11			
2011	19	7	1	N/A	16			
2012	13	7	n/a	N/A	8			
2013	11	11	n/a	N/A	n/a			
2014	31	6	19	N/A	n/a			
2015	40	11	20	11	16			
2016	44	6	19	20	12	1	4	
2017	34	12	11	14	15	9	6	
2018	32	14	16	26	4	2	12	
2019	37	8	10	29	8	5	17	
2020	56	16	2	46	7	28	21	
2021	64	18	3	55	9	23	29	
2022	60	11	1	49	3	2	31	
2023	50	11	0	42	11	28	28	4
2024	36	8		26	6	16	25	2
2025	21	6		13	5	3	13	4
2026	4			2	1		1	1



## **TRENDS IN CASES IN 2025**

- 1. The total number of cases decreased from 2024**
- 2. Drug Overdose deaths continued to be lower than prior years.**
- 3. Suicides increased from our record low year in 2024 and back to average.**
- 4. Advanced decomposition cases were consistently high with some cases that needed DNA to make positive identification.**
- 5. The number of Unclaimed/Indigent cases continued to be high and doesn't take into account all of the city's indigent cases as they are handled directly by the funeral homes in most cases.**



## **GOALS FOR 2026**

Our main goal will be to continue to provide the best possible death investigation for the citizens and visitors to our county. We will strive to continue to provide medicolegal death investigation that meets or exceeds the national and international standards for death investigation. Our goal is to be able to answer the tough questions families and friends, as well as the general public may have when a death occurs under our jurisdiction.

We will continue to work with law enforcement, local emergency medical services, and the health community, to do our part in keeping Ross County safe. We will continue to provide any needed and/or requested education while striving to better educate ourselves in the ever so fast changing field of medicolegal death investigation.

2025 saw several difficult cases, several with the need to use DNA to make positive identification. We are continuing to see a trend of individuals that have died alone and not found for several days later. This is a trend that we saw an increase with the pandemic but continues to be an issue in our county. We are discussing with our stakeholders on options to try preventing such deaths, but no good overall solution has been found.

We end 2025 with (2) two open cases that we are waiting for lab results from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification.

2025 is my final year as Chief Investigator and as an active member of this office; it's bittersweet for sure as I have truly enjoyed my time here, and I sincerely hope that I will leave this office at least a little better than I found it.

Our goal is to be better than in 2025.

Michael R Ratliff  
Chief Investigator