

**LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE  
& FORENSICS CENTER**

**2022**



**ANNUAL REPORT**

**DANIEL A. BUGLIO, D-ABMDI**  
LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER

# *Dedication*

*To everyone who has experienced loss, and continues to experience grief  
and sadness, we dedicate to you.*

*"Say not in grief, 'he is no more', but thankfulness that he was"*

-Hebrew Proverb

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# Acknowledgements

The staff of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office always demonstrates compassion, professionalism and true dedication. They tirelessly serve our community with 24-hour commitment and hard work. Not only should they be recognized as essential workers, but also as an essential team.

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them"

- John F. Kennedy

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# LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE & FORENSICS CENTER

**DANIEL A. BUGLIO, D-ABMDI**  
LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER

4350 BROADWAY  
ALLENTOWN, PA 18104  
OFFICE: (610) 782-3426  
FAX: (610) 820-8271

## Letter from the Coroner

Everyone,

Wow! As I sit here and type this letter, I am doing so as your Lehigh County Coroner. It has been my honor to take on the role as Coroner and lead a team of true professionals. The year of 2022 has brought about many changes to the Lehigh County Coroner's Office & Forensics Center. My appointment to Coroner in April, 2022 began those changes and the positive outcomes still continue. Staff has increased and we have made investments and advancements in technology. Education and training for staff flows on a continuing basis to remain on-point and enhance our investigational capabilities. Our new community outreach program has been a huge success! We have provided education and positive learning experiences for numerous civic, medical and law enforcement communities. We have attended community events, health expos, parades and even "trunk or treats". We have been actively utilizing Facebook and social media. Those resources help keep our office engaged with the community and have proven to be successful in locating next-of-kin and/or family members when needed for investigations. Most importantly, we became part of the community. My work as Coroner has just started. I look forward to continuing my service to the community and leading my staff in a forward and positive direction in 2023.

The year of 2022 continued with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the variants that followed. The year of 2022 continued with the resurgence of the opioid crisis. We have seen numerous opioid combinations; every combination instantly proves to be fatal. Neither the pandemic or illicit drug addiction have a boundary. My staff will always be there to investigate, assist, educate, offer help and guidance to the families we serve and continue to offer support for as long as necessary.





# LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE & FORENSICS CENTER

The year of 2022 has provided my entire staff and I the opportunity to meet and work with many law enforcement agencies, first responders, 911 dispatchers, healthcare workers and funeral directors. We strengthened our current relationships and gained many more. It is an honor to work hand-in-hand with these professionals and I am forever thankful for that.

Finally, it is with honor that I provide to you the 2022 Annual Report for the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center. A report comprised of statistical information and additional data, that will inform you and provide insight for you on the daily operations of the Coroner's Office.

Please remember, each one of these numbers represents a person who lost a loved one. The staff of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center will always offer support, compassion and prayers.

Respectfully,



Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI  
Lehigh County Coroner

## **Mission Statement**

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center provides services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is staffed by diverse and highly trained personnel, whose function is to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding a death over which the coroner has jurisdiction, and to determine the cause and manner of death.

Forensic investigative services performed include: death investigation, post mortem examination, photography, fingerprinting, entomology, anthropology, temperature analysis, child and infant death analysis, bloodstain pattern analysis, odontology and ophthalmology.

Death scene investigations include: natural deaths, accidents, suicides, homicides as well as deaths due to neglect, abuse, terrorism, fire/arson, industrial accidents and mass disasters.

The investigations and rulings of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center concerning criminal acts, criminal neglect or those that affect public health and safety, are often the foundation for follow-up actions by other investigative agencies.

The six basic functions of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office are:

- Determine the cause and manner of death for individuals in a timely fashion in the process determining whether or not there is sufficient reason to believe that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect.
- Identify the deceased with the highest degree of certainty possible, and provide written documentation of the same.
- Proper and timely notification of death to the legal next of kin.
- Prepare, maintain, and safeguard thorough investigation reports and scene documentation.
- Account for, maintain, and safeguard personal property and evidence.
- Provide assistance to families involved in our investigations as applicable.

## **Introduction**

The Coroner's Office is an independent, investigative division of the Lehigh County Government. The citizens of Lehigh County fund the office through the Office of the Lehigh County Executive and Board of Commissioners. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office was the first Coroner's Office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the second worldwide to have received accreditation from the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME). We have complied with recertification and continue to uphold the highest standards to maintain this accreditation. We went through and passed our reaccreditation for 2021, making it our 15<sup>th</sup> year of being accredited.

The position of coroner is an elected position, voted upon by the citizens of Lehigh County. Coroner Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI, has been with the office since the spring of 2000, serving as an Investigator and then as First Deputy Coroner/Operations Manager. He is a member of the Pennsylvania State Coroner's Association and the International Association of Coroners and



Medical Examiners. Coroner Buglio serves as Co-Chair for the Lehigh County Child Death Review Team, member of the Lehigh County Suicide Task Force, the Lehigh County Elder Abuse Task Force and the Allentown Heroin/Opioid Task Force. Under the direction of Coroner Buglio, the coroner's office provides medicolegal death investigations, which can include the authorization to conduct autopsies, administrative support, as well as many other family assistance services.

Lehigh County is the most populated of four counties that comprise the Lehigh Valley region of eastern Pennsylvania and northwestern New Jersey. It is one of the fastest growing counties in Pennsylvania, with a current estimated population of 372,195, with a growth rate of 0.26% in the past year according to recent United States census data. Lehigh County's largest city, Allentown, had a population of 125,845 in 2020, a 6.6% increase in the last decade, ranking behind only Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Lehigh County is served by Lehigh Valley International Airport and Allentown Queen City Municipal Airport. Public bus service is also available to and from the metropolitan cities of New York City and Philadelphia. Major highways include Interstate 78, Interstate 476, Routes 22 and 222, and numerous smaller state routes. The Lehigh Valley has been part of a warehouse "boom" in recent years, creating a significant increase in the amount of truck traffic along the road network.

There are a total of nine hospitals in Lehigh County. The two largest health-care systems, Lehigh Valley Health Network and St. Luke's Hospital Network, both boast Level One trauma centers with helicopter access. Investigations will often stretch far outside Lehigh County and into our neighboring counties and states. In addition, Lehigh County has twenty-five nursing home facilities within its boundaries.

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is in Allentown, South Whitehall Township, Pennsylvania. The complex building is shared by Cetronia Ambulance Corps, Lehigh County Special Operations, Lehigh County Emergency Management, and the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office Firearms & Tool Mark Laboratory. The Coroner's Office is comprised of approximately 6,000 square feet of office space and approximately 7,000 square feet housing the morgue operations. Below are photos of the main autopsy suite and decomposition autopsy room.



**Individual Autopsy Suite**

## **Main Autopsy Area**

Consisting of two individual Autopsy Suites







## Decomposition Autopsy Suite

Self-contained within the Morgue Area



## Decomposition Autopsy Suite

Featuring two viewports for outside observation



## Decomposition Autopsy Suite

Through the viewport of the Law Enforcement Observation Room

### Coroner Investigations

According to Title 16 of the Pennsylvania Statutes, it shall be the duty of the coroner or the deputy coroner of any county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in all cases where death is sudden or violent or is of a suspicious nature and character, to cause a careful investigation of the facts concerning said death to be made, to ascertain whether the death was due to other than natural causes (16 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 9521). The coroner having a view of the body shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning deaths which appear to have happened within the county, regardless where the cause may have occurred, for the purpose of determining whether or not an autopsy should be conducted (16 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 1237) in the following cases: (1) sudden deaths not caused by readily recognizable disease, or when the cause of death cannot be properly certified by a physician on the basis of prior medical attendance; (2) deaths occurring under suspicious circumstances, including those where alcohol, drugs or other toxic substances; (3) deaths occurring as a result of violence or trauma, whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental; (4) any death in which trauma, chemical injury, drug overdose or reaction to drugs or medication or medical treatment was a primary or secondary; (5) operative and peri-operative deaths in which the death is not readily explainable on the basis of prior disease; (6) any death wherein the body is unidentified or unclaimed; (7) deaths known or suspected as due to contagious disease and constituting a public hazard; (8) deaths occurring in prison or a penal institution or while in the custody of the police; (9) sudden infant death syndrome; (10) stillbirths; and (11) bodies to be cremated.



## Coroner Activities

The staff of the coroner's office are involved in a wide variety of activities on a daily basis to facilitate the mission of the office. This includes responding to and investigating deaths throughout the geographic boundaries of Lehigh County, regardless of location, time and weather. Investigators perform postmortem examinations, attend autopsies, obtain toxicology samples, consult with medical personnel, laboratory personnel, and review medical records. Investigators routinely interact with law enforcement agencies on the local, state and federal levels as well as district attorney's offices throughout the Commonwealth.

Staff members are well versed in communicating with families and assisting them accordingly in their time of need. Quite often, an investigator is the first person to bring the worst of news. We guide family members through the investigatory process and are available for them well after the investigation has concluded. Additional duties include, reviewing investigative and autopsy findings with the legal next of kin, and coordinating release of the deceased and any property to the funeral home of the families choosing.

The coroner's office staff provides testimony both in court and in depositions. This can be for both civil and criminal matters.

The coroner's office is responsible for reporting deaths to numerous outside agencies. Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and many other government and regulatory agencies.



The coroner's office cooperates routinely and is actively involved in the local and state Child Death Reporting Systems. These agencies are comprised of members of several disciplines within the local health care systems, as well as local health bureau members, to review all deaths under the age of twenty-one. We participate in various programs and needs ranging from suicide prevention to pandemic preparedness. Additionally, the staff is routinely active in other entities, whether it is for education, guidelines or resources to assist with current trends in investigation procedures.

All of our investigators attend annual training to obtain and maintain the continuing education requirements, set forth by Office of the Attorney General and the Pennsylvania Coroner's Education Board. Many on our staff have passed the rigorous training to become registered with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, which requirements include extensive field experience and training. Several on our staff have received additional specialized training in diagnostic imaging through the use of digital x-rays and dental x-rays.





**Portable  
X-Ray  
Machine**



**Portable Dental X-Ray Device**

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is prepared, trained, highly educated and motivated to meet the needs in this often-demanding field. Our desire to bring the finest service to not only the families we serve, but to the numerous other outside agencies we work hand in hand with on a daily basis. These agencies include local and state police departments, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security and the National Transportation Safety Board.



It should be noted that the Lehigh County Coroner's Office annual report does not include all deaths occurring in Lehigh County, but only the cases investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner's Office. For a total description of deaths occurring in Lehigh County please consult:

Vital Records, Pennsylvania Department of Health  
105 Nesbitt Road  
New Castle, PA 16105  
(724)-656-3100



## **Coroner's Office Staff**

The staff of the Coroner's Office comes from a diverse background with considerable training and experiences that benefit our investigations. Backgrounds include emergency medical services, law enforcement, fire / emergency services, fire investigation, military and funeral service. In addition, several staff members have received degrees in forensics and related fields.

### **Administration**

Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI  
*Coroner*

Richard B. Pender, D-ABMDI  
*Chief Deputy Coroner*

Cassandra Schiffner, D-ABMDI  
*First Deputy Coroner*

Michael Bartholomew, D-ABMDI  
*Field Supervisor*

Marianne Granitz  
*Administrative Asst.*

Kelly Dickinson  
*Deputy Coroner/Administrative Asst.*

### **Morgue Staff**

Maryanne Lutz, M.A.  
*Morgue Technician*

Heather Newman, RT(R)  
*Radiology Technician*

Jill Gower, RT(R)  
*Radiology Technician*

### **Deputy Coroners (Full Time)**

Anthony Chirumbolo  
*Investigator*

Craig Hanzl, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Dywane Harris, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

W. Wayne Hopkins, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Jennifer Huaman  
*Investigator*

Richard Kroon, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Jason Nicholas, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Gabrielle Riley, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Jackie Seidman, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

Philip Szalczinger  
*Investigator*

Rachel Tallarico, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

### **Deputy Coroners (Part Time)**

Jason Smith  
*Investigator*

Edward Zucal, D-ABMDI  
*Investigator*

### **Outside Office Consultants**

Dr. Edward Mazuchowski,  
*Chief, Forensic Pathology Associates*

Dr. Rameen Starling-Roney,  
*Forensic Pathology Associates*

Dr. Michael Johnson,  
*Forensic Pathology Associates*

Dr. Crystal Magno,  
*Forensic Pathology Associates*

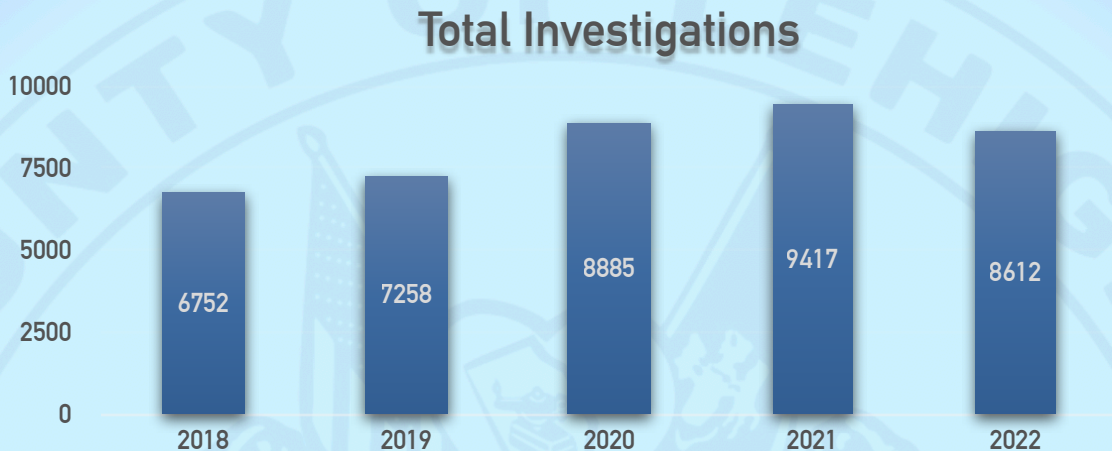
Dr. Robert Morrison,  
*Ophthalmologist*

Dr. David Wyke,  
*Odontologist Investigator*



## 2022 INVESTIGATION DATA

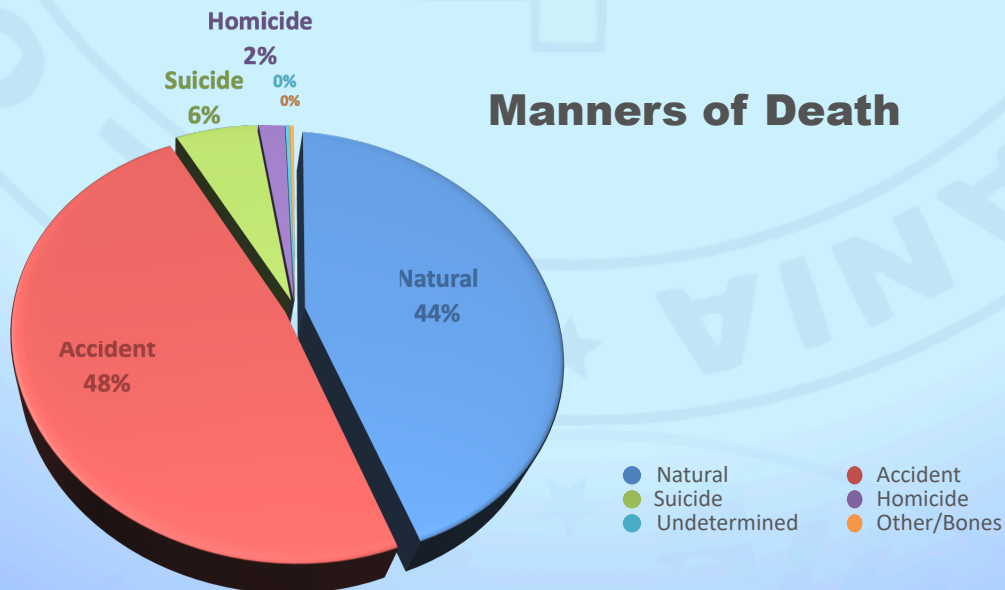
The information provided in this report was compiled from the deaths that were reported to the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and occurred during the calendar year 2022.



In 2022, our office conducted a total of 8,612 investigations. Jurisdictional cases, which required a deputy coroner response and scene investigation accounted for 1,020 investigations.

The remaining 7,592 investigations consist of Non-Jurisdictional cases, which are natural deaths that occurred under medical care but met the criteria of a reportable death (3,966) and authorizations for decedents to be cremated (3,626).

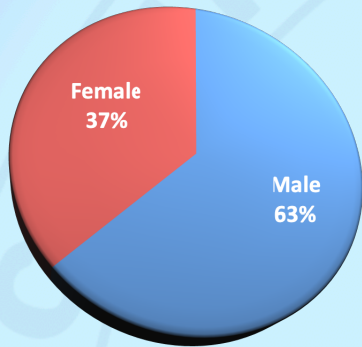
There are five medicolegal classifications related to the manners of death. The manner of death is the determination of how the injury or disease leads to death. The five manners of death are: Natural, Accident, Suicide, Homicide and Undetermined. "Pending Investigation" are those cases awaiting further information, such as autopsy or toxicology results, before they can be ruled on. The chart below represents the manners of death in numbers investigated and percentage as ruled upon by the coroner's office in 2022. The numbers below exclude any cases pending further investigation.



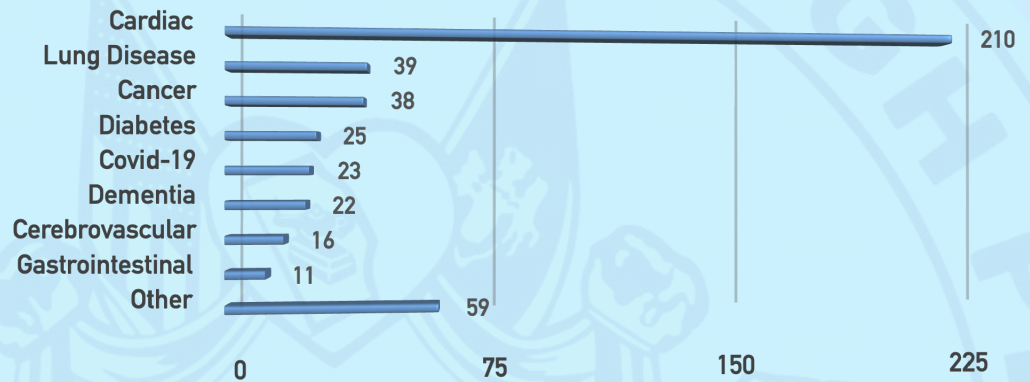


By definition, a natural death is death occurring in the course of nature and from natural causes (as age or disease) as opposed to accident or violence. Often, a natural death can occur suddenly, without a recognized disease process or while the deceased is not under medical care. Of the **443 natural death** cases investigated in 2022, thirty-five (35) required an autopsy to determine the cause and manner of death. The chart below represents the natural cases investigated in 2022 and the associated disease process. “Other” is comprised of a number of disease processes, most notably kidney, liver and chronic alcohol related illness.

### Natural Deaths by Gender

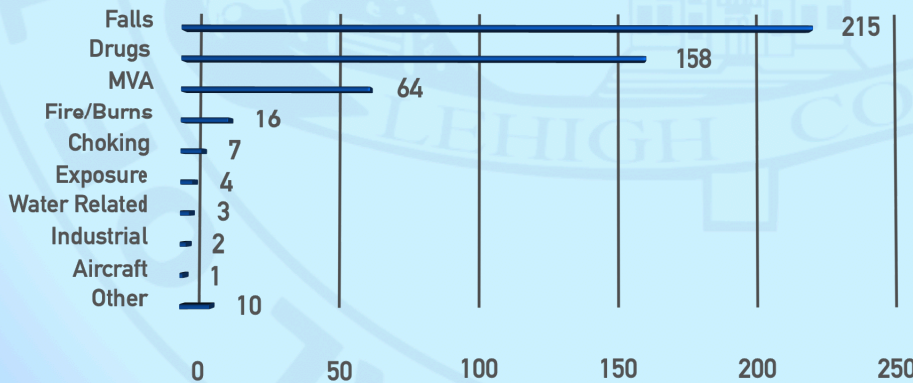


### 2022 Natural Death Investigations

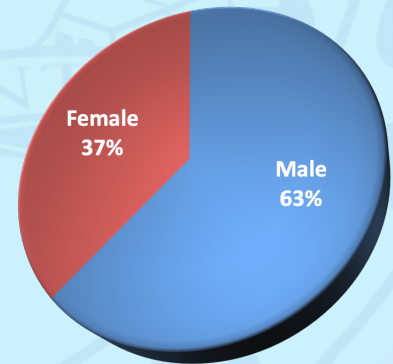


Accidental deaths were the highest category of investigations in 2022. The chart on the left represents the **480 accidental deaths** with modality, investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner’s Office which were accident in manner. The chart on the right represents the percentage of deaths between male and females. Of particular note, the percentages between male and female mirror the natural death percentages noted above.

### Accidental Deaths by Modality

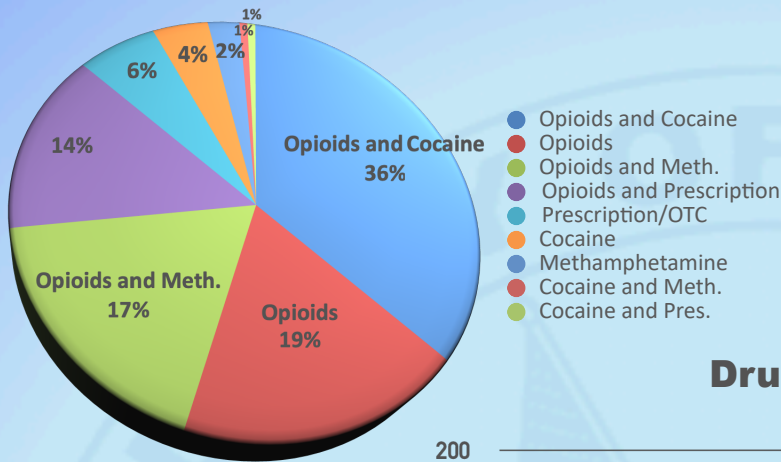


### Accidental Deaths by Gender



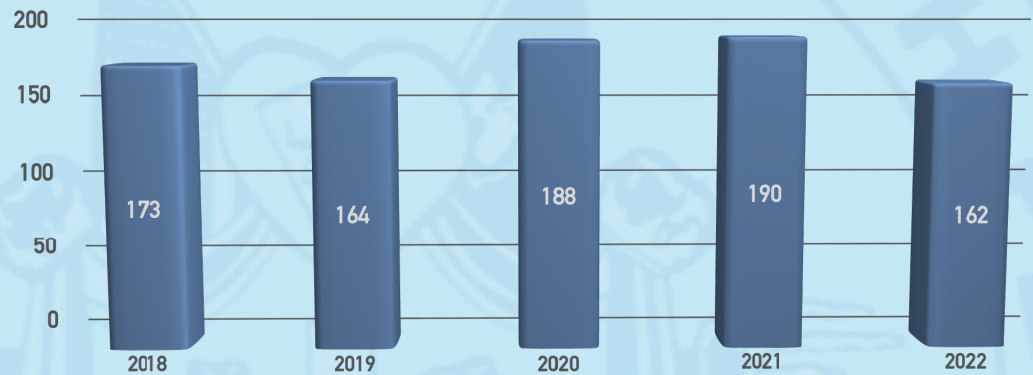
Next to fall related deaths, drug related deaths are one of the most common investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner’s Office. National statistics continue to rise and that is no different here in Lehigh County. The Lehigh County Coroner’s Office partners with the Allentown Health Bureau Opioid Task Force, Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol, Lehigh County District Attorney’s Office, and law enforcement agencies in a continued effort to make a positive impact on the opioid crisis. A chart of the following page represents the number of drug deaths investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner’s Office over the last five years. The number reflects drug involvement (illicit, prescription or over-the-counter) in three manners of death; Accident (158), Suicide (3), Homicide (1).

## 2022 Drug Death Investigations



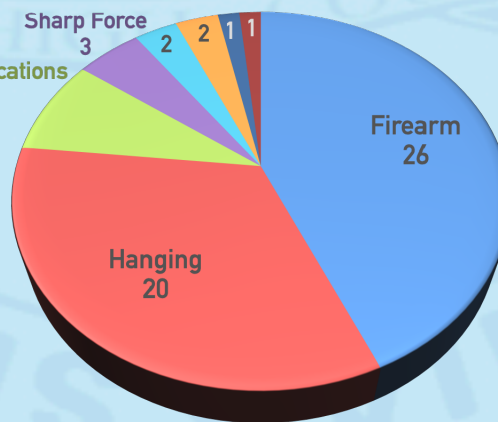
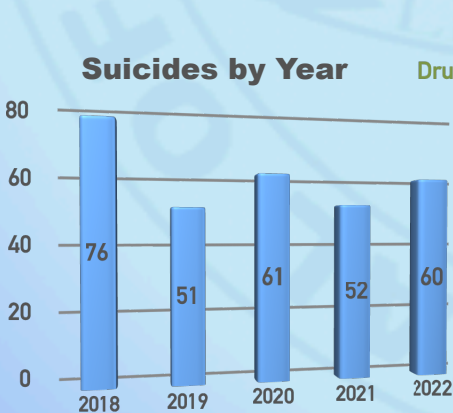
As illustrated in the chart to the left, deaths related to opioids such as heroin and the synthetic opioid fentanyl, have reached crisis levels. 91% of all drug deaths investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner's Office in 2022 had an opioid present exclusively or in combination with methamphetamine, prescription or over-the-counter medications.

## Drug Related Deaths by Year

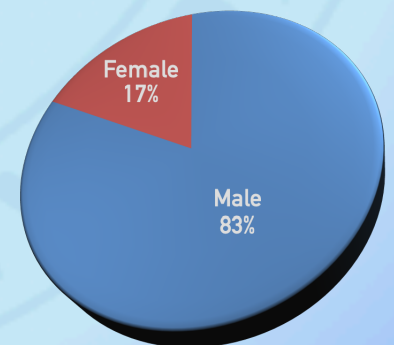


Suicide is death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. Every Suicide is a tragedy and to some degree a mystery. Depression is a key risk factor for suicide; others include psychiatric disorders, substance use, chronic pain and a family history of suicide. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office partners with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of the Allentown Health Bureau; providing valuable insight into the awareness and prevention of suicide. The following charts below provide additional information on the **60 suicide deaths** investigated by the Lehigh County Coroner's Office in 2022.

## 2022 Suicide Modality



## 2022 Suicides by Gender



● Firearm ● Hanging ● Drugs/Medications ● Sharp Force ● Carbon Monoxide ● Burns ● Poison ● Fall

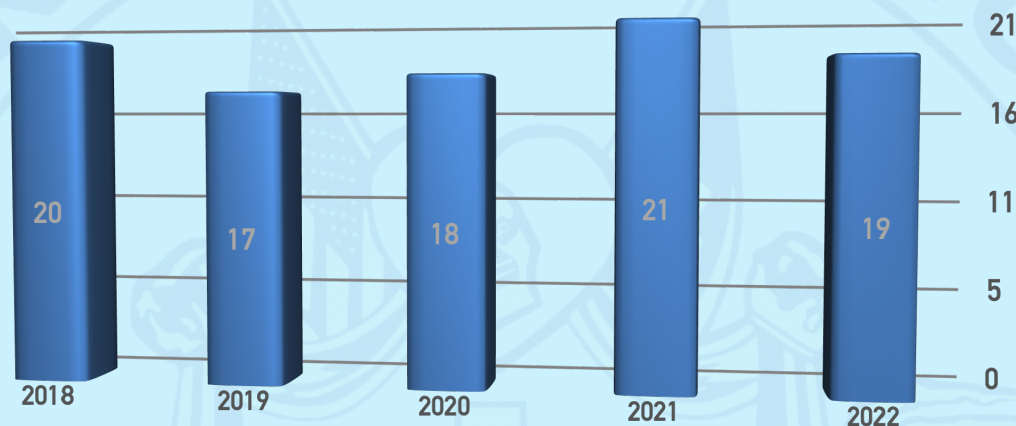
The above charts represent the amount of suicide deaths investigated by this office over the past five years, the modality of the 60 suicide deaths investigated in 2022, and the percentage difference between male and female suicide investigations, respectively from left to right.



Homicide is the act of killing one human being by another. Homicide is a general term and may refer to a noncriminal act as well as the criminal act of murder.

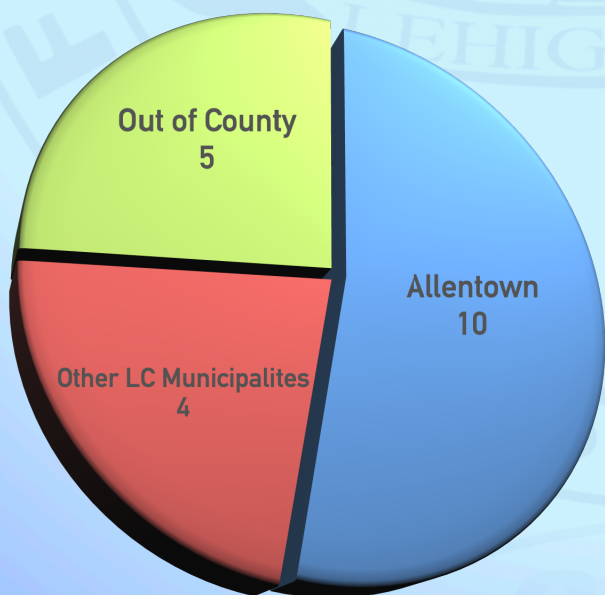
The Lehigh County Coroner's Office works closely with all involved law enforcement agencies and district attorney's offices. While a cause of death is often readily known in a homicide, an autopsy is always performed in order to document injuries and collect additional evidence.

### Homicides by Year

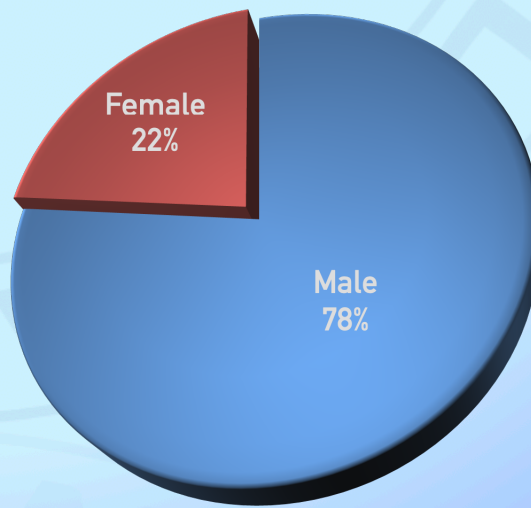


Of the **19 Homicide** deaths that occurred in 2022, the injuries and death occurred in Lehigh County fourteen (14) times. Ten (10) of those homicides occurred in the City of Allentown. Out of county injuries and subsequent death occurred in five (5) cases. The chart on the left below reflects that case breakdown. The chart on the right reflects the percentage difference between male and female homicide victims.

### 2022 Homicide Investigations



### 2022 Homicides by Gender





The chart below reflects the methods to which the injuries resulting in homicides occurred.

## 2022 Homicides by Modality



In 2022, the Lehigh County Coroner's Office investigated three (3) bone recoveries. In two of those cases, the bones were determined to be non-human. The other case was a weathered human skull found in an abandoned shed. No additional investigatory information was available to further the case.





## SUMMARY

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your support of our office throughout 2022. I and my staff look forward to 2023 with a continued pursuit of excellence; not only to the families we serve, but to the Lehigh County Administration as well.

If there is any part of this report that you have questions about, or would like more information about, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

This report is provided to:

- County of Lehigh – Administration
- County of Lehigh – Board of Commissioners
- County of Lehigh – Judiciary
- County of Lehigh – Row Officers
- Various boards and committees

This report is also available on the website of the Office of the Coroner;  
[www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Coroner](http://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Coroner)

This report has been provided in electronic format. If you require a printed format, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,



Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI  
Coroner