Presentation of Annual Report to Board of County Commissioners

REGIONAL MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Dr. Laura Knight, Chief Medical Examiner & Coroner

August 8, 2017

Regional Medical Examiner's Office

- ***Regional center of excellence in death investigation***
- **State of the art, new facility opened Jan 2017**

First Annual Statistical Report

- General Statistics on Numbers and Types of Deaths Referred to WCRMEO
- Descriptive Statistics on Specific Causes and Manners of Death
- Focus on Vulnerable Populations and Other Special Categories, including: seniors, pediatric population, homeless persons, indigent and unclaimed bodies
- Purpose: resource for strategic planning for WCRMEO, informing citizens and county leadership, policy guidance, and aiding public health and prevention efforts

Mission Statement

The mission of the WCRMEO is:

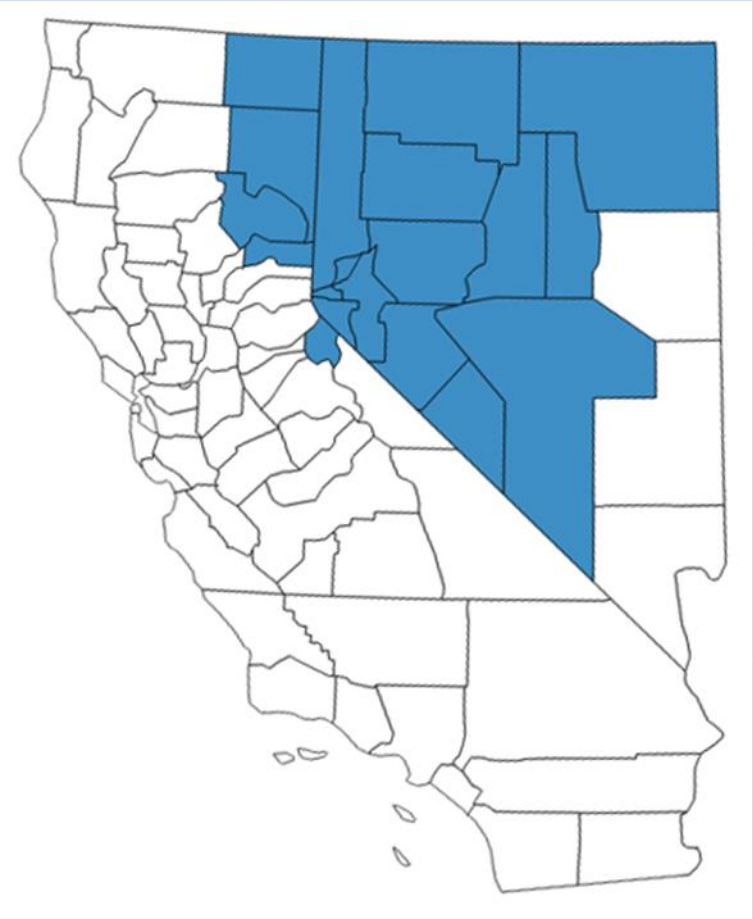
- **to investigate unexpected and unexplained deaths, and**
- **to identify and report on the cause and manner of death.**

We apply scientific investigative techniques and medical procedures,

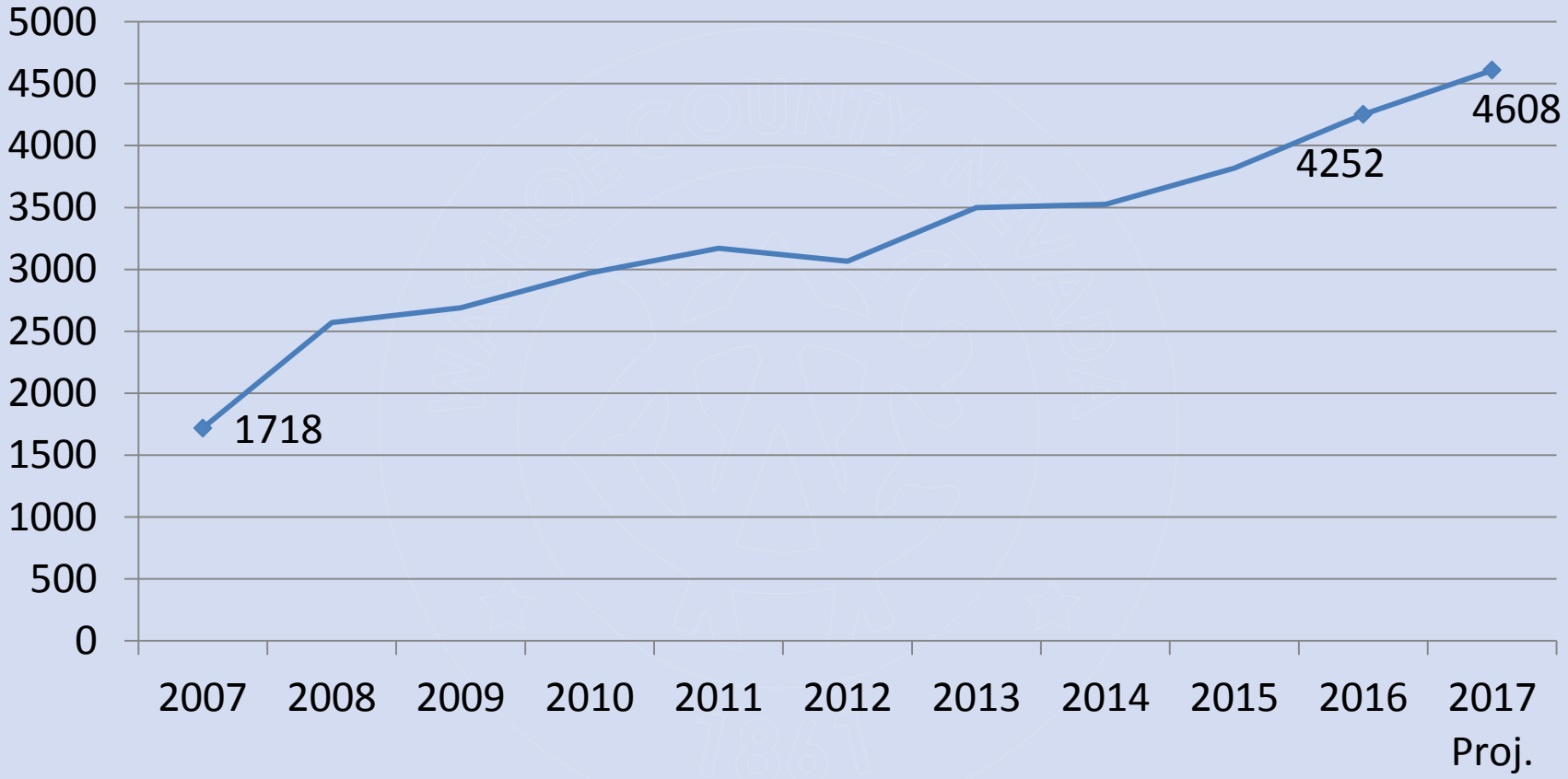
using integrity and compassion,

to serve families and public agencies impacted by sudden unexpected death.

18 Additional Counties Rely on Us



Deaths Reported to WCRMEO



Reasons for increased caseload

- Increased regional population
- Ageing population
- Large indigent/homeless population
- More unclaimed bodies
- Drug trends
- Suicide rate
- Trauma referral center
- **Anticipate continued annual growth**

Total Cases by Type (for all areas served)

	2015	2016	Percent Change
Autopsies	565	657	+16%
Limited Autopsies	27	54	+100%
External Exams	316	279	-12%
Consultations	655	641	-2%
Jurisdiction Terminated	2255	2622	+16%
Total Cases Reported	3819	4253	+11%

Total* Examinations

Manner of Death	2015	2016	Percent Change
Natural	288	326	+13%
Suicide	137	170	+24%
Homicide	34	38	+12%
Accident	237	263	+11%
Undetermined	41	27	-34%
Pending	0	4	N/A

*Total Examinations comprises all autopsies, limited autopsies, external examinations completed by WCRMEO.

Total Examination Cases by Sex

Male	698	70%
Female	292	30%
Unknown	0	0%

Transportation Deaths

88 transportation-related deaths in Washoe County in 2016

Role	#	%
Motor Vehicle Driver/Operator	49	56%
Motor Vehicle Passenger	12	14%
Pedestrian	23	26%
Cyclist	1	1%
Aircraft Pilot/Operator	1	1%
Aircraft Passenger	1	1%
Unknown	1	1%

Drug Intoxication Deaths

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Washoe County Drug Deaths	125	145	109	133	110

While 2016 saw a decrease in overall number of drug deaths, particularly prescription drug deaths, ***methamphetamine*** *and* ***heroin*** *remain prevalent and increasingly are being combined with prescription drugs with an end result in death.* ***Designer drug*** *deaths also appeared in Washoe County in 2016, largely due to the illicit designer opioid drug U-47700.*

Drug Intoxication Deaths

Major Categories*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Illicit Drugs Only	36	54	41	53	38
Prescription Drugs Only, or Prescription & Over-the-Counter Drugs	77	64	64	65	43
Illicit and Prescription Drugs Combined	8	17	2	11	19
Illicit-involved Deaths, By Drug					
Methamphetamine (Without Heroin)	25	50	26	43	46
Heroin (Without Methamphetamine)	11	9	12	13	16
Methamphetamine and Heroin	3	4	3	8	9
Cocaine (Alone or With Others)	5	11	4	3	4
Designer Drugs	1	0	0	0	4

Washoe County Homeless Persons

- 24 deaths in 2016
- 23 Male, 1 Female
- 83% aged 30-69; no children, few elders >70
- Majority (58%) aged 50-69

Manner of Death	#	%
Natural	9	38%
Accident	11	46%
Suicide	2	8%
Undetermined	2	8%
Homicide	0	0%

Accidental Homeless Deaths

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Drug-related deaths (all involved methamphetamine and/or heroin)	5	45%
Pedestrians struck by motor vehicle (1) or train (2)	3	27%
Bicyclist struck by motor vehicle	1	9%
Fall	1	9%
Hypothermia due to exposure	1	9%

Washoe County Senior Deaths

There were 552 deaths at 65 years of age and older that met the criteria for Medical Examiner jurisdiction. Deaths in seniors present special challenges, such as the need to rule out neglect or abuse, and the propensity for ultimately lethal injury from simple falls.

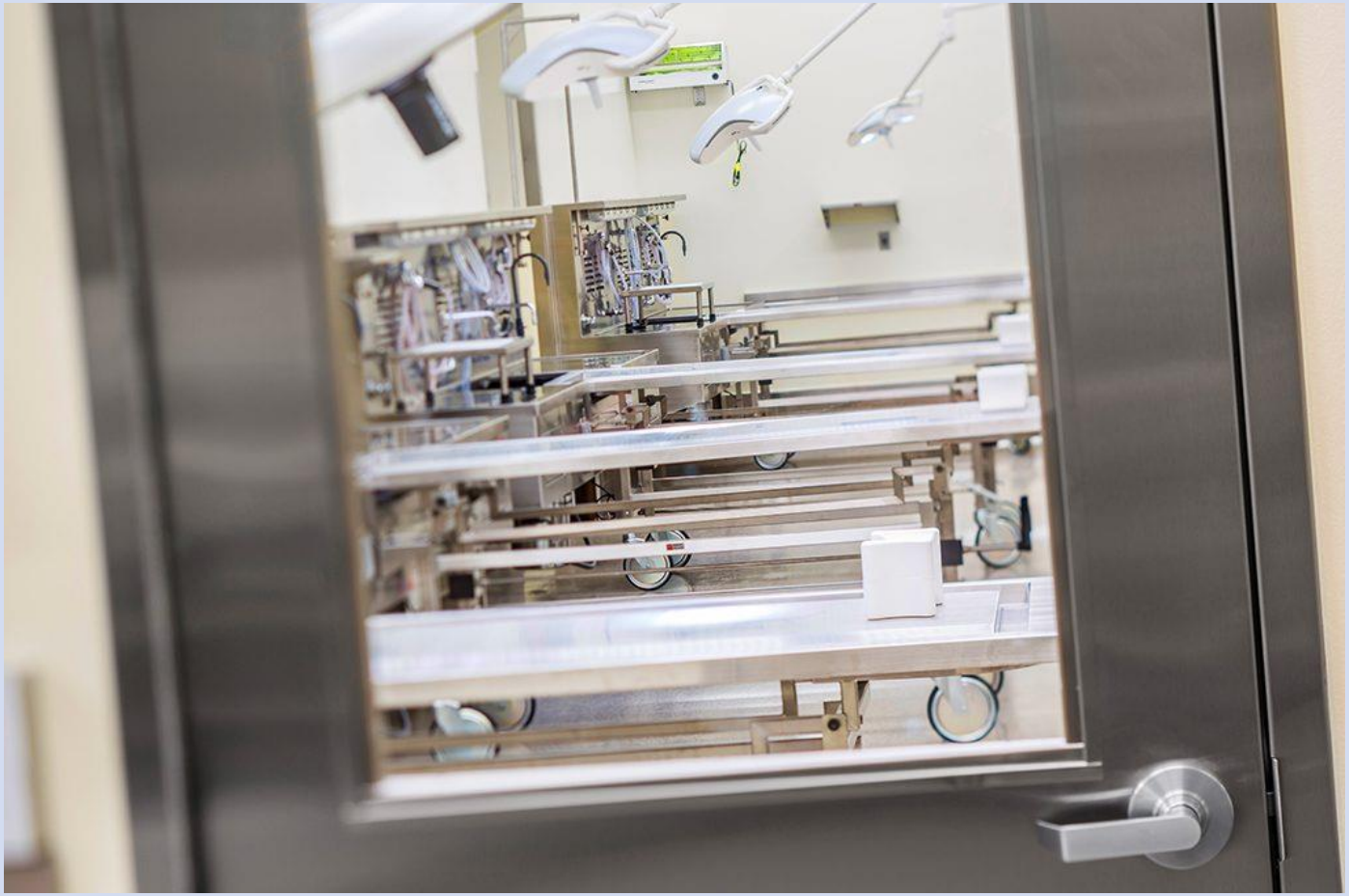
Sex	#	%
Male	356	65%
Female	196	36%

Manner of Death	#	%
Natural	**356**	**65%**
Accident	**143**	**26%**
Suicide	45	8%
Undetermined	6	1%
Homicide	1	<1%
Pending	1	<1%

2016 Statistics of Interest

- 1320 bodies were transported to and refrigerated at the Medical Examiner's Office.
- Toxicology testing was performed on 809 cases.
- There were zero (0) cases in which a decedent remained unidentified after thorough investigation.
- WCRMEO referred 157 unclaimed and abandoned decedents to the Washoe County Public Administrator's Office, and collaborated on further attempts to find and notify the NOK/responsible party.
- 34 organ donations and 78 tissue donations were performed on Medical Examiner cases, with the full cooperation of the WCRMEO.

Report Available

- Much additional information is in the 24 page report
- Annual report will be available to citizens on the Medical Examiner website
- Copies distributed to county leadership and key partners
- Plan for available statistics to be expanded in future annual reports, based on feedback

- www.washoecounty.us/coroner/annual_reports.php