# Dekalb County Medical Examiner's



## 2016 AMMUTI BBDDFT

Gerald T. Gowitt, MD Chief Medical Examiner Patrick L. Bailey Director

### DEPARTMENT LOCATION

Medical Examiners Office
Administrative and Operational Facility
(which includes the Morgue)
3550 Kensington Road
Decatur, Georgia 30032

## Medical Examiners Office

#### Mission Statement

DeKalb County Medical Examiners Office will provide comprehensive professional forensic death investigations and conduct exhaustive post mortem examinations within our jurisdiction, for it is not justice that we seek, but the truth in death so that justice may be served.

#### **Department Description**

The DeKalb County Medical Examiners Office performs investigations, post mortem examination, and forensic scientific testing into deaths that are required by law to be reported under the provisions of the Georgia Death Investigation Act.

#### Department promotes the following DeKalb County Strategic Priorities:

- Enhanced Public Safety
- Ensure Efficient Operations
- Invest in Employees
- Improve Internal Communication, Collaboration, and Implementation
- Promote Fiscal Integrity

## Geographical Information

- DeKalb County covers 267.58 square miles
- DeKalb County has an estimated population of about 740,321.



## Jurisdiction



- The DeKalb County Medical Examiner (DKME) serves all incorporated and unincorporated areas within DeKalb County. In 2016, these areas included the cities of Atlanta, Avondale, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Clarkston, Decatur, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain, Tucker, unincorporated DeKalb County and other areas served by special law enforcement agencies such as Georgia State Patrol, MARTA and post secondary educational institutions campus police/ law enforcement agencies.
- As per State Law, deaths occurring on State owned and/or State leased property are investigated by the State Medical Examiners Office.
- Under the provisions of the Georgia Death Investigation Act, DKME investigates deaths that are suspected or known to have resulted from external causes such as injury or poisoning, and deaths that are sudden, unexpected, and not explained with a reasonable degree of medical probability. Other selected types of death are also investigated such as those occurring while a person is in custody of law enforcement agencies.

### Georgia Death Investigation Act (§ 45-16-24)

- The laws describing the duties of Medical Examiners in Georgia are specified within in Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Title 45, Chapter 16, titled the "Georgia Death Investigations Act." The types of death(s) required to be reported to the Medical Examiner include:
  - Violence (injury)
  - Casualty (accident)
  - Suicide
  - Suddenly when in apparent good health
  - When unattended by physician (a PCP has not been located or refuses to sign the death certificate)
  - Suspicious or unusual
  - Children under 7 if death is unexpected or unexplained
  - Executions pursuant to death penalty
  - Inmate of state hospital or state, county, or city penal institution
  - Admitted to hospital unconscious and dying within 24 hours without regaining consciousness

Decisions about autopsies are not mandated and are left to the discretion of the Medical Examiner.

When a death is reported to DKME, the case is either **accepted** (AJ) or **declined** (DJ). If a case is accepted, it means that the Medical Examiner will be certifying the death and will sign the death certificate. A case is **declined** for one of two reasons:

- The agonal events that caused or contributed to death did not occur in DeKalb County
- The deceased was in the direct care of a physician and/or hospice care who will certify the death.

### A case is **accepted** if:

- It meets the criteria specified in the Georgia Death Investigation Act (§ 45-16-25), and
  - The agonal events that caused and/or contributed to death occurred in DeKalb County, or
  - If the place of incident or onset of fatal events is unknown, the death occurred or the dead body was found in DeKalb County

## Medical and Social History

- The medical and social history of a person can be directly linked to a cause of death. If there is no medical history, meaning the person was in apparent good health, without injury, then an autopsy will most likely be conducted.
- When a person indulges in risky behavior such as illegal and legal drug abuse then an autopsy will be conducted. Alcoholics will be considered for autopsy as well.

## Some Common Medical Histories that Do Not Require Autopsy

- ASCVD
- CHF
- Pacemaker
- ▶ HCVD/HBP
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Terminal Disease

- Atherosclerotic Cardio Vascular Disease.
- Congestive Heart Failure
- Hypertension/High Blood Pressure.
- ▶ 100+ LBS Overweight
- HIV/Aids, Cancers, Renal Disease

## No Medical History That Require

## Autopsy

- Infants with no known illness or disease.
- known illness or disease.
- Adults with no known or known illness or disease.
- Homicide
- Suicide
- Accidental
- Natural

- > SIDS/SUIDS
- No cold, fever, or flu like symptoms.
- Adult with controlled diabetes, asthma, HCVD/HBP.
- Murder
- Car accidents, work accidents, accidents at the home.
- Sometimes when requested by family.

The Medical Examiner (a forensic pathologist) generally uses one of four approaches to certify a death (to obtain information to complete the death certificate):

- Sign-out. The death certified after reviewing medical records and interview statements. This generally occurs after a physician certifies a death noting some injury, trauma, and/or toxicity was exhibited.
- View. A cursory examination is performed to further evaluate the case and rule out trauma or the need for further in-depth examination. A few simple case notes may be prepared.
- External examination. Formal external examination with a dictated report of the examination, usually including toxicology or chemistry tests as well.
- Autopsy. Complete postmortem examination with a dictated report.
- A limited dissection (partial autopsy) is sometimes performed if:
  - -there is expressed objection to autopsy or significant health or safety risks exist for staff, and,
  - –a complete autopsy need not be performed.

There are basic general "rules" for classifying manner of death:

- Natural deaths are due to a natural disease process, infection, virus, and/or the aging process.
- Accidental death occurs when an injury or poisoning causes death and there is little or no evidence that the injury or poisoning occurred with intent to harm or cause death. In essence, the fatal outcome was unintentional.
- Suicide results from an injury or poisoning as a result of an intentional self-inflicted act committed to do self harm or cause the death of one's self.
- Homicide occurs when death results from a volitional act committed by another person to cause fear, harm, or death. Intent to cause death is a common element but is not required for classification as homicide (more below). It is to be emphasized that the classification of homicide for the purposes of death certification is a "neutral" term and neither indicates nor implies *criminal* intent, which remains a determination within the province of legal processes.
- Undetermined or "could not be determined" is a classification used when the information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death, based on all available information.

In general, when death involves a combination of natural processes and external factors, such as injury or poisoning, preference is given to the non-natural manner of death.



### **General Response**

When a death is reported to DKME, the case is assigned a sequential case number.

Basic information is obtained on all cases reported. Medical Examiners Investigators, in consultation with the Medical Examiner as needed, make decisions about whether the case should be accepted or declined, if death scene investigation is required, and whether or not the body needs to be transported to the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Forensic Science Center.

The Medical Examiner then makes decisions about the type of examination to be conducted and the extent of additional testing to be performed.

For further information about Medical Examiners and death investigation, please see the website of the National Association of Medical Examiners at

www.TheNAME.org

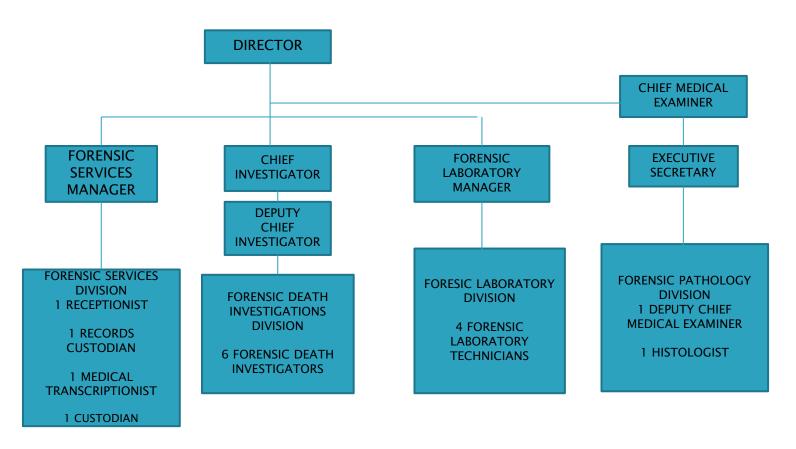


# **DKME Budget and Staff**

The 2016 operating budget was \$2.5 million. The DKME staff consists of 24 employees:

- 1 Director
- 2 Full Time Medical Examiners
- 2 Investigative Supervisors (Chief and Deputy Chief)
- 6 Medical Examiner Investigators
- 1 Administrative Supervisor (Forensic Services Manager)
- 5 Administrative support staff
- 1 Forensic Laboratory Manager
- 5 forensic technicians and morgue support staff
- 1 facility support staff.

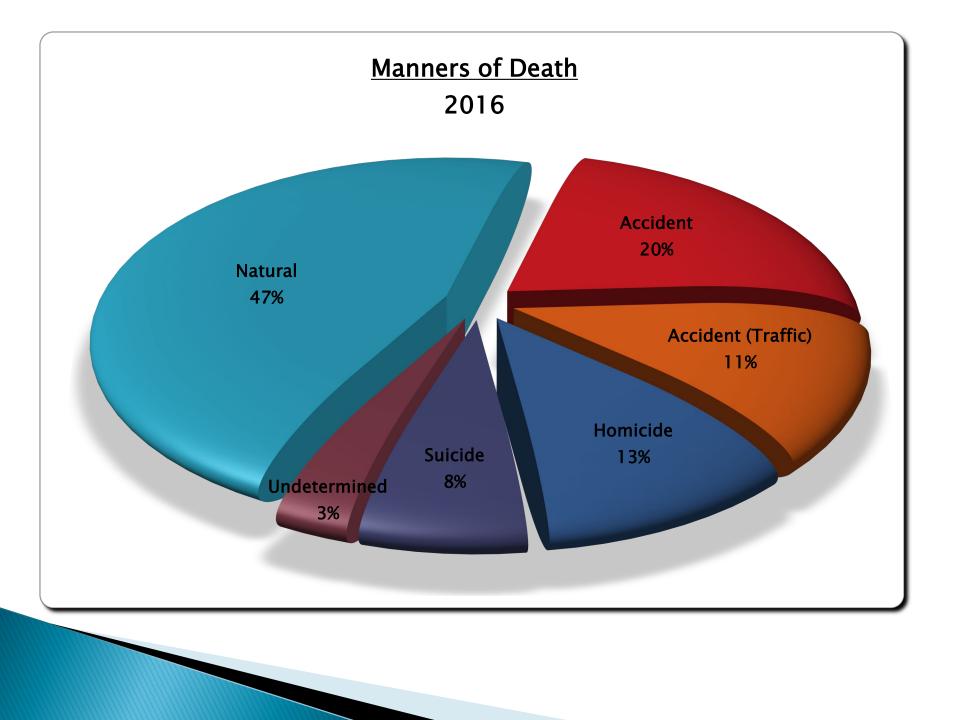
## Organizational chart



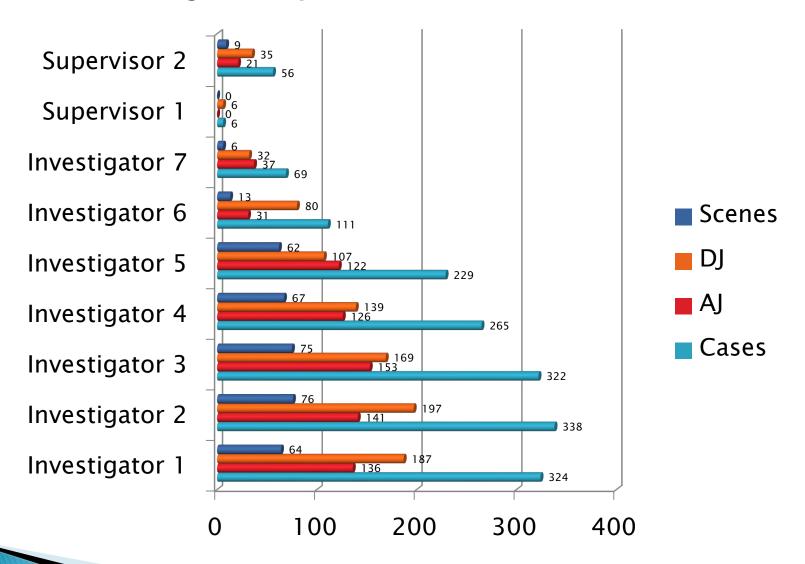
# All Reported Cases in 2016

There were 1727 unique deaths reported to the office.

Jurisdiction	Manner of Death	<u>Frequency</u>
Accepted (AJ)	ACCIDENT (Not Traffic Fatalities)	150
	ACCIDENT (Traffic Fatalities)	84
	HOMICIDE	102
	NATURAL	361
	SUICIDE	58
	UNDETERMINED	25
	Cases still open from 2016	10
	Total of Accepted Cases =	768
Declined (DJ)		949
AJ		768
TOTAL		1727



### Investigator/Supervisor Case Load in 2016



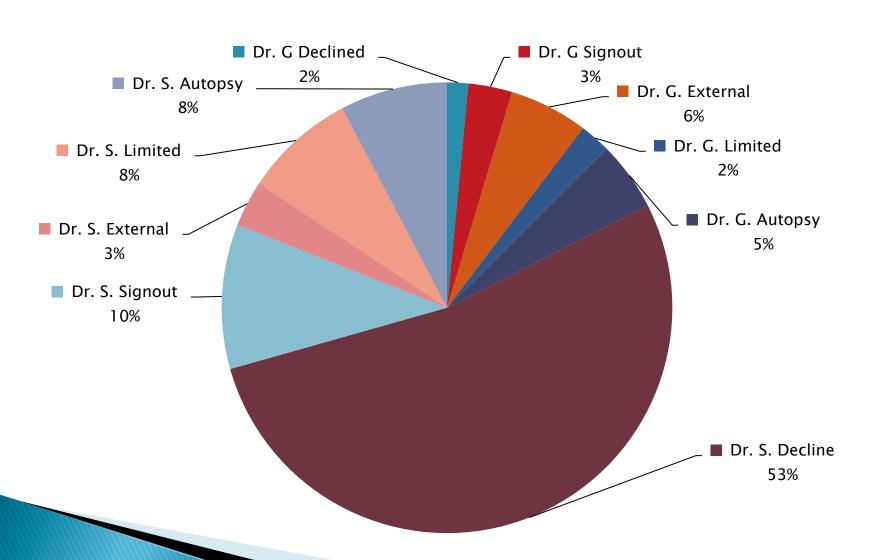
# Procedures on Accepted Cases

		Total			
MANNER	Autopsy	External PM Exam/View	Limited Dissection	Sign-out	
ACCIDENT	45	21	36	49	151
TRAFFIC ACCIDENT	4	42	27	11	84
HOMICIDE	102	0	0	0	102
NATURAL	38	55	99	162	354
SUICIDE	8	35	12	3	58
UNDETERMINED	20	1	0	4	25
(Pending Cases)	0	0	0	5	5
Total =	217	154	174	234	779

### Procedure Totals for Each Medical Examiner

Medical Examiner	Number of Cases	Procedure
Geoffrey P. Smith, MD	178	Sign-out
Geoffrey P. Smith, MD	137	Limited Dissection
Geoffrey P. Smith, MD	57	External PM Exam
Geoffrey P. Smith, MD	911	Confirm DJ
Geoffrey P. Smith, MD	132	Autopsy
Gerald T. Gowitt, MD	54	Sign-out
Gerald T. Gowitt, MD	38	Limited Dissection
Gerald T. Gowitt, MD	97	External PM Exam
Gerald T. Gowitt, MD	26	Confirm DJ
Gerald T. Gowitt, MD	85	Autopsy

## Pathologist Procedures

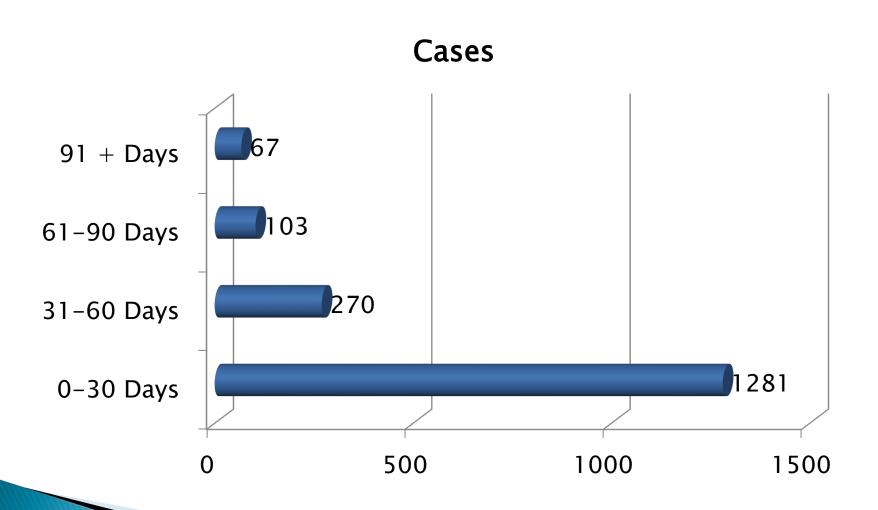


# **Turnaround Times**

Case Completion Times										
Case Completion Times	Number of Cases	Percent								
0–30 days	1281	74.43%								
31–60 days	270	15.68%								
61–90 days	103	5.98%								
91 days and over	67	3.89%								
TOTAL	1721	99.65%								

Includes cases declined, which a Medical Examiner reviews to confirm jurisdiction.

## **Turnaround Times**



# Police Jurisdiction for Reports of Death

Police Jurisdiction	ACCIDENT	ACCIDENT (Traffic)	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	LINDETERMINED	NATURAL DEATUS
	ACCIDENT	ACCIDENT (Traffic)	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED	NATURAL DEATHS
Atlanta PD	4	ı	2	I	0	21
Avondale PD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brookhaven PD	6	0	3	5	1	9
Chamblee PD	7	2	5	2	3	10
Clarkston PD	3	0	0	0	0	6
Decatur PD	1	0	1	3	0	5
DeKalb County Fire	2	0	0	0	0	0
DeKalb County PD	67	65	90	43	15	156
DeKalb County SO	0	0	0	2	0	0
Doraville PD	2	3	0	1	0	7
Dunwoody PD	5	1	0	1	0	7
Lithonia PD	0	1	0	0	0	1
Stone Mountain PD	0	0	0	0	0	0
*Other Reporting Agencies	1	10	0	0	0	4

<sup>\*</sup>Includes other police jurisdictions such as GSP, MARTA, School Campus Police, other states, or nearby counties.

	<=10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51-60	61–70	71+	Age Unknow n	Total
AF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AM	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
BF	2	3	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	13
BM	3	19	20	15	10	5	1	2	0	75
HF	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
HM	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	6
WF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WM	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	23	26	22	12	9	1	2	1	102

## Homicides

Cause	Number Of Deaths
Asphyxia-Strangulation	5
Asphyxia-Suffocation	1
Blunt Force	6
Gun	55
Gun-Assault	2
Gun-Handgun	15
Gun-Pistol	5
Gun-Revolver	1
Gun-Rifle	4
Gun-Shotgun	2
Malnourishment-Neglect	1
Sharp Instrument	3
Sharp Instrument-Knife	2

	<=10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	61–70	71+	Age Unknow n	Total
AF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AM	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
BF	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	5
BM	0	1	7	3	3	2	2	0	0	18
HF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
НМ	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
WF	0	1	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	8
WM	0	0	3	4	3	7	2	0	0	19
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	5	15	13	8	12	5	0		58

## Suicides

Cause	Number of Deaths
Asphyxia-Hanging	21
Drug Death-Poisoning	5
Gun	6
Gun-Handgun	15
Gun-Pistol	8
Gun-Revolver	1
Gun-Rifle	2

	<=10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51-60	61–70	71+	Age Unknow n	Total
AF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
BF	0	2	0	3	2	2	3	1	1	14
BM	1	3	13	12	6	7	5	0	0	47
HF	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
НМ	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
WF	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	4
WM	0	2	0	2	3	2	1	3	0	12
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	9	16	13	12	12	9	5	1	84

## **Motor Vehicle Accidents**

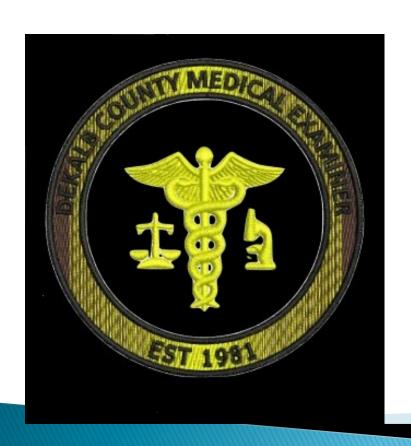
Cause	Number of Deaths
Blunt Force	2
MARTA-Train	1
MVA-Driver	30
MVA-MotorcyclistDriver	10
MVA-Occupant	8
MVA-Pedestrian	33

	<=10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	61–70	71+	Age Unknow n	Total
AF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
AM	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
BF	0	0	2	5	2	4	2	5	0	20
BM	0	0	5	5	8	4	6	7	0	35
HF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
НМ	1	0	1	0	3	1	1	1	0	8
WF	0	0	4	3	1	6	4	15	0	33
WM	1	2	9	10	5	4	2	17	0	50
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	2	22	23	19	19	16	47		150

# Accidents (Non-Traffic Related)

	130	
Cause		Number of Deaths
Aircraft		1
Asphyxia-Ca	fé Coronary	2
Asphyxia-Ha	inging	1
Blunt Force		7
Cardiac		1
Drowning		2
Drug Death-	Poisoning	75
Drug Death-	Poisoning+Dise	2
Electrical		1
Fall		1
Fall- Down S	Steps	5
Fall-From He	eight	7
Fall-From m	oving object	1
Falls		1
Fall-Standing	g Height	29
Fire death		7
Gun-Pistol		1
Hypothermi	a-Exogenous	4
MVA-Occup	ant	1
Poisoning-C	O with no fire	1

### 2016 Drug Deaths by Jurisdiction





**DeKalb County Medical Examiner Office** 

	At	t <mark>lant</mark> a	Poli	ce I	<b>epar</b> t	tment	
Total Dea	ths	4					
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs	;	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage
	Male	4		Cocaine	0.00%	Tramadol	0.00%
	Female	0		Heroin	50.00%	Fentanyl	25.00%
	Unknown	0	Methamph	netamine	0.00%	Hydrocodone	0.00%
Race		Totals	M	larijuana	0%	Methadone	0.00%
	White	4		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	0.00%
Africar	n American	0					
	Hispanic	0			Other Pro	escription Drugs	25%
	Asian	0				Other	0.00%
	Unknown	0					
Median A	ge	34			Combin	ed with Alcohol	25%

	Brookhaven Police Department											
<b>Total Deat</b>	ths	6										
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs	5	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage					
	Male	3		Cocaine	16.66%	Tramadol	33.33%					
	Female	3		Heroin	16.66%	Fentanyl	16.66%					
	Unknown	0	Methampl	netamine	16.66%	Hydrocodone	0.00%					
Race		Totals	Marijuana		0%	Methadone	0.00%					
	White	6		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	16.66%					
African	American	0										
	Hispanic	0			Other Pr	escription Drugs	33%					
	Asian	0				Other	0.00%					
	Unknown	0										
Median A	ge	43			Combined with Alcohol		33%					

	Chamblee Police Department											
Total Deat	Total Deaths 5											
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs		Percentage	Opioids	Percentage					
	Male	3		Cocaine	0.00%	Morphine	20.00%					
	Female	2		Heroin	0.00%	Fentanyl	20.00%					
	Unknown	0	Methamph	netamine	40.00%	Hydrocodone	20.00%					
Race		Totals	N	larijuana	0%	Methadone	20.00%					
	White	3		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	20.00%					
Africar	American	1										
	Hispanic	1			Other Pr	escription Drugs	20%					
	Asian	0				Other	0.00%					
	Unknown	0										
Median A	ge	45			Combin	ed with Alcohol	0%					

	Cla	rksto	n Pol	ice l	Depar	tment	
Total Deat	ths	1					
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs	;	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage
	Male	1		Cocaine	0.00%	Morphine	0.00%
	Female	0		Heroin	100.00%	Fentanyl	0.00%
	Unknown	0	Methamph	netamine	0.00%	Hydrocodone	0.00%
Race		Totals	Marijuana		0%	Methadone	0.00%
	White	0		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	0.00%
						011,000.0110	0.00
African	<b>American</b>	0				,	
Africar	American Hispanic	0				escription Drugs	
Africar						·	
Africar	Hispanic					escription Drugs	0%

D	ekal	b Cou	inty I	Polic	ee De <sub>l</sub>	partme	nt
Total Deat	ths	65					
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drug	S	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage
	Male	44		Cocaine	33.84%	Morphine	4.61%
	Female	21		Heroin	27.69%	Fentanyl	10.76%
	Unknown	0	Methamp	hetamine	15.38%	Hydrocodone	7.69%
Race		Totals	N	/larijuana	0%	Methadone	3.07%
	White	33		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	16.92%
Africar	American	30				U-47700	1.53%
	Hispanic	2			Other Pro	escription Drugs	37%
	Asian	0				Other	1.53%
	Unknown	0					
Median A	ge	42			Combin	ed with Alcohol	20%

	Doraville Police Department											
Total Deat	ths	1										
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs	S	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage					
	Male	1		Cocaine	0.00%	Morphine	0.00%					
	Female	0		Heroin	0.00%	Fentanyl	0.00%					
	Unknown	0	Methampl	hetamine	100.00%	Hydrocodone	0.00%					
Race		Totals	N	1arijuana	0%	Methadone	100.00%					
	White	1		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	100.00%					
Africar	American	0										
	Hispanic	0			Other Pro	escription Drugs	0%					
	Asian	0				Other	0.00%					
	Unknown	0										
Median A	ge	50			Combin	ed with Alcohol	100%					

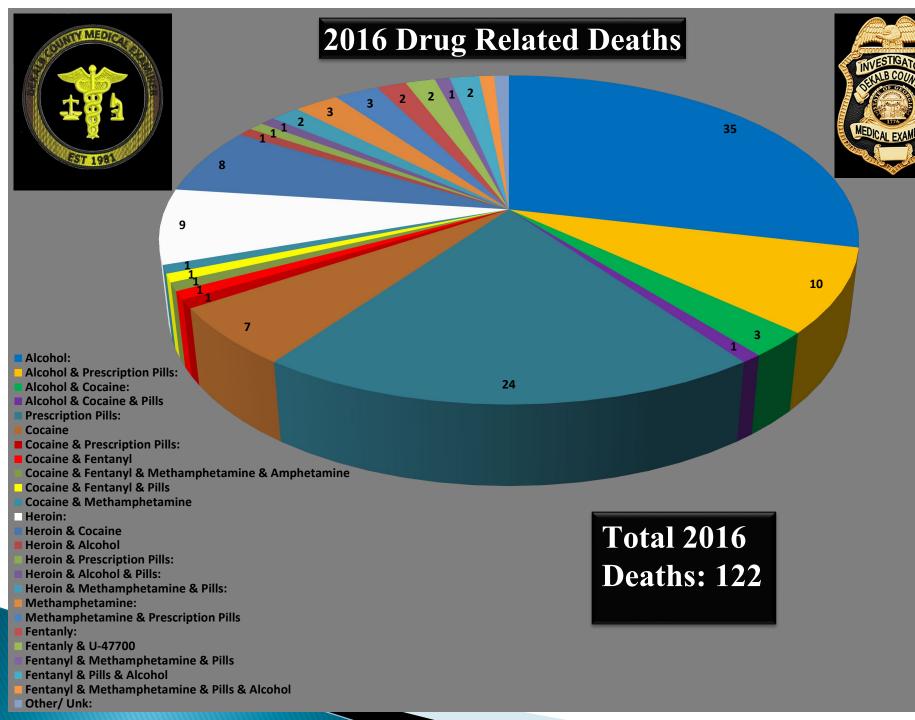
	Du	1W000	ly Po	lice	Depa	rtment	
<b>Total Deat</b>	:hs	3					
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs	S	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage
	Male	2		Cocaine	33.33%	Morphine	0.00%
	Female	1		Heroin	0.00%	Fentanyl	100.00%
	Unknown	0	Methampl	netamine	0.00%	Hydrocodone	0.00%
Race		Totals	N	1arijuana	0%	Methadone	0.00%
	White	3		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	0.00%
African	American	0				U-47700	33.33%
	Hispanic	0			Other Pro	escription Drugs	33%
	Asian	0				Other	%
	Unknown	0					
Median A	ge	33			Combin	ed with Alcohol	0%

	Pine Lake Police Department										
<b>Total Deat</b>	ths	1									
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drugs		Percentage	Opioids	Percentage				
	Male	1		Cocaine	0.00%	Morphine	0.00%				
	Female	0		Heroin	0.00%	Fentanyl	0.00%				
	Unknown	0	Methamph	netamine	0.00%	Hydrocodone	0.00%				
Race		Totals	Marijuana		0%	Methadone	0.00%				
	White	1		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	0.00%				
African	American	0									
	Hispanic	0			Other Pro	escription Drugs	100%				
	Asian	0		'		Other	0.00%				
	Unknown	0									
Median A	ge	28			Combined with Alcohol		0%				

## Dekalb County Medical Examiner

Total Dea	ths	87					
Gender		Totals	Illicit Drug	S	Percentage	Opioids	Percentage
	Male	58		Cocaine	26.43%	Morphine	3.44%
	Female	29		Heroin	25.28%	Fentanyl	13.79%
	Unknown	0	Methamp	hetamine	14.94%	Hydrocodone	6.89%
Race		Totals	Marijuana		0%	Methadone	4.59%
	White	52		PCP	0%	Oxycodone	13.79%
Africa	n American	31				Tramadol	2.29%
	Hispanic	3				U-47700	2.29%
	Asian	1			Other Pro	escription Drugs	44.82%
	Unknown	0				Other	1.14%
Median A	\ge	41			Combin	ed with Alcohol	19.54%

DeKalb County Total: 87 Year to Date



### Please contact our office at

404-508-3500

If you have any questions

THANK YOU!