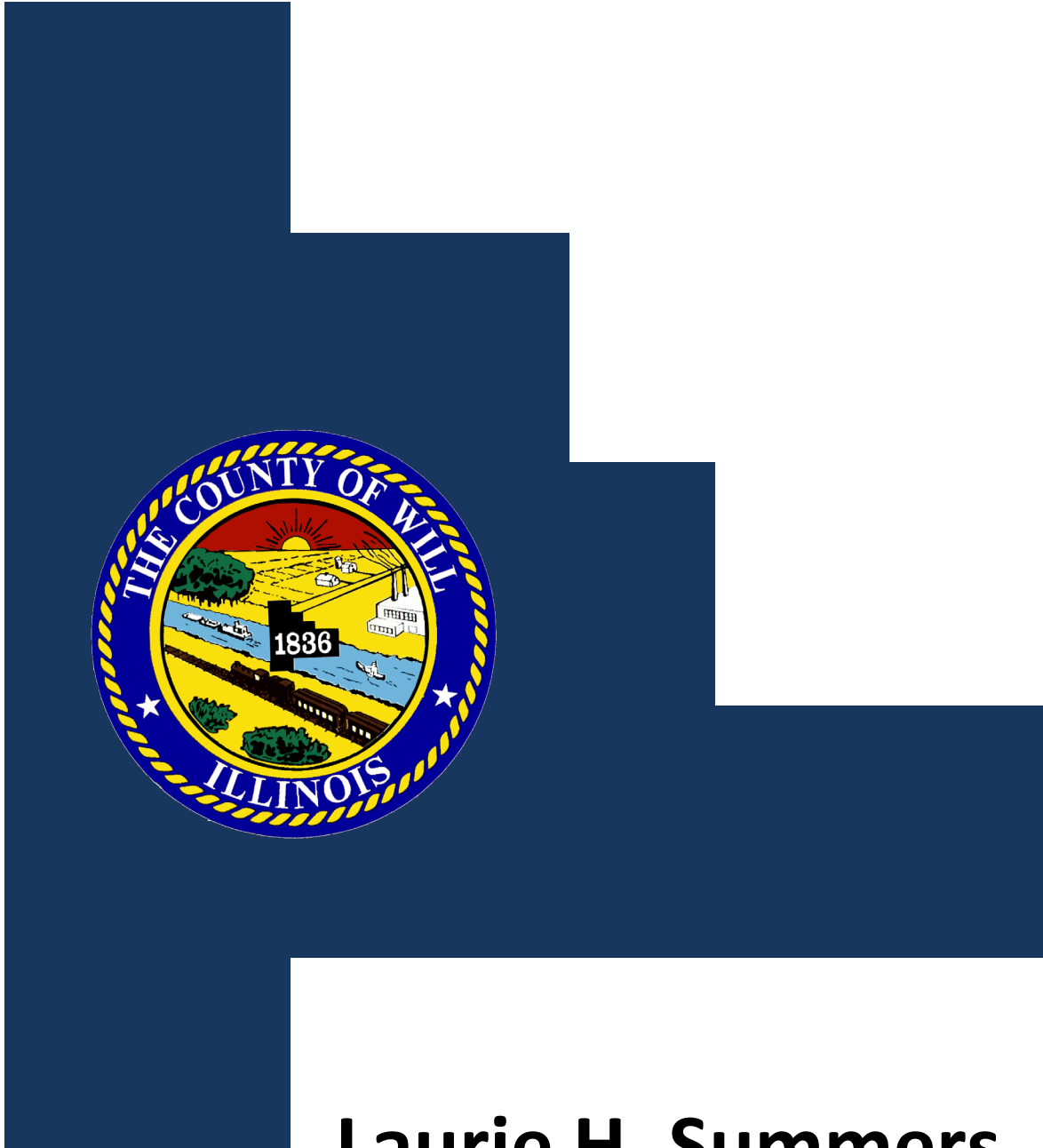


# 2020 Annual Report



**Laurie H. Summers, RN**  
**WILL COUNTY CORONER**



# The Will County Coroner,

as a member of the Law Enforcement Community,

investigates deaths and

provides critical services to surviving

family members, relatives, and friends

with compassion and dignity.

Should you have any questions

regarding this Annual Report, or this

office, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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# ILLINOIS CORONER'S CREED

...Birth and death are the only two universal human experiences...

**Birth** is the most important biological event in the life of any human being. If it does not occur, there is no being. If there is no person, no legal rights and duties arrive, for the law relates to the rights and duties of living people, not inanimate objects.

**Death**, on the other hand, is the most important legal event for all human beings. When it occurs all legal rights and duties devolving upon the person during his life span in a civilized jurisdiction are terminated. All persons with whom the deceased had legal relations at that moment in time are also directly affected by the occurrence of death. Moreover, both the deceased and the survivors may be greatly affected legally by how death occurred, what actually happened, why it occurred, and precisely when it occurred. Above all, who died must be absolutely determined, and where death occurred is positively required for legal jurisdiction over the decedent is based upon a geographical location.

The law becomes extremely active when a person dies. Wealth is redistributed. Contracts are altered. A wrongful death may give rise to tortuous claims. Tax obligations are always present. Public social benefits and private insurance policies are paid. Criminal laws may be involved. Creditors must be satisfied, and debtors are located. Spouse and children, heirs and next-of-kin have their attachments rearranged. It is not surprising that for centuries the sovereign state has had an overriding interest in the death of its subjects or citizens. The office of the Coroner, or the office of the Medical Examiner, along with the state-licensed physician is legally charged with significant duties answering the pertinent questions relating to death: **WHO, WHERE, WHAT, HOW, WHY?** Only when these questions have been answered correctly can all the proper legal issues arising at death be effectively handled for the proper administration of justice.

Although the legal aspects of death are most important, certainly the religious and humanitarian heritages of a civilized society also command a deep concern over the death of a human being. The spiritual faith in a religion as well as the humanitarian concern for a fellow human being demand correct answers to the question of death: **WHO, WHERE, WHAT, HOW, WHY?** Human death obligates the living to acquire accurate facts on which to apply just laws for each deceased member of the human race.

The obligation for proper death investigation is mandatory for legal and religious/humanitarian satisfactions in the human society. Let those responsible for death investigations take heed, that they labor not only for the State, but also for God.

Our Commitment...Care of the Deceased; Concern for the Living...

Excerpts from the Illinois Coroner's Creed taken from "Death Investigation and Examination," The American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Permission granted by Kenneth S. Field, Forensic Sciences Foundation, April 12, 1988.

## ATTENTION:

Physicians  
Hospital Personnel  
Embalmers  
Vital Statistics Registrars  
Home Healthcare Agencies

Police Officers  
Funeral Directors  
Paramedics  
Hospice Agencies

### DEATHS THAT MUST BE REPORTED

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Any person who discovers a body or acquires first knowledge of the death of any person who died as a result of criminal or other violent means, in casualty, or by suicide, or suddenly when in apparent health, or in any suspicious or unusual manner, shall immediately notify the office of the Will County Coroner with the known facts concerning the time, place, manner, and circumstances of such death, and any other information that is required by the coroner.

All suspected or known deaths resulting from accident, homicide, or suicide shall be reported to the Coroner. In such cases, if a request for cremation is made, the funeral director called in attendance should immediately notify the Coroner. No person shall willfully refuse to report such a death, or shall without an order from the Coroner, willfully touch, remove, or disturb the body, clothing, or any article upon or near the body.

### NOTIFICATION BY HOSPITAL PERSONNEL

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Any person dead on arrival shall be reported immediately to the Coroner. No person shall, without order from the Coroner, willfully touch, remove, or disturb the body, nor should the clothing or any article upon or near the body be disturbed. Any death that occurs within 24 hours after admission is also to be reported. This includes emergency room deaths and inpatient deaths within that time frame.

#### I. ACCIDENTAL DEATHS

1. Anesthetic Accident (Death on the operating table prior to recovery from anesthetic).
2. Blows and Other Forms of Mechanical Violence
3. Burns
4. Carbon Monoxide Intoxication (Resulting from natural gas, automobile exhaust, or other).
5. Crushing Injuries
6. Cutting or Stabbing Injuries
7. Drowning
8. Electric Shock
9. Explosion
10. Exposure
11. Falls
12. Firearms

13. Fracture of Bones Not Pathological in Nature (Such cases are to be reported even when the fracture is not primarily responsible for the death. All hip fractures, when the patient dies within 1 year and 1 month needs to be reported to the Coroner).
14. Hanging
15. Heat Exhaustion
16. Insolation (Heat Stroke)
17. Poisoning (Food poisoning, occupation, chemical, or other).
18. Strangulation
19. Suffocation
20. Vehicular Accident (Automobile, bus, railroad, motorcycle, bicycle, or other).
21. Drug Toxicity (Elicit, prescription, Alcohol)

II. HOMICIDAL DEATHS

1. Any and all, known or suspected, by any means

III. SUICIDAL DEATHS

1. Any and all, known or suspected, by any means

IV. ABORTIONS: CRIMINAL OR SELF-INFLICTED

1. Must be reported, even if the survival period after onset is 12 months

V. SUDDEN, SUSPICIOUS, OR UNUSUAL DEATHS

1. All deaths that occur at **home**
2. All deaths that occur at a **place of employment**
3. All deaths in **public places**, or on the **street**, in the **open**, or **temporary shelter**
4. Deaths involving **alcoholism**
5. **Stillborn infants** where there is suspicion of illegal interference
6. Deaths when the **attending physician is unavailable**
7. Deaths when there is **no attending physician**

VI. DEATHS IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

1. Juvenile Detention Facilities
2. Adult Detention Facilities
3. Prisons
4. Nursing Homes

VII. DEATHS OF WARDS OF THE STATE

1. In private care facilities
2. In programs funded by the Dept. of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
3. In programs funded by the Dept. of Children and Family Services

VIII. OTHER

1. While a subject is being pursued, apprehended, or taken into custody
2. While in custody of any law enforcement agency

IX. CREMATIONS

1. All deaths where a cremation is to take place

### **In 2020 the Will County Coroner's Office issued over 3000 cremation permits**

The Coroner must issue a Medical Examiner/Coroner Permit to Cremate when cremation is planned as the final disposition for a body. The Coroner or Medical Examiner of the county where the death has occurred issues the permit.

When the remains to be cremated are not subject to an investigation by the Coroner, a funeral director must present a signed Medical Certificate of Death when requesting a cremation permit. The case is briefly reviewed by a staff member to verify that the death should have been certified by a doctor. If all appears in order the cremation permit is issued. If there are questions regarding a death, those questions will need to be resolved before a permit is issued. Sometimes the Coroner pulls the medical death certificate and the death is investigated further.

When the Coroner is investigating a death, the permit to cremate will only be issued after the Coroner is completely satisfied that all investigative procedures necessary for a proper and thorough investigation have been completed. A temporary death certificate is prepared and filed with Vital Records at the Will County Health Department, and a Cremation Permit will also be issued.

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### **In 2020 the Will County Coroner investigated over 4000 Natural deaths**

## NATURAL DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

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When a person has an attending physician and dies in a hospital emergency room, or within 24-hours after being admitted to a hospital, or at home, or at any public place, or under any other kind of known circumstance, the Coroner's office is notified. The circumstances and details of the death are reviewed. If it appears to be a death of natural causes the attending physician will be contacted. The circumstances are reviewed with the attending physician. If the deceased has a medical history that supports a cause of death that is consistent with the circumstances surrounding the death and the physician agrees, the case is released to the doctor. If the attending physician does not have enough medical history to support the cause of death, or if the attending physician is not available, or if the attending physician refuses to certify the death, the death is investigated by the Coroner.

Many methods are involved in proper death investigation. Toxicology samples are obtained and sent to a laboratory for analysis. A decision is made as to the necessity for an autopsy. Medical records may need to be subpoenaed from a hospital or doctor. When the necessary medical records have been obtained and the toxicology and autopsy reports are complete, and it is evident that the death being investigated is from natural causes, the death certificate is signed and

filed by the Coroner. However, if the cause of death appears to be from unnatural causes, or if the cause of death cannot be determined, the case is reviewed by the Coroner and may be scheduled for inquest.

The Coroner also reviews all deaths certified on a Medical Certificate of death when a cremation permit is requested to assure that the death should have been certified as a natural cause of death and there is no need for further investigation.

## LEADING CAUSES OF NATURAL DEATHS

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Heart disease and strokes are leading causes of death among Americans, both **MEN** and **WOMEN**. The heart attack that kills is sometimes preceded by years of heart disease that has gone unrecognized, and therefore untreated. Sometimes, however, heart disease has been diagnosed, but the patient is either not compliant with treatment, or ignores medical advice. In other words, the heart disease that kills a person in their 50's or 60's has usually been there since those people were in their 30's and 40's. Symptoms may vary. Some feel chest pain; others describe a sensation of chest discomfort. Pain or discomfort anywhere, that cannot be explained, is a red flag and should not be ignored. When in doubt, always consult your physician.

There are many risk factors for **heart disease** that are not controllable such as age, family history of heart disease, and your race. Some risk factors you can control. By making changes in your lifestyle, you can reduce your risk for heart disease.

Controllable risk factors include:

- Quit Smoking
- Improve Cholesterol Levels
- Control High Blood Pressure
- Get Active
- Eat Right
- Achieve and Maintain a Healthy Weight
- Learn to Manage Stress
- Control Diabetes

There are no guarantees that a heart-healthy lifestyle will keep heart disease away, but a change in the risk factors that you can control will certainly improve your general health and quite possibly lower your risk for heart disease.

***Stroke*** is another reason to pay attention to your heart and lifestyle. Stroke is a cardiovascular disease that occurs when a blood vessel carrying oxygen to the brain bursts or is blocked by a clot. The brain is not able to function properly because it is deprived of blood and oxygen.

Just like heart disease, there are many controllable risk factors for stroke. Maintaining a healthy blood pressure is one of the most significant. Lowering cholesterol levels, staying fit and active, and avoiding tobacco are other controllable factors as well.

### ***What is Atherosclerosis?***

Atherosclerosis is the process where blood vessels become blocked with a build-up of fat and cholesterol, sometimes called plaque. This process narrows the arterial opening and restricts the blood supply to the heart. A person may feel chest pain or angina when this occurs. This is sometimes the first recognized symptom of heart disease. A blood clot can form and block blood flow completely which results in a heart attack. When

atherosclerosis leads to blockage in a vessel leading to the brain, then a stroke or cardiovascular accident is the result.

### *What is Hypertension?*

Hypertension is usually without symptoms. Therefore, your blood pressure needs to be checked on a regular basis. When you have your blood pressure taken, the amount of pressure your blood exerts against the arterial wall is what is being measured. Over time, high blood pressure stresses and damages the blood vessels. It can also cause damage to the heart because the heart works harder to pump blood through the damaged vessels. Hypertension can be treated with medication, diet restrictions, and exercise.

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### DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR)

The purpose of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is the prevention of sudden, unexpected death. Sometimes people feel they do not want CPR to be initiated, such as cases of terminal, irreversible illness, when death is expected. A physician can issue an order to the effect that no CPR measures be initiated on behalf of the patient. This is usually a decision made by a physician and patient or the physician and the patient's family. The physician and the patient or the physician and the family member that has Medical Power of Attorney for the patient must sign this order. This order is referred to as a DNR, or DO NOT RESUSCITATE ORDER. If the patient is in the hospital the staff is made aware of this order. If the patient is at home, they should have this order readily available so that if 911 is called, the responding agency knows about the order and does not initiate CPR.

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### HOME DEATHS WHEN ENROLLED WITH A HOSPICE PROGRAM

Some people who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness choose to enroll in a hospice program and stay at home rather than a hospital setting. There are many hospice programs serving Will County. A hospice staff member can help the patient and family cope with managing care in a home setting. They can also provide support during this stressful and emotional time. They will often be in attendance at the time of death, or immediately after, and will call the doctor and funeral director the family has chosen. The hospice patient has a valid DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order on file. The funeral director arranges for the removal of the remains in a quiet manner. A police agency is not called to respond to the scene in this type of situation and the Deputy Coroner on-call does not respond to the residence. Either the hospice nurse or the funeral director reports the death to the Will County Coroner's Office. The report is taken over the phone and the Deputy Coroner taking the call releases the body to the funeral director.

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### HOME DEATHS WITHOUT HOSPICE

Some people choose to take care of a loved one at home and do not want to enroll in a hospice program. Usually, some type of home health professional is involved in their case and visits the home on a regular basis, usually reporting to the attending physician. As the subject's condition deteriorates, they may be hospitalized shortly before death, or they may die at home. If they die at home under these circumstances, 911 should be called and when death has been confirmed the Coroner's Office will be contacted and requested to respond to the scene. The circumstances of the death will be reviewed, and the body examined for signs of injury, abuse, or any type of foul play. The attending physician will be contacted. If all appears in order and the physician is willing to certify the death, the funeral director is called for removal and the remains are released to the funeral home.

If a person dies at home and the death was not expected, the Coroner's Office will be notified and will investigate the death. When the investigation is completed, the body will be released to the funeral home chosen by the family.

## NURSING HOME DEATHS WITH HOSPICE

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Those who reside in a nursing home may also have the option of enrolling in a hospice program. The hospice agency can provide support for the family and patient in a nursing home setting. If the family cannot visit the patient very often because of distance or other factors, the hospice nurse can serve an invaluable service of providing support for both the family and the patient. If a person is enrolled in a hospice program and dies in a nursing home the hospice nurse usually reports the death to the Coroner.

## NURSING HOME DEATHS WITHOUT HOSPICE

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A nursing facility experiences death often. If the nursing home is considered a state facility, they must report all deaths. Many nursing homes in Will County report all deaths, some do not. However, if a person is in a nursing facility because of injury or they have sustained a recent fall or injury, or any other trauma, the death must be reported.

The Will County Coroner's Office helps to monitor nursing home deaths in such a way as to monitor neglect and abuse. Pressure sores are a particular problem with patients of limited mobility. If neglected, they can become chronic and are a prime source for infection as well as discomfort. Proper treatment includes skin care and changing the position of the patient in bed on a regular basis.

## POLICE AGENCIES, DETENTION FACILITIES AND PRISONS

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When death occurs while a subject is being pursued, apprehended, or taken into custody, or incarcerated by any law enforcement agency, the death is always reported to and investigated by the Coroner. This includes natural and unnatural deaths, even if the person's death was expected because of illness and/or disease, even if the person was hospitalized before death. If the death was from natural causes, the Coroner will sign the death certificate. If the death appears to be from unnatural causes such as suicide, homicide, or any type of accidental death, the case may be inquested before the death certificate is signed.

## WARDS OF THE STATE

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The death of someone who is in any program funded by the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, or the Department of Children and Family Services must be reported to the Coroner. This includes those with disabilities who live in group homes or nursing homes, children who have been placed in foster homes or are otherwise receiving services from the Department of Children and Family Services.

## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT (CAPTA)

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National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CAPTA)

CAPTA identifies 4 major types of child maltreatment:

### Physical Abuse:

Infliction of physical injury such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, or otherwise harming a child.

### Child Neglect:

Failure to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. It includes withholding medical treatment.

### Sexual Abuse:

Including physical acts, exhibitionism, commercial exploitation

### Emotional Abuse:

Psychological/verbal, mental injury, acts that have or could cause serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional or mental conditions.

\*It is estimated that 1750 children died in 2020 because of abuse and neglect. 5 children die daily due to abuse and neglect. Children under 3 years of age comprise 67.8% of all abuse and neglect fatalities. Children under 1 year of age comprise 46.4% of these deaths. 80.6% of child fatalities involve at least one parent. Child abuse and neglect should not be ignored by anyone in a position to report it. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has a hotline and will investigate any reported case regarding the health and welfare of a child. The number is [1-800-25-ABUSE](tel:1-800-25-ABUSE).

\*statistic sources: American SPCC: Child Abuse Statistics

## ILLINOIS CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAMS (CDRT)

Illinois established multi-disciplinary and multi-agency Child Death Review Teams in 1995. Their mission is to review cases of child fatalities to gain a better understanding of the causes and reasons for child deaths and to recommend changes in practice and policy that will hopefully prevent future deaths and injuries from the same circumstances. The agency has identified certain categories of death for review based on incidence in Illinois. They are:

- Premature Birth
- Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/SUDI
- Overlaying
- Poisoning and Overdoses
- Vehicular Accidents
- Fire
- Fire Arms
- Illness
- Injury
- Suffocation
- Drowning
- Undetermined

## What is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome(SIDS) or Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy (SUDI)?

SIDS or SUDI is the diagnosis given for the sudden death of an infant under one year of age that remains unexplained after a complete investigation, which includes an autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of other factors such as any symptoms and/or illnesses the infant was experiencing prior to dying, and the infant's medical history. Because most cases of SIDS/SUDI occur when a baby is sleeping in a crib, SIDS/SUDI is also known as Crib Death. SIDS/SUDI is considered a worldwide health problem. SIDS/SUDI has no specific symptoms and **is not caused by abuse or neglect**. It is important that parents who have a child die from SIDS/SUDI not be blamed for abuse and/or neglect. It is equally important that these parents not

blame each other for the infant's death. Research has yet to identify a cause of SIDS/SUDI deaths. Research has collected data that may lower the risk of a child dying from SIDS/SUDI.

### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS OF SIDS/SUDI?

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development reports that a number of risk factors seem to put a baby at higher risk of dying from SIDS/SUDI. Babies who sleep on their stomachs are more likely to die of SIDS/SUDI than those who sleep on their backs. Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are three times more likely to have a SIDS/SUDI baby, and exposure to passive smoke from others smoking in the household doubles the risk. Other risk factors include temperature – make sure your baby doesn't overheat or get too cold, babies born to mothers who had no or only late prenatal care, and premature or low birth weight babies.

### WHAT MIGHT HELP LOWER THE RISK OF SIDS/SUDI?

Currently there is no way of predicting which newborns will succumb to SIDS/SUDI; however, there are a few measures parents can take to lower the risk:

- Good Prenatal Care
  - o No Smoking
  - o No Drug or Alcohol Use
  - o Early and Regular Medical Care for Mother
  
- Provide Firm Sleep Surface
  - o Avoid Using Fluffy Blankets
  - o No Pillows
  - o No Waterbeds
  - o No Soft Toys in Crib
  
- Put Child to Sleep on Back
  - o Since 1992 the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that healthy infants be placed down for sleep on their back or side.
  
- Provide Regular Health Care
  - o Well Baby Check-ups
  - o Routine Immunizations
  - o Have Unusual Medical Episodes Medically Evaluated

### WHAT IS SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME?

Shaken Baby Syndrome is caused by shaking an infant or young child by the arms, legs, chest, or shoulders. Forceful shaking can result in brain damage that may lead to mental retardation, speech and learning disabilities, paralysis, seizures, hearing loss and even death. A baby's head and neck are especially vulnerable to injury because the head is so large and the neck muscles are still weak. In addition, a baby's brain and blood vessels are very fragile and easily damaged by whiplash motions such as shaking, jerking, and jolting. Shaken Baby Syndrome has been identified by other names such as abusive head trauma, shaken brain trauma, pediatric traumatic brain injury, and shaken impact syndrome. It is estimated that 50,000 cases occur each year in the United States and one in four of the infants, or 25% die as a result of this condition. The victims of Shaken Baby Syndrome range in age from a few days to five years, the average age being 6-8 months. Physicians often report that a child with possible Shaken Baby Syndrome is brought for medical attention due to falling, difficulty breathing, seizures, vomiting, altered consciousness or choking. Without early medical intervention the child may be at risk for further damage or even death.

## HOW IS SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME TREATED?

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Immediate medical attention may help reduce the impact of shaking, but many children are left with permanent damage from the shaking. Some victims will need behavioral and educational accommodations as well.

## CAN SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME BE PREVENTED?

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Experts give conflicting answers to this question. Some believe lack of knowledge regarding the dangers of shaking a child is a contributing factor and that most people don't intend to harm or kill these children by shaking them. Others believe that shaking is primarily the result of anger felt by an adult, combined with a loss of impulse control.

## WHAT CAN A PERSON DO IF THEY FEEL THEY COULD SHAKE A BABY?

---

**DON'T SHAKE A BABY! DO NOT HANDLE A BABY IF YOU FEEL ANGRY!** If you are afraid, you might hurt a child, follow these simple steps:

1. **STOP** – place the baby in a safe place such as a crib or playpen.
2. **CALM DOWN** – sit down or walk out of the room, but not too far that you can't hear the child.
3. **CHOOSE AN ACTIVITY THAT MAY CALM YOU AND THE BABY:**
  - a. Listen to music for a short time
  - b. Call a friend or relative for support and advice
  - c. Run the vacuum cleaner to drown out the crying
4. Crying may indicate the infant is hungry, needs changing, or is in pain from an illness or is teething. Think about these possibilities.
5. When you have calmed down, resume trying to help the baby.
6. If you can't calm the baby and the crying continues for a long time, **call the doctor.**

## INQUESTS

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A Coroner's Inquest is fact finding and statistical in nature. The Coroner's Jury Verdict has no civil or criminal trial significance. Usually if more than one person dies from the same incident, such as a traffic accident or fire, there is one inquest including all those deaths. A typical inquest lasts 30-45 minutes or more depending on the circumstances.

The Coroner, or the Chief Deputy Coroner in the Coroner's absence, serves as a hearing officer for the inquest. A court reporter is present to record all testimony presented. A jury of six (6) is present. The hearing officer presents all pertinent information and reports to the jury. If a law enforcement agency has investigated the circumstances surrounding the death, they are also asked to testify. If the family is present at the inquest, they are asked to testify to confirm the personal history information that has been submitted for the death certificate. The family may also be asked to testify regarding basic questions surrounding the circumstances of the death.

Upon completion of the testimony the Coroner's Jury deliberates in private. When they have concluded their deliberation, they issue a verdict through the foreman as to the cause and manner of death. The manner of death will be ruled an accident, a homicide, a suicide, or undetermined. The permanent death certificate will reflect this ruling. The death certificate is then filed with the Vital Records Division of the Will County Health Department. Death certificates can be obtained from The County Clerk's office. Certificates from 1999 to present can also be obtained from Vital Records.

All testimony presented during the inquest is recorded and transcribed by a court reporter. This transcribed testimony, along with all reports presented during the inquest, are kept together and become public record. They have been microfilmed since the 1960's and most recently are scanned to keep the records permanent and secure. They are available for public examination and copies of certain reports can be purchased for a fee.

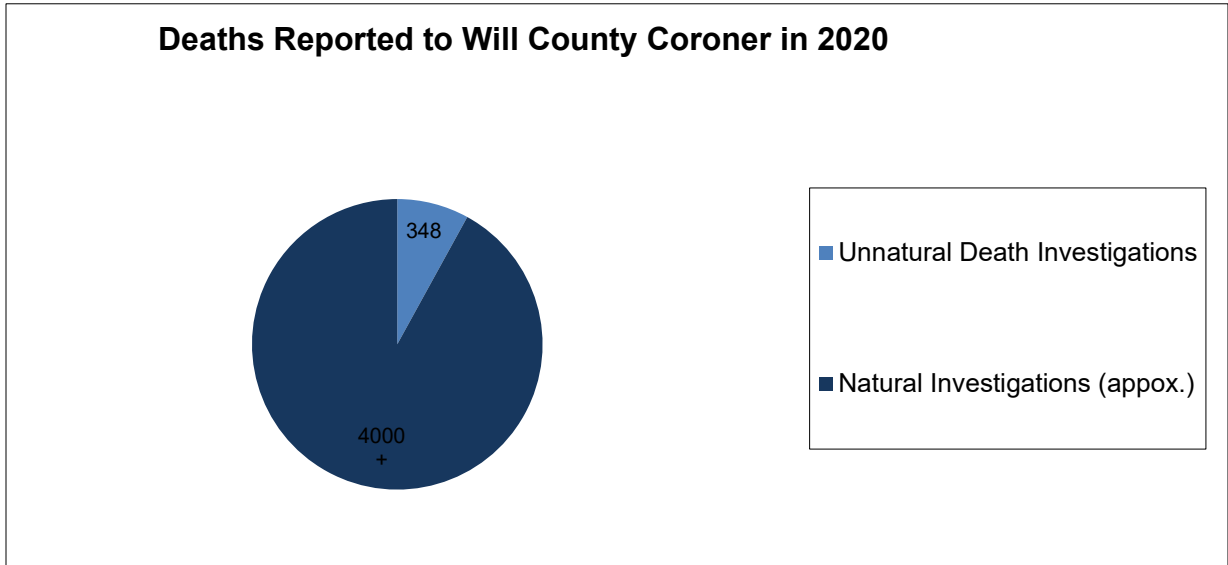
Effective January 1, 2007:

HB4971 is introduced and passed... allowing an amendment to the Counties Code for Coroners and the inquest process. Language changed from shall to may.

In all counties, in cases of apparent suicide, homicide, or accidental death or in other cases, within the discretion of the coroner, the coroner may summon 8 persons of lawful age from those persons drawn for petit jurors in the county. The summons shall command these persons to present themselves personally at such a place and time as the coroner shall determine and may be in any reasonable form of request for acknowledgement which the coroner deems practical and provides a reliable proof of service. The summons may be served by first class mail. From the 8 persons so summoned, the coroner shall select 6 to serve as the jury for the inquest.

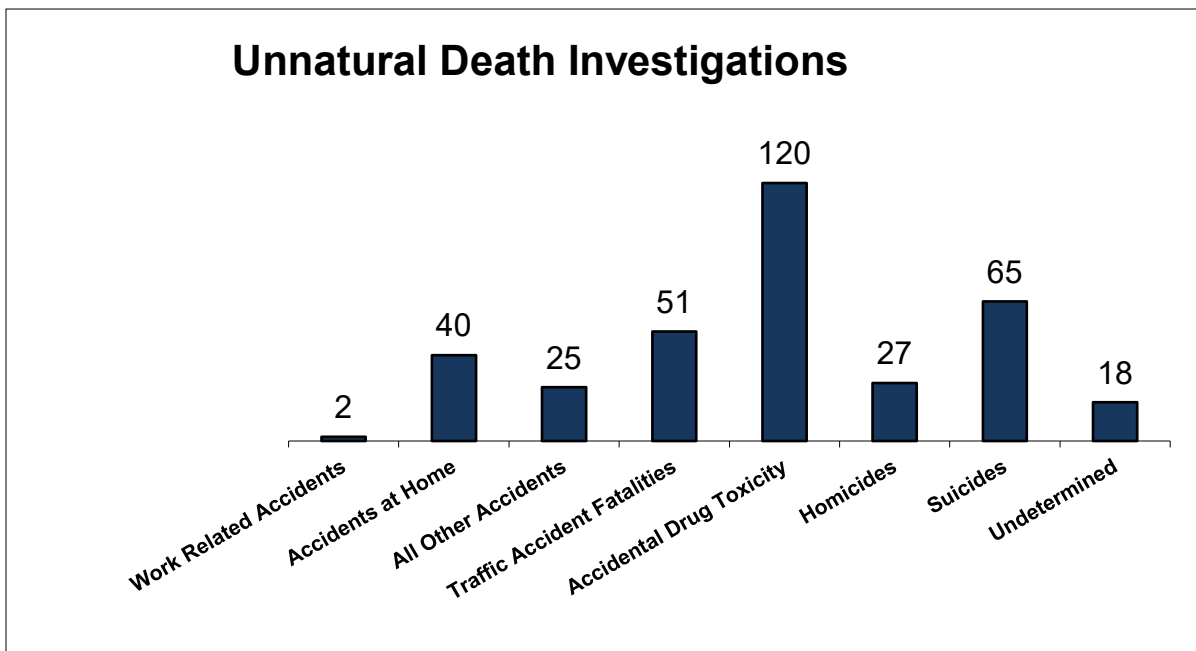
In counties which have a jury commission, in cases of apparent suicide or homicide or of accidental death, the coroner may conduct an inquest.

## DEATHS REPORTED TO WILL COUNTY CORONER IN 2020

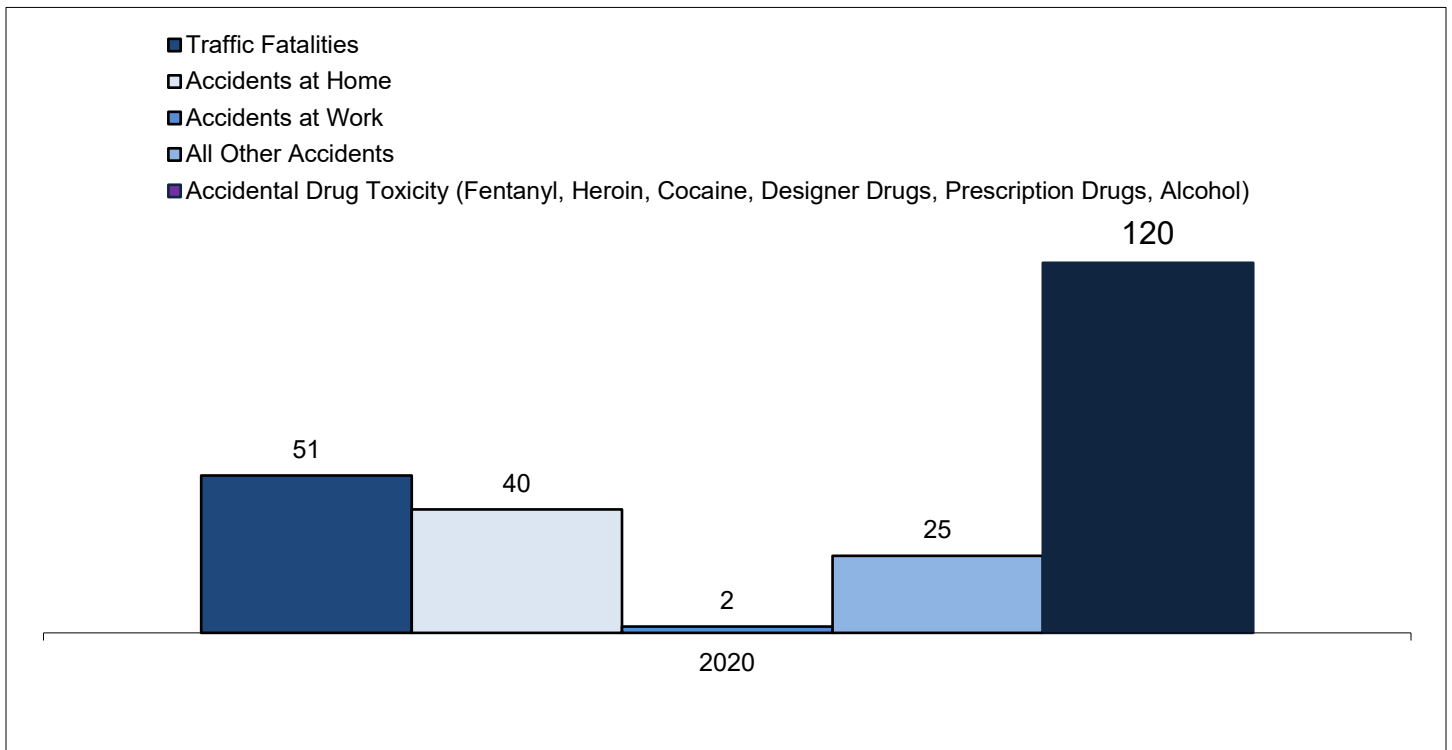


## UNNATURAL DEATHS

Unnatural deaths include all suicides, homicides, traffic fatalities, work related accidents, all other accidental deaths, and any deaths where the cause and/or manner cannot be determined. An inquest hearing may or may not be held for unnatural deaths.



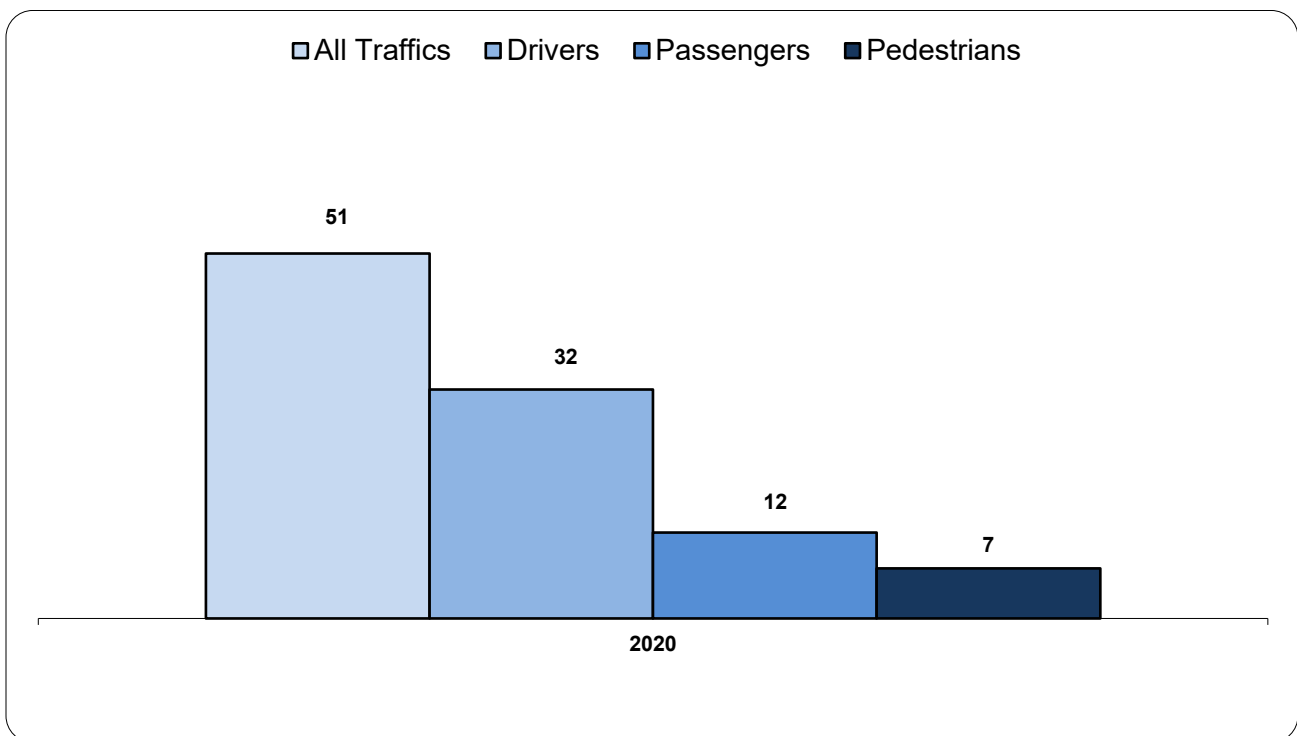
## All Accidental Deaths in Will County



# 51

## Traffic Fatalities in Will County

Law enforcement agencies continue their efforts to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries through safety programs and enforcement of seatbelt and child restraint laws, speed limits and DUI arrests.



ALL TRAFFIC FATALITIES

	<b>2020 (51)</b>
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	19
Male	32
<b>SAFETY RESTRAINTS</b>	
No/Unknown/Does Not Apply	34
Yes	17
<b>TOXICOLOGY RESULTS</b>	
Negative/Unknown/Does Not Apply	25
Positive Drugs and/or Alcohol	26
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	1
age 10-19	5
age 20-29	9
age 30-39	5
age 40-49	6
age 50-59	10
age 60-69	11
age 70-79	4
<b># of VEHICLES INVOLVED</b>	
One	16
Two	15
Three or More	7
Motorcycle	11
Unknown	2
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	2
Channahon	1
Crest Hill	2
Frankfort	1
Illinois State Police	19
Joliet	6
Lockport	2
Naperville	1
Out of County	1
Peotone	1
Plainfield	2
Romeoville	2
Shorewood	1
Wilmington	1
Will County Sheriff	5
University Park	2
Unknown	2

## BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION BY BODY WEIGHT

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There is a direct correlation between body weight, the amount of alcohol consumed, and the length of time over which the amount of alcohol is consumed. This translates to the BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION or BAC. Basically, the less you weigh, the more you drink and the faster you drink, the higher your blood alcohol level will be. The following chart relates this information in a usable, understandable form.

Number of Drinks								
10	.375	.313	.251	.234	.208	.188	.170	.156
9	.338	.281	.241	.211	.188	.169	.153	.141
8	.300	.250	.214	.188	.167	.150	.136	.125
7	.263	.219	.188	.164	.146	.131	.119	.109
6	.225	.188	.161	.141	.125	.113	.102	.094
5	.188	.156	.134	.117	.104	.094	.085	.078
4	.150	.125	.107	.094	.083	.075	.068	.063
3	.113	.094	.080	.070	.063	.056	.051	.047
2	.075	.063	.054	.047	.042	.038	.034	.031
1	.038	.031	.027	.023	.021	.019	.017	.016
Weight in Pounds	100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240

Note: If these drinks were not taken within one hour, deduct one drink from the total number of drinks for each hour that elapsed between the first and last drink. A drink is defined as 1oz. of 100 proof hard liquor such as whiskey, vodka, gin, etc., or 12oz. of 4% beer, or 3oz. of fortified wine.

*In 1997 the Illinois DUI/Implied Consent Law was amended to establish the legal level at 0.08. It was previously 0.10. It is important to note that the levels lower than this will impair your thinking and reaction times as well.*

## PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

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Alcohol affects the brain similar to the way any narcotic does. Reactions include removal of inhibitions, loss of self-control, weakness of willpower, development of euphoria, increased confidence, generosity, altered judgment, slurred speech, tremors, cessation of automatic movements, sweating, dilation of surface capillaries, stupor, coma, and death.

It is important to remember that a large dose of alcohol taken over a relatively short period of time can cause death. This kind of circumstance should be treated the same way a suspected drug overdose is handled: **CALL 911.**

## SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

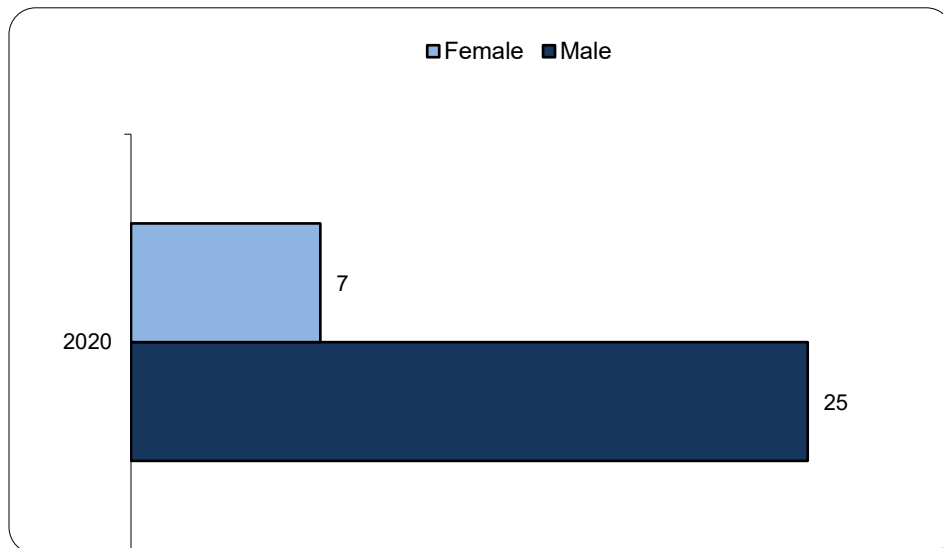
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### Traffic Accidents and Fatalities

- **ALCOHOL/DRUGS**
- **FAILURE TO YIELD**
- **DRIVING TOO FAST FOR ROAD CONDITIONS**
- **DRIVING TOO FAST FOR WEATHER CONDITIONS**
- **DISTRACTED DRIVING (TEXTING, TALKING ON PHONE, MULTIPLE PASSENGERS)**

## Driver Fatalities in Will County in 2020

Drivers consistently comprise the largest group of traffic fatalities every year. Many test positive for alcohol and/or not wearing seat restraints. The following chart reflects driver, passenger, and pedestrian fatalities in 2021.



# 32

## Driver Fatalities in 2020 in Will County

	2020 (32)
<b># of VEHICLES INVOLVED</b>	
One (includes Motorcycles)	12
Two (includes Motorcycles)	14
More Than Two (includes MC)	6
Car/Train	-
<b>TOXICOLOGY</b>	
Neg. Alcohol and/or Drugs	14
Pos. Alcohol and/or Drugs	18
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	7
Male	25
<b>USING SAFETY RESTRAINTS</b>	
No/Unknown/Does Not Apply	20
Yes	12
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	1
Frankfort	1
Illinois State Police	14
Joliet	3
Lockport	2
Naperville	1
Out of County	1
Peotone	1
Romeoville	2
University Park	2
Will County Sheriff	4

# 12

## Passenger Fatalities in 2020 in Will County

	2020 (12)
<b># of VEHICLES INVOLVED</b>	
One	3
Two	6
More Than Two	1
Unknown	2
<b>TOXICOLOGY</b>	
Negative BAC/ N/A	8
Pos. Drugs of Abuse &/or Alcohol	4
<b>USING SAFETY RESTRAINTS</b>	
No/Unknown	7
Yes	5
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	9
Male	3
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	1
Channahon	1
Crest Hill	2
Illinois State Police	3
None/Unknown	2
Plainfield	1
Will County Sheriff	1
Wilmington	1

# 7

## Pedestrian/Bicycle Fatalities in Will County

	2020 (7)
<b>TOXICOLOGY</b>	
Negative Drug/Alcohol	3
Positive Drug/Alcohol	4
<b># of VEHICLES INVOLVED</b>	
One	6
Two	1
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	3
Male	4
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	-
age 10-19	2
age 20-29	-
age 30-39	-
age 40-49	1
age 50-59	3
age 60-69	1
age 70-79	-
age 80-89	-
age 90-100	-
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Illinois State Police	2
Joliet	3
Plainfield	1
Shorewood	1

## Accidental Deaths

### Injury Facts:

Accidental injury has become the No. 3 cause of death for the first time in U.S. History. An American is accidentally injured every second and killed every three minutes by a preventable event. A total of 14,803 more people died accidentally in 2016 than in 2015, the largest single-year percent rise since 1936. In 2020, the U.S. experienced 200,955 preventable deaths. The top 4 leading causes of preventable injury-related deaths in Illinois are poisoning, motor-vehicle crashes, falls, and choking.

*\* National Safety Council – Injury Facts*

### RECOMMEDATIONS TO REDUCE DEATHS AND INJURIES IN THE COMMUNITY

#### Make Communities Walkable

- Provide residents access to safe walking areas
- Provide handrails, grab bars and good lighting
- Safe walking routes to and from school for children

#### Increase Citizen Education regarding Recreational and Sports Safety

- Alcohol as it Relates to Recreational and Sports Activities
- Boating Safety
- Biking Safety
- Hunting Safety
- Personal Safety
- Swimming Safety

# 40

## Accidental Deaths at Home in Will County

	2020 (40)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Animal Attack/Bite	1
Asphyxiation	4
Carbon Monoxide Intoxication	2
Choking	2
Drowning	2
Fall	26
Intestinal Blockage	1
Medical Mishap	2
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	17
Male	23
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	4
age 10-19	-
age 20-29	1
age 30-39	1
age 40-49	2
age 50-59	6
age 60-69	7
age 70-79	3
age 80-89	12
age 90+	4
<b>TOXICOLOGY</b>	
Negative or Not Available	34
Positive for Alcohol and/or Drugs	6
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	3
Bourbonnais	1
Crete	1
Homer Glen	2
Joliet	9
Lockport	2
Manhattan	1
Mokena	1
New Lenox	1
None	1
Orland Park	1
Plainfield	3
Rockdale	1
Romeoville	2
Shorewood	1
Tinley Park	1
Will County Sheriff	8

# 25

## Other Accidental Deaths in Will County

	2020 (25)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Animal Attack/Bite	2
Asphyxia	2
Aspiration/Choking	1
Bicycle Mishap	1
Diving Mishap/Pool Mishap	1
Drowning	0
Fall	14
Flying Mishap (plane, glider, etc)	1
Gunshot Wound	1
Jumping Mishap	1
Unknown	1
<b>PLACE OF INJURY</b>	
Another's Residence	8
Field/Lot	1
Hospital/Dr. Office	1
Nursing Home/Assisted Living	1
Park/Trails	3
Parking Area	5
Roadway/Bridge	2
Store/Building	1
Unknown	3
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	10
Male	15
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	2
age 10-19	-
age 20-29	1
age 30-39	2
age 40-49	2
age 50-59	5
age 60-69	3
age 70-79	7
age 80-89	2
age 90-100	1
>100	-
<b>TOXICOLOGY INFORMATION</b>	
Negative or Not Available	16
Positive/Alcohol &/ or Drugs	9

## ACCIDENTAL DEATHS AT WORK

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE WORKPLACE DEATHS AND INJURIES

*by the National Safety Council*

- Increase efforts for construction zone safety
- Every company or organization should require employees to buckle up
- All workplaces should have a comprehensive safety and health plan
- Address security issues to prevent workplace violence
- Increase awareness of safe practices

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2020 there were 4764 fatal work injuries in the United States.

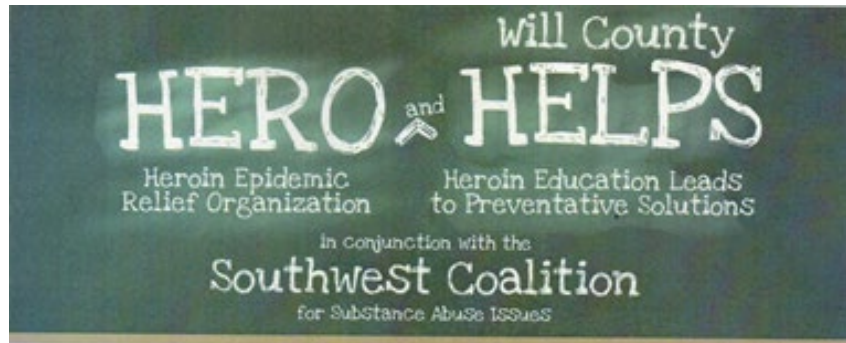
## 2

### Accidental Deaths at Work in Will County

	2020 (2)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Fall	1
Industrial Mishap	1
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	-
Male	2
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	-
age 10-19	-
age 20-29	-
age 30-39	-
age 40-49	2
age 50-59	-
age 60-69	-
age 70-79	-
age 80-100	-
<b>Responding Agency</b>	
Out of State	1
WCSP	1

## Accidental Drug Toxicity Deaths in Will County

Due to the increasing interest and inquiries involving drug toxicity deaths in Will County we have decided to dedicate a section of the annual report to provide information on these cases separately. In the past, we included accidental drug toxicity deaths in the statistics regarding accidental deaths. Drug toxicity deaths have quickly become the largest number of unnatural deaths in Will County. In particular, Heroin and Fentanyl toxicity deaths have been on the rise. The Will County Coroner along with many other County and City offices continue to work together to try to resolve this growing epidemic.



We are the **Heroin Epidemic Relief Organization**. Our mission is to stop the growing heroin epidemic that has rapidly swept across the nation through our own programs and by supporting strategic pieces of legislation all while providing comfort and support to those who have lost a loved one to heroin or are currently helping a loved one who is struggling with this terrible disease.

HERO was founded by John Roberts and Brian Kirk after their two sons, Billy and Matt, were tragically taken from them while battling a heroin addiction. The Two Dads, as the local media took to calling them, set out to call attention to the heroin epidemic spreading throughout similarly affluent middle-class communities, to connect with and build a support network of families who have also lost children to heroin, and to work to see the day when no parent has to experience the loss of a child to addiction again.

# 120

## All Accidental Drug Toxicity Deaths in Will County

	2020(120)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
<b>For detailed breakdown of drug combinations please see the website statistics <a href="http://www.willcountyillinois.com">www.willcountyillinois.com</a></b>	
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	31
Male	89
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	-
age 10-19	-
age 20-29	23
age 30-39	49
age 40-49	29
age 50-59	14
age 60-69	5
age 70-79	-
age 80-89	-
age 90-100	-
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	7
Braidwood	2
Channahon	2
Crest Hill	5
Crete	1
Elwood	1
Joliet	40
Lockport	9
Manhattan	2
Minooka	1
Mokena	6
Monee	1
Naperville	3
New Lenox	1
None/Unknown	1
Plainfield	1
Rockdale	3
Romeoville	4
Shorewood	3
Tinley Park	2
University Park	1
Will County Sheriff	24

# 90

## Accidental Heroin/Fentanyl Toxicity Deaths in Will County

	2020 (90)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
For detailed breakdown of drug combinations please see the website statistics <a href="http://www.willcountyllinois.com">www.willcountyllinois.com</a>	
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	20
Male	70
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	-
age 10-19	-
age 20-29	18
age 30-39	40
age 40-49	22
age 50-59	8
age 60-69	2
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Bolingbrook	7
Braidwood	2
Channahon	2
Cook County	3
Crete	1
Elwood	1
Joliet	29
Lockport	8
Manhattan	2
Minooka	1
Mokena	3
Naperville	2
New Lenox	1
None/Unknown	1
Plainfield	1
Rockdale	3
Romeoville	4
Shorewood	3
Tinley Park	1
Will County Sheriff	15

## SUICIDES

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Family and friends left behind after a suicide often feel great guilt and depression after someone they knew commits suicide. They are called suicide survivors. There are support groups available for suicide survivors. You can call any local hospital or check the local paper for information on support groups. There is a 24-hour crisis line in Will County:

**Will County Crisis Line  
815-722-3344**

There is a toll free Suicide Prevention Helpline (National Crisis Helpline) sponsored and operated by Suicide Awareness Voices of Education:

**1-888-SUICIDE (1-888-784-2433) or 1-800-273-8255**

It is difficult to predict suicidal behavior in many areas, such as age, race, occupation, social status, and income. Statistics tell us a male is much more likely to succeed in a suicide attempt. When a person talks about or threatens suicide their comments should be taken very seriously. There is a certain set of behavioral characteristics that may suggest impending suicide.

### **A person may be suicidal if he or she:**

- Appears depressed: is sad, tearful, confused, has poor sleep patterns, poor appetite, and expresses lack of hope.
- Threatens suicide
- Shows marked changes in behavior, appearance or mood.
- Abuses drugs and/or alcohol.
- Has experienced a significant loss: financial, social status, break-up in a relationship or divorce, death of a loved one
- Deliberately injures self.
- Gives away possessions.
- Withdraws from social and outside activities.

# 65

## Suicide Deaths in Will County

	2020 (65)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Carbon Monoxide	1
Chemical/Poison Inhalation/Intoxication	2
Drug Overdose	16
Gunshot Wound	21
Hanging	21
Jumping/Fall from Heights	1
Stab/Slash Wounds	1
Train Incident	2
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	
age 10-19	5
age 20-29	11
age 30-39	10
age 40-49	14
age 50-59	8
age 60-69	12
age 70-79	2
age 80-89	3
age 90-100	-
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	16
Male	49
<b>NOTE or MESSAGE FOUND</b>	
No	41
Yes	24
<b>TOXICOLOGY RESULTS</b>	
Negative or N/A	25
Positive Drug and/or Alcohol	40
<b>DAY OF WEEK</b>	
Monday	10
Tuesday	8
Wednesday	13
Thursday	4
Friday	6
Saturday	10
Sunday	14

## HOMICIDES

Homicide is the killing of one human being by the act or omission of another. The term applies to all such killings, whether criminal or not. Homicide is considered non-criminal in a number of situations, including

- a) deaths as a result of war or
- b) putting someone to death by the valid sentence of the court.

# 27

## Homicide Deaths in Will County

<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Asphyxia	1
Blunt Trauma/Assault	1
Gunshot Wound(S)	22
Stab/Chop Wounds	2
Strangulation/Suffocation	1
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	3
Male	24
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
0-20	9
21-30	7
31-40	6
41-50	3
51-60	1
61-70	-
71-80	1
81-90	-
91-100	-
<b>TOXICOLOGY INFORMATION</b>	
Negative, Unknown, N/A	5
Positive for Drug and/or Alcohol	22
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Crest Hill	2
Joliet	13
Lockport	2
Steger	1
Romeoville	1
Will County Sheriff	4
Wilmington	1
WGMCTF	3

UNDETERMINED

# 18

## Undetermined Deaths in Will County

	2020 (18)
<b>CAUSE OF DEATH</b>	
Cranial Cerebral Injuries	1
CO Intoxication	3
Drowning	5
Multiple Injuries	4
Undetermined	5
<b>GENDER</b>	
Female	2
Male	16
<b>AGE RANGE</b>	
age 0-9	3
age 10-19	2
age 20-29	3
age 30-39	2
age 40-49	3
age 50-59	3
age 60-69	-
age 70-79	2
age 80-89	-
age 90+	-
<b>TOXICOLOGY INFORMATION</b>	
Negative or Unavailable	8
Positive for Drug and/or Alcohol	10
<b>RESPONDING AGENCIES</b>	
Braidwood	1
Crete	1
Illinois State Police	3
Joliet	3
Minooka	1
None	2
Plainfield	1
Romeoville	1
Tinley Park	1
WCSP	3
WCMCTF	1

## UNDETERMINED MANNER OF DEATH

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Undetermined (or Could Not Be Determined) applies when the evidence does not clearly indicate one Manner of Death over another. A death may be deemed Undetermined if after a thorough investigation and careful consideration of all findings, the Coroner or Medical Examiner concludes there is insufficient information to classify the Manner of Death as an Accident, Suicide, Homicide or Natural Death. Also when a cause of death cannot be established due to circumstances, i.e. skeletalized remains, etc. the Manner of Death may also be classified as Undetermined.

## TIME OF DEATH

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Determining the exact time of death that is not witnessed is very difficult. The Will County Coroner and Deputy Coroners pronounce the time of death when they arrive at a death scene. This is true even when it is evident that death may have occurred several hours or maybe even days prior to discovery of the body. An autopsy does not reveal the time of death.

## AUTOPSIES

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The word “autopsy” comes from a Greek word and means “seeing for oneself”. Often what is revealed during an autopsy has not been discovered or even suspected during medical testing, examination, or even surgery. Sometimes these discoveries are helpful for family members of the deceased as they may be genetically linked and/or predisposed for certain diseases/conditions.

An autopsy is the systematic examination of a body using appropriate surgical techniques. It consists of an overall inspection of the body and the examination of the organs within the body. External and internal exams are the beginning of a longer process of investigation, which includes examination of tissue cells, results of toxicological tests, and looking for bacteria or other causes of infection and/or disease.

When the examination and test results are complete, the pathologist prepares a written report that gives all of the findings and what was determined to be the cause of death.

The wishes of the family are always kept in mind when making a decision as to whether or not an autopsy should be performed. However, the coroner does have jurisdiction of the body, and, if it is determined that an autopsy is necessary, the coroner does have the authority to order an autopsy, even if this decision conflicts with the family’s wishes.

There are times when the Coroner determines that an autopsy is not necessary, but the family feels they would like one. In this situation, the family can request a private autopsy through the primary care physician and the hospital affiliation. If this is not possible, then the family can contact a pathologist privately and they are responsible for the pathology fees.

**360**

Autopsies completed in Will County

## ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

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Advancement in medical technology during the past few years has made tissue and organ transplantation one of the most dramatic and successful techniques available for treating certain medical diseases and conditions that were once considered fatal. Even though Illinois' rate of donation is among the highest in the nation, donation of tissue and organs is behind due to increasing number of patients needing transplants.

Gift of Hope is a federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization dedicated to recovering organs and tissue for patients awaiting transplants in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and in northwest Indiana.

Almost anyone can be a donor, regardless of age or circumstances of death. (Since the final decision for donation may rest with your family, it is important to discuss your wishes with your family ahead of time regarding this very important issue.) Families of donors receive information on the donation process, placement of organs and tissue taken, and the progress of the recipient. Follow-up support programs are also provided to the donor's families.

