

Baldwin County Coroner's Office

Annual Report FY 2018

In 2018 the Baldwin County Coroner's office consist of the following employees:

Stan Vinson - Coroner

Dr. Brian Pierce – Chief Deputy Coroner

Troy Dyess – Deputy Coroner

Daren Montgomery – Deputy Coroner

Brandy Byrd: Administrative Support Specialist III Full-Time 40 hours/week

Victoria Key : Administrative Support Specialist I Part-Time 24 hours/week

The Baldwin County Coroner's Office (BCCO) covers over 2000 square miles of Baldwin County and serves some 212,000 residents as well as numerous visitors. Coroner Stan Vinson appointed 3 Deputy Coroners to assist him with his duties. Administratively in 2018 the County provided 1 full time office administrator and one part-time assistant resulting in approximately 64 hours of work per week. Phones are answered 24 hours/day, 365 days a year. The Coroner's office handled 486 Cases in the FY 2018, which equated to 1.33 deaths per day.

The primary purpose of the Coroner's Office is to investigate unattended, unexplained, violent and accidental deaths as set forth in the Constitution of Alabama Title 11, Chapter 5. Our Mission Statement is as follows:

Mission Statement

To accurately determine the cause and manner of death, of individuals that die within Baldwin County; through a fair, ethical, and competent investigation of death; performed by qualified and trained individuals, in accordance with the accepted medicolegal death investigation professional standards; ensuring the integrity of the investigation.

To establish and maintain cooperative, professional relationships with law enforcement, funeral homes, and other community members.

To assist the bereaved in the loss of a loved one.

To earn and hold the trust and respect of the citizens that we are privileged and honored to serve.

The office continued to maintain a 1-hour response time as well as a timely progression of Death Investigation. Additionally, Standard Operating Procedures were written, and while an ongoing process, will prove beneficial as the Office seeks National Accreditation with the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IAC&ME). This will be a crucial step in the overall planning of establishing a Medical Examiner for Baldwin County.

The 2018 Fiscal Year (FY) saw 486 cases as accepted through the Coroner's Office.

Of the 486 cases, 179 were sent for autopsy (37%) and 375 were ruled as natural deaths (77%).

The remaining 111 cases have the following breakdown:

39 Violent Deaths MVA, Drownings,

38 Suicides 4 Drug related

17 Drug Related Deaths

7 Homicides

3 Undetermined

1 Infectious Death

6 pending

*see appendix A for Excel spreadsheet breakdown of all cases.

Continued assistance with Law Enforcement, the District Attorney and the Alabama Department of Forensic Science (ADFS) office is essential for these cases to be adjudicated accurately and without bias.

The BCCO was responsible for taking custody of 282 bodies, of which 179 were sent to ADFS, in Mobile, AL, for autopsy then released/returned to a funeral home of the family's choice.

The BCCO transported and housed 103 bodies for families from out of state or for cases needing a medical record review.

Transportation costs for the 2018 FY was approximately \$70,000.00, up from 50,000 in 2017. The changes in policy at the State Lab in Mobile, reflected a 20,000 dollar increase to transportation cost in 2018. This is an area we need to look at for cost savings or adjusting our procedures.

The Coroner's office responded to 111 death scenes for investigative purposes. Typically, when Coroners respond to a scene, an autopsy is warranted. Each case is different but often scene investigation will result in at least an external exam and toxicology.

This past year the Coroner's Office could identify 100 % of the cases, leaving us no case with an unidentified body. The Coroner's office assisted the Council on Aging with 12 county Cremations and 1 County burial.

The BCCO continues to work with the AOC and the Eye Bank to assist with organ donation. The BCCO assisted with 15 Tissue harvests in 2018. We assist the organ recovery teams whenever it is feasible to honor the subject's or family wishes. We do however guard the public trust and should further investigation be warranted for pending charges the request to harvest may be denied by the Coroner's Office.

As we move into 2019, the office will continue to maintain its response time of 1-hour county wide. Rigorously advance its educational status of its investigators as well as the public as to the scope of work performed by the Office of the Coroner. Additionally, we will actively pursue Accreditation through IAC&ME. As the County grows so should our ability to serve it.

I would respectfully submit this FY 2018 report to the Commission, along with the attached spreadsheet.

I would request that this report be placed on the Baldwin County Website for the public to view and understand the Scope and Practice of the Coroner's Office to Baldwin County and its Citizens.

Dr. Brian Pierce, D-ABMDI

Coroner Elect

12-22-2018