



**Jefferson County Coroner  
Office**

**Barbara Weakley-Jones MD  
Coroner**



**BINGHAM BUILDING  
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**[www.louisvilleky.gov/coroner](http://www.louisvilleky.gov/coroner)**

# Historical Perspectives:

The Jefferson County Coroner's Office is the 16<sup>th</sup> largest office in the United States and was established in 1780.

In 2009, Dr. Barbara Weakley-Jones was appointed Coroner. She then won the election in 2010 to become the first female elected to the office of Coroner. Dr. Weakley-Jones mission reflects her philosophy that her deputies are educated in medicine and death investigations with primary goal of determining the cause and manner of death.

The coroner's office always had a morgue and we shared with the ME when they started in 1977.

1<sup>st</sup> The general hospital

2<sup>nd</sup> University hospital

3<sup>rd</sup> 810 Barret Ave. 2016

2017 NO morgue 4 spaces with the ME at their facility

## Statutory Requirements:

Kentucky Statute mandates the Coroner's Office to determine the cause and manner of deaths in medical/legal related deaths "coroner's cases." The *Cause of Death* is the injury, disease, or a combination of the two that cause the death of the person. The *Manner of Death* is ruled by the Coroner to be natural, suicidal, accidental, homicide, unknown, or pending further investigation.

Kentucky law does not recognize the right to refuse an autopsy ordered by the coroner. Autopsies are performed to answer medical and legal questions to protect public health and aid in legal issues.

The Coroner's Office deals with many kinds of death, such as:

- Skeletal Remains
- Homicides
- Accidental Death
- Death in a Correctional or state owned Facilities
- Childhood deaths
- Motor Vehicle, train and plane Deaths
- Disasters
- Suicides
- Natural deaths in the young
- Drowning deaths
- Fire deaths
- Cremations

## **Death Scene Investigation:**

The Coroner or Deputy has the responsibility of pronouncing death. This includes: determining the time of death, taking custody of both the body and property on the body, ensuring the body has not been moved from the original death scene, making a positive identification of the body, notifying the next of kin, sign the death certificate, completing required forms and records for each death investigation, and collaborating with other appropriate agencies.

The Coroner/ Deputies act as a liaison between the police and the Medical Examiner's Office in the investigation of various types of death in the community.

The Deputies are continually involved in courses, which aid in their work. Deputies are mandated to attend yearly training sessions.

# Postmortem examination

A postmortem examination is required for all coroner's cases however that does not mean that an autopsy is performed on all cases.

# The Autopsy

An autopsy is an examination of the body to determine the cause and manner of death. It is performed by the state medical examiner not the coroner. Small specimens of internal organs are microscopically examined along with body fluids tested for drugs. In violent deaths, other evidence may be collected and examined by a crime laboratory.

The autopsy and other tests rarely delay the release of the body, however, final results of the autopsy report usually takes 6-8 weeks. Death certificates are signed after receiving the autopsy reports.

During the autopsy, all *property* and *clothing* is generally handled by the Medical Examiner and released with the body to the funeral home except in homicide or undetermined cases where those items get released to the law enforcement agency.

## The Coroner's Office services and programs:

**Indigent Program** - The Indigent Program was established for the homeless and destitute in Louisville. Each year more than 300 homeless or indigent persons die in our community with no family or resources. When a relative or other legal representative applies for a county burial or cremation, the Coroner's Office has an application process with an interview. The Coroner evaluates the request and needs of each situation, and the resources are explored (insurance, savings, Social Security, retirement, Veteran benefits, etc) to determine eligibility of the person.

The Coroner's Office is also proud to have a nonprofit program "**Be a Memory Maker**" that takes donations to raise money to purchase grave markers for individuals buried through the indigent program. The Coroner's Office believes firmly in service to the community and is committed to providing a permanent marker for the indigent people to acknowledge their time on earth.



# Jefferson County Coroner's Office

Coroner  
Barbara Weakley-Jones MD

Administrative  
deputy  
coroners

Cindy Thoene  
(Cremations)  
Steve Moran  
(Office works)  
Kim Smith( IT)

Indigent  
Program

Jackie Smith

Personnel/  
Rotating  
deputies

Joann farmer(Chief)  
Larry Carroll  
Eddie Robinson  
Jack Arnold  
Rita Taylor  
Scott Russ  
Mike Haag  
Wayne Pryse  
David Wood

# Coroner statistics

- Number cases each year

<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
4,723	4,924	5,442	predicted 6,196

That is an increase of over **750** cases in the last 2 years

- Average bodies in morgue are 5 daily with only 4 spots allowed in the ME morgue

The indigent program	2014	2015	2016
• Burials	134	161	137
• Cremations	180	172	152

# 2016 statistics

- Numbers of cases 5,442
- 15 cases per 24hr period
- Average 5 bodies in morgue per day, some stay in morgue for 2-3 wks.
- WE had a record breaking year with homicides and drug overdoses which has caused our greatest increase in work load.

# The Coroner's office Since 1977

The office has had the same number of rotating deputies (9).

The same number of staff people or actually less now.

No major increase in pay except for cost of living raises.

They drive their own personal vehicles over 10,000.00 miles per year per deputy

We had to change some policies so we could handle the load of cases

There has been a marked increase in homicide and drug overdose cases.

Our rotating deputies rotate on a 24hr period starting at 9am in the morning until 9am the next morning, then off 60 hours. They get paid a yearly fee no matter many cases they do a year or hours they work. They get no counted vacation or sick leave. They get no overtime pay even though they are never finished at 9 am the next day.

**They must love what they do for this type of schedule**

# WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO MAKE THE OFFICE MORE EFFICIENT AND SAVE MONEY

- Laid off two administrative positions and taken over their responsibilities
- Use stickers on old envelopes and stationary
- Updated Policies and Procedure manual in office
- Worked with GLMS to educate and provide a flow chart for ER doctors to avoid unnecessary coroner calls
- Provided Hosparus a check list to send to us instead of calling us
- Lectured to hospitals on what is a coroner's case

Re-wrote and updated the Coroner's Manual for the coroner's association.

Made a pamphlet for the coroner's office and the police department to hand out at a death scene.

Moved out of 810 Barret Ave to a new location where there is no county morgue so we share with the state morgue.

We have never **not** had a morgue  
to store our bodies

We need a MORGUE





Morgue





We need a Jefferson County  
Morgue

AND

We need more deputy coroners or  
at least a major increase in pay