



HOWARD COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

2017 Howard County Coroner's Office 4th Quarter and Year End Report

For Immediate Release

January 22, 2018

To: All Media Outlets

From: Dr. Steven J. Seele

The Howard County Health Department-Vital Records Division recorded over 200 deaths in Howard County for the 4th Quarter which ended December 31, 2017. Of those deaths, 51 were investigated by the Howard County Coroner's Office. There were 33 natural deaths, 1 homicide, 2 suicides, 0 undetermined, and 15 accidental deaths. Of the 15 accidental deaths, 3 were due to residential fires, 3 were due to automobile crashes, 2 were related to hypothermia, 1 was due to an accidental fall, and 6 were the result of overdoses. The drug related deaths consisted of 2 opiate related in which both involved heroin. Methamphetamine was detected in 3 of the cases. There was 1 spice related death and alcohol was involved in 3 of the cases.

Of the 51 cases investigated by the Howard County Coroner's office in the fourth quarter, there were 22 autopsies with 20 toxicology studies conducted at the cost of \$37,738.00.

The Howard County Coroner's office conducted 208 death investigations for 2017. The manner of death breaks down to 127 naturals, 3 Homicides, 14 Suicides, 60 Accidentals, and 4 were undetermined. There were 44 drug overdose cases for the year. Two of the overdose cases are due to undetermined substances but the investigations revealed that illicit substances were being used at the time of death. Many of the cases involving overdose, polysubstance abuse is present.

Even though we have seen a record number of overdose deaths across the nation and locally, I am encouraged with the steps that are taking place at the national and state level to address this crises. Locally, there have been great strides made over the past several months with the development of the "Systems of Care" since the drug summit that took place in September of 2017 in Kokomo. I am hopeful as we move forward this next year that we will see a reduction in the deaths due to drug overdose as a result of steps that are being taken.

Dr. Steven J. Seele,

