



# VENTURA COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE



## Budget Report FY2324

March 28, 2023



**Christopher Young, M.D.**  
Chief Medical Examiner



# Death Investigation Services

- ◆ Death Scene Investigations
- ◆ Review Medical Records
- ◆ Perform Medicolegal Autopsies
- ◆ Determine Cause and Manner of Death
- ◆ Complete the Certificate of Death



# Dual Purpose of the Medical Examiner's Office

- ◆ Serve the Criminal Justice System
- ◆ Public Health Role




# Medical Examiner Jurisdiction

- ◆ Homicides
- ◆ Suicides
- ◆ Accidents
- ◆ Drug Overdoses
- ◆ Deaths on the Job
- ◆ Deaths While in Custody of the State
- ◆ Natural Deaths while not under the care of a physician
- ◆ Unusual or Suspicious Deaths
- ◆ California *Government Code 27491*

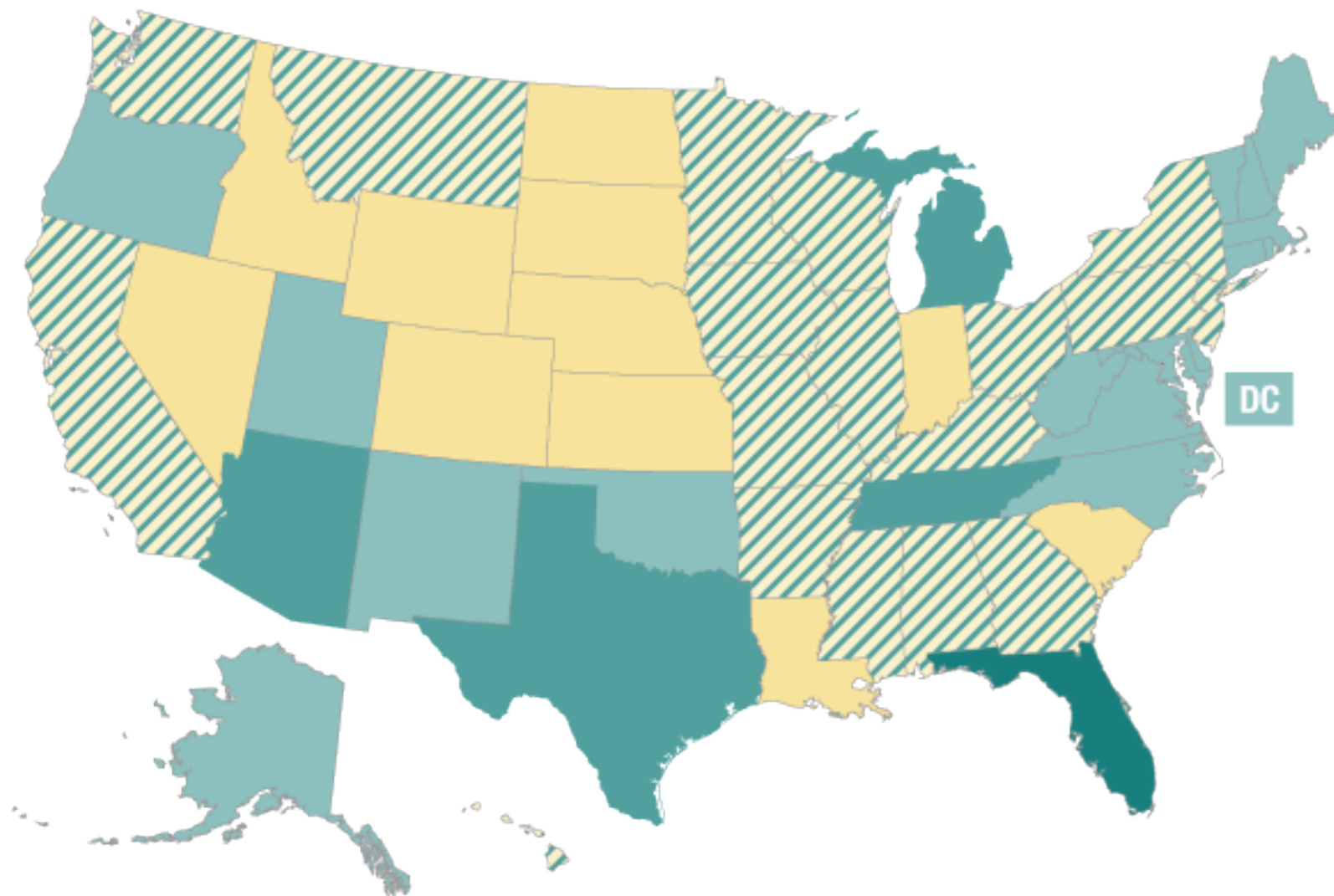


# Problems Faced Nationally

- ◆ No Federal or local regulations
- ◆ Inadequate staffing and facilities
- ◆ Shortage of physicians
- ◆ Inadequate expertise / training
- ◆ Conflicts of interest



# **Coroner vs Medical Examiner**



- County medical examiners only (4)
- Statewide Medical Examiner (16 and DC)
- District Medical Examiner (1)
- Only coroner offices, by county or multi-county districts (11)
- Mixture of medical examiners and coroner offices (18)



# California:

- ◆ 47 Sheriff-Coroners

- ◆ 5 Coroners

- ◆ Calaveras

- ◆ San Mateo

- ◆ Sacramento

- ◆ Humboldt

- ◆ Inyo

- ◆ 6 Medical Examiners

- ◆ San Diego

- ◆ San Francisco

- ◆ Ventura

- ◆ Santa Clara

- ◆ Los Angeles

- ◆ San Joaquin

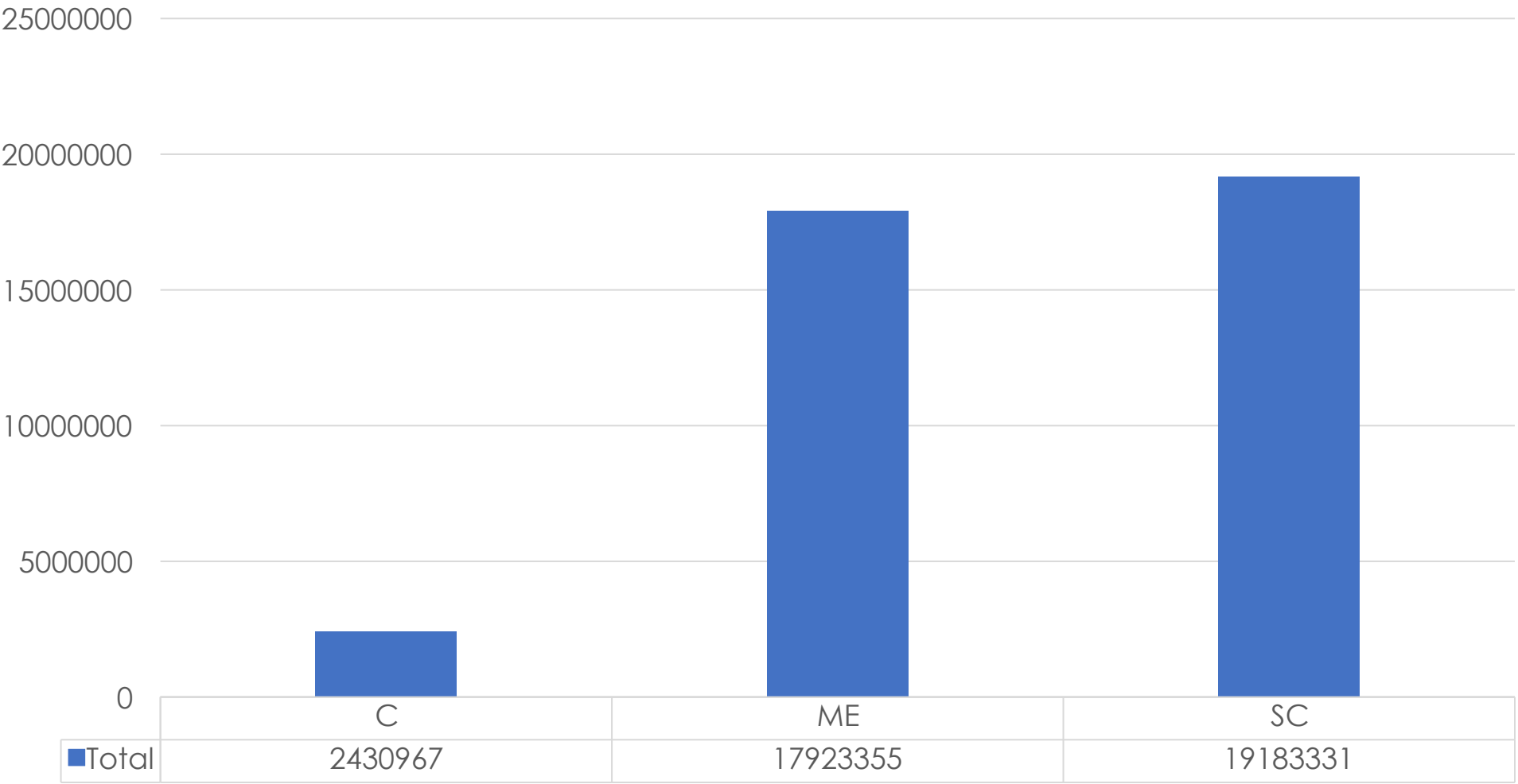


# California remains 1 of 3 states that doesn't require independent coroner and sheriff

By Lisa Fernandez | Published September 1, 2022 | Updated 12:05PM | California | KTVU FOX 2 | ➞



# California Population by Death Investigation System





# Federal Recommendations and Ventura:

- ❖ Medical Examiner System
- ❖ Administration/Oversight
- ❖ All Medicolegal Death investigators should be certified
- ❖ All medicolegal autopsies should be performed or supervised by a board certified forensic pathologist
- ❖ All offices, facilities and institutions performing MDI should be accredited



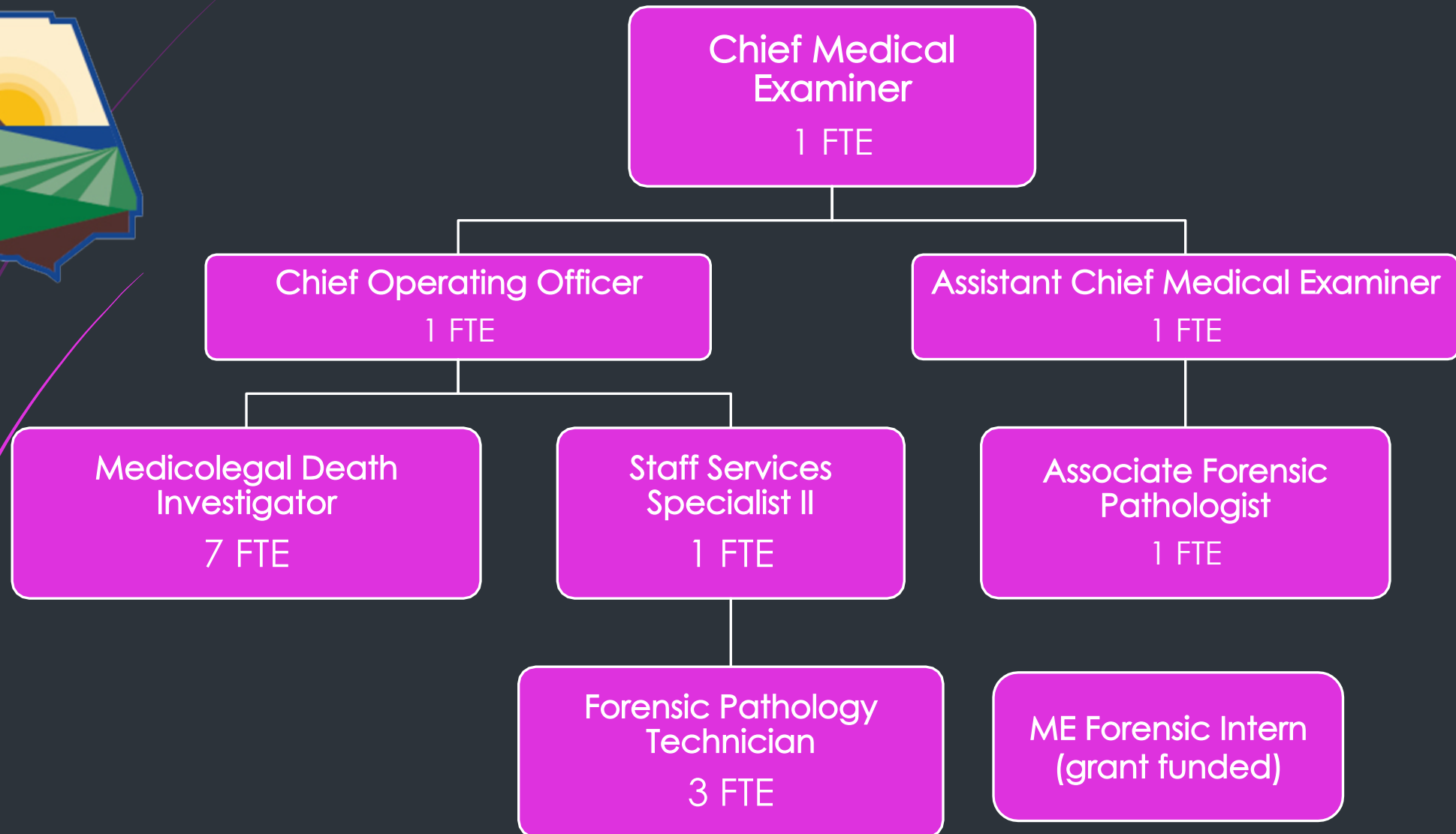
# NAME Accreditation

- ◆ Minimum standards to improve the quality of MDI in the US
- ◆ Endorsement – adequate environment to practice MDI and serve its jurisdiction well
  - ◆ Staff
  - ◆ Facility
  - ◆ Policies and Procedures

# Performance Measures

Description	Unit of Measure	Benchmark	FY 2020-21 Actual	FY 2021-22 Actual	FY 2022-23 Estimated	FY 2023-24 Target
Autopsy performance - % of cases examined within 48 hours	%	>90	>90	>90	90	>90
Autopsy reports - % completed within 60 days of autopsy	%	>90	55	57	90	>90
Autopsy reports - % completed within 90 days of autopsy	%	>90	71	71	94	>90
Toxicology - % completed within 60 days	%	>90	96	98	99	>90

# Ventura County Medical Examiner's Office Organizational Chart (15 FTE)

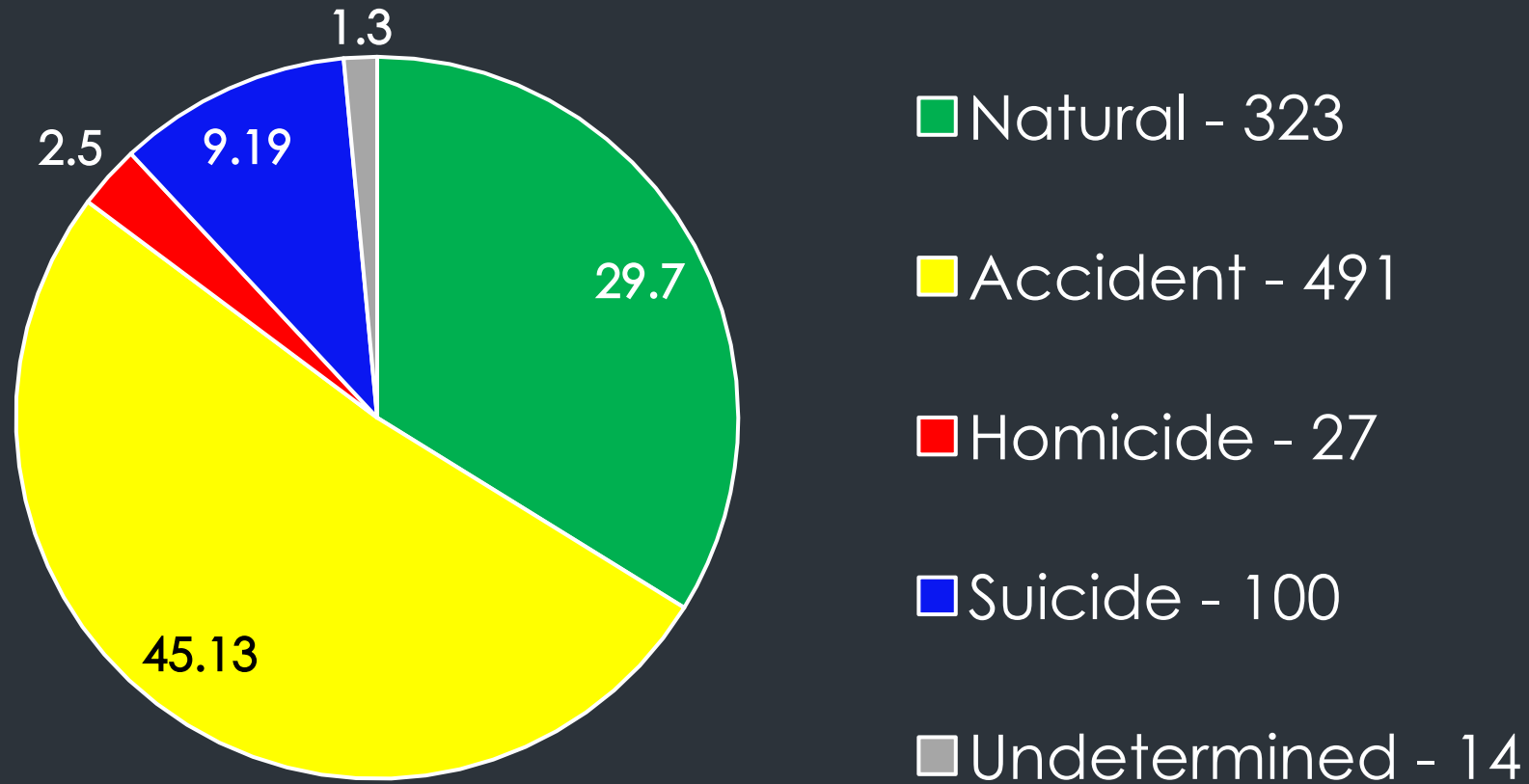


# Medical Examiner Statistics

	CY 2018	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022
Homicide Deaths	37	29	25	22	27
Suicide Deaths	95	94	85	87	100
Accidental Deaths	335	340	452	504	491
Natural Deaths	243	223	288	314	323
Total Examinations:	620	585	706	788	805
Total Scene Responses	632	649	748	829	859
Total Investigations	1,565	1,651	2044	2128	2091
Annual County Deaths	5,574	5,763	6,997	7018	6782
County Population	859,073	859,967	843,870	846,249	833,652



2022: approx. 6,782 deaths  
2091 reported (30%)/ 1090 JA (52%)





## Ventura County per capita Cost

\$ 5.10

FY 21-22 Net County Cost (Adopted Budget)	FY 22-23 Net County Cost (Adopted Budget)	FY 23-24 Net County Cost
\$ 3,879,000	\$ 4,128,000	\$ 4,179,000

## Personnel

15 FTE

# FY2324 Revenue Sources

- ◆ Physician civil testimony
- ◆ Autopsy services for area hospitals and Trauma service programs
- ◆ Medical Examiner Report distributions
- ◆ Tissue Recovery facility usage fees
- ◆ California Dept. of Public Health (CDPH)
  - Cal Enhanced Surveillance Program
  - SODD – Suspected Overdose Death Program
- ◆ Paul Coverdell Federal Grant



# Accomplishments

- ◆ Now meeting NAME accreditation performance measures after onboarding of a third forensic pathologist last fiscal year
- ◆ Improved Security
- ◆ Providing requested autopsies for VCMC Trauma Service
- ◆ Implemented Forensic Internship program



# Future Projects & Initiatives

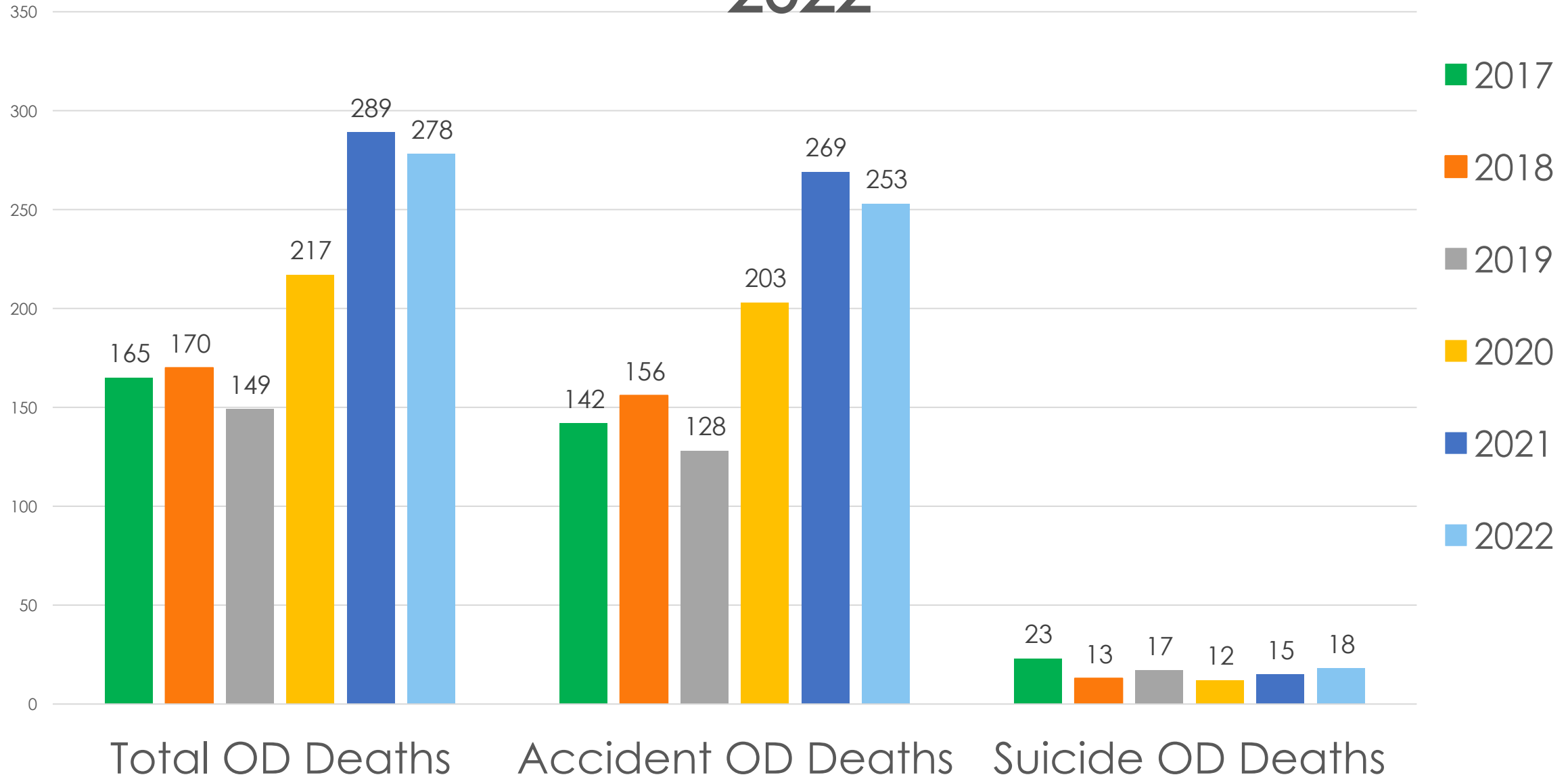
- ◆ Expand Trauma and Hospital autopsy services
- ◆ Facility expansion
- ◆ NAME accreditation



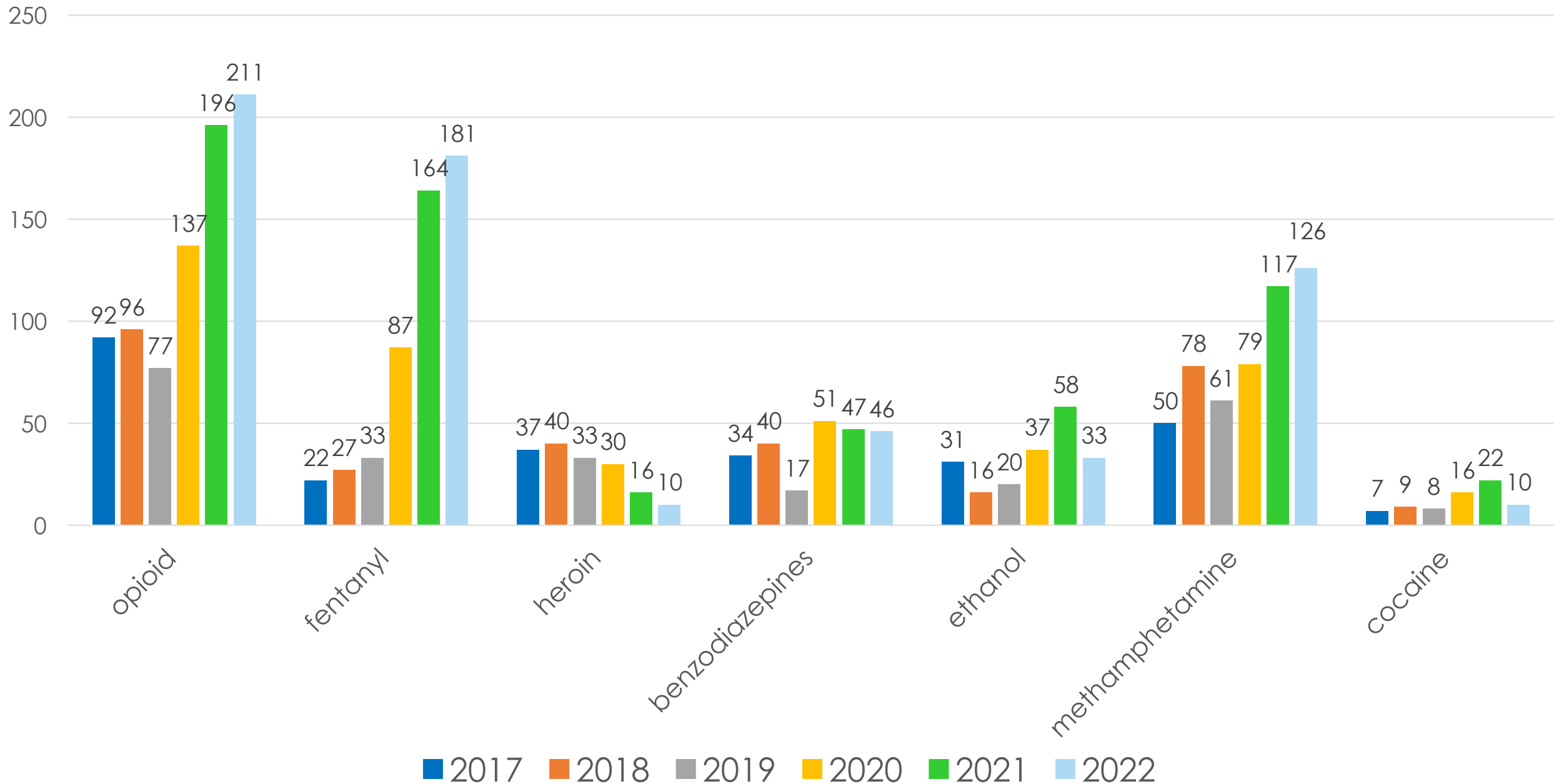
# Challenges

- ◆ Facility limitations – parking, equipment storage and work space
- ◆ Lean Staffing
- ◆ Opioid epidemic

# General Drug Death Statistics: 2017-2022



# Accidental Overdoses by Drug: 2017-2022





# Timeline of Steps toward Accreditation



*“Show me the manner in which a nation or a community cares for its dead. I will measure exactly the sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals.”*

- William Ewart Gladstone



Thank You