

News Release



October 19, 2022

MEDIA CONTACT

Brittney Martin, Chief Deputy Coroner
Phone: (843) 746-4030 / Fax: (843) 746-4033
Email: bmartin@charlestoncounty.org

Charleston County Coroner's Office Receives Grant Related to Opioid Deaths

The Charleston County Coroner's Office has been awarded approximately \$280,000 for a three-year grant from the 2022 Bureau of Justice Act Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program. Funds will be used to hire a forensic analyst who will focus on improving regional efforts in fatal overdose investigations. The Charleston County Coroner's Office will work with five neighboring county coroner offices to improve inter-county opioid investigation protocols, faster uploading of data to national stakeholder databases, and more accurate regional opioid death statistics which will be provided to local, state, and federal agencies that analyze opioid-related mortality rates.

In 2021, the Charleston County Coroner's Office investigated 183 unintentional opioid/drug related deaths. In 2022, the Coroner's Office has confirmed 146 unintentional opioid/drug related deaths. Currently there are 40 cases pending toxicology testing but those are suspected overdoses.

"Charleston County and the Lowcountry region has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic. We are honored to have been awarded funds that will provide a forensic analyst who will work closely with our neighboring counties and focus on the specific needs of drug related death investigations, engage with community stakeholders, and provide needed resources to surviving families," said Coroner Bobbi Jo O'Neal.

"Berkeley County has recently experienced an increase in the number of drug related deaths. We look forward to working with our counterparts in the Lowcountry region to improve data collection and dissemination to try to prevent future drug overdoses in Berkeley County," said Coroner George Oliver.

"The opioid epidemic doesn't recognize county lines. I look forward to working with my peers to seek ways to improve regional data sharing with stakeholders to try to prevent opioid related deaths," said Dorchester County Coroner Paul Brouthers.

For information on Charleston County Coroner Office news and services, the public can:

- Visit our website: <https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/coroner/index.php>
- Visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/charlestoncoroner>

-written by the Charleston County Coroner's Office-

