



Office of The Coroner
County of Kane
ANNUAL REPORT
-2025-

Coroner Dr. Monica Silva



630-232-3535



37W699 IL Rt.38, St.Charles, IL



coroner.kanecountyil.gov

A Message from the Coroner

It is my honor to present the 2025 Kane County Coroner's Office Annual Report. I am so very grateful to the residents of Kane County for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Coroner. You have allowed me to walk with you in some very difficult moments, and I have fully devoted myself to this leadership role while navigating human impact, complexities of the field, and budgetary constraints. As a professional health care practitioner, a single mom, a business owner, and a life time resident of Kane County, I am personally invested in our community. I believe these experiences have beneficially informed my decisions in this incredibly layered and gratifying role of the Kane County Coroner.



During my first year in office, I have focused on building a strong team through training while creating effective policies and procedures. Simultaneously, it was essential to evaluate demands, morale and burnout risk. I have made myself available 24 hours a day and have accompanied my Deputy Coroners on many calls. I am proud to lead a team of dedicated, highly qualified, selfless individuals who make up the Kane County Coroner's Office. I am impressed by their hard work and dedication and am immensely grateful for their generous efforts in assisting me to learn the nuances of such delicate work. Each of them has contributed significantly to our success. It is my goal to ensure they feel valued and supported, as the work they do does take a toll. I appreciate their altruistic attitudes, empathy, and most of all their service to Kane County.

This report will highlight the office's accomplishments, provide statistics and analyses of cases, and offer insight into what typically goes on in the Coroner's Office. Coroners should work with legislators, other law enforcement agencies, public health officials, and community organizations to identify trends and support policies that enhance public safety. One of our more publicized highlights occurred in March of 2025 with our positive identification in the cold case of Karen Schepers. Ms. Schepers disappeared in April 1983 and had been missing since. Through hard work and a well-coordinated team response with Elgin Police Chief Ana Lalley and her department, we were able to confirm within 24 hours that the remains found inside the submerged vehicle did, in fact, belong to Ms. Schepers.

While the Coroner's Office receives the headline for identifying the human remains of individuals, I want to highlight the partnerships between many agencies that occur during cases like these. We frequently work with local police departments, sheriff's offices, the state's attorney's offices, Illinois State Police, and other organizations to determine the cause and manner of death so that we may bring clarity to families suffering loss. I look forward to strengthening those partnerships and continuing to collaborate with various agencies as we move forward.

A Message from the Coroner

I would like to acknowledge our forensic partners who oftentimes receive none of the recognition, but who have spent many years training to be able to provide the expertise without which the Coroner/Medical Examiner system could not exist. This includes forensic pathologists Dr. Mitra Kalelkar, Dr. James Filkins, Dr. Marta Helenowski, forensic odontologist Dr. David Wold, and forensic anthropologist Dr. Erin Waxenbaum.

I am pleased to report that the Coroner's Office was re-accredited by the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners in 2026. This accreditation process by an acclaimed organization of peers examined all areas of the internal operations of our office. We received a 100% score in their review. Kane County was the first Coroner's Office in Illinois to receive accreditation back in 2014. This effort was led by then Coroner, Rob Russell. I would also like to thank representatives of the County Board who have been so supportive of our work. My staff and I appreciate you very much, and we recognize the difficult work that you do to fund all departments and provide services.

Community engagement is a key part of our mission. Throughout the year, the Coroner's Office participated in many community events such as the National Night Out, farmers markets, the county fair, etc. We value opportunities to interact, educate, and provide resources to our residents. Although determining the cause and manner of death is the major focus of our office, I feel strongly that we also play a role in helping to reduce preventable deaths in our county.

Lastly, I am proud to inform you that our office was able to accomplish all of this and remained under budget for 2025 due to grants and other revenue-seeking alternatives.

If my office can assist you or your organization in helping to support our community, please reach out to us so that we can work together on this critically important goal of helping to reduce preventable death.

With my deepest gratitude and respect,

Dr. Monica Silva,
Kane County Coroner

The Kane County Coroner's Office

Purpose:

We recognize the evolving role of the Coroner system, which not only determines cause and manner of death, but also is a crucial partner in helping to reduce preventable death. We provide data in real time to inform partners, elected officials, and the community of emerging risks.

The Kane County Coroner's Office operates 24-hours a day to maintain full investigative and supportive services. The Coroner's Office strives to maintain a high level of sensitivity with the families and loved ones of the deceased, while still keeping them apprised of all steps. The Coroner ensures that proper scientific testing is conducted to assist law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. The Coroner's Office, per Illinois state law, has the responsibility to inform the public of any and all issues that present a risk of death. We strive to provide educational programs to address preventable death.

Vision:

To be a trusted leader in medicolegal death investigation, support families, and use the knowledge gained from every case to help reduce preventable death through collaboration, education, and public health initiatives. We strive to be a partner with other agencies, to inform the public, and to help create a healthier and safer community. We hope to do this while advancing the profession and highlighting the critical role of death investigators in our society.

Mission:

The Kane County Coroner's Office is responsible for investigating specific categories of death, often defined by their sudden, violent, or suspicious nature. The office is mandated to determine the cause and manner (natural, accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined) of deaths occurring in Kane County. State law requires that, when these certain types of deaths occur in Kane County, the Coroner's Office shall respond to the scene of the death to take control of the decedent's body and immediately commence an investigation into the death. The office's investigation includes, but is not limited to, subpoenaing and reviewing extensive medical and pharmacological records, conducting pertinent interviews with involved persons, taking photographs and X-rays, processing toxicology (blood, urine, vitreous) and/or histology (tissue), and overseeing autopsies to assist in making the necessary determinations in these mandated situations.

Types of Cases Handled by the Kane County Coroner's Office

The Coroner's Office categorizes death cases into 3 categories:

- Return to Medical (RTM)
- Sign Out (SO)
- Sign Out Unnatural (SOU)

Return to Medical:

- After thorough investigation, Deputy Coroners determine that this is likely a “natural death”
- A physician who is familiar with the medical history of the person, when available, is notified
- Next of kin are in agreement, credible, and can attest to the natural circumstances
- The death is not found to be suspicious, and natural causes can be attributed
- The physician agrees to sign the death certificate

Sign Out:

- In the course of an investigation, if no physician is available or willing to attribute the death to anything they clinically managed for the deceased individual
- Medical records are reviewed and interviews are conducted
- Toxicology testing is often undertaken
- An autopsy may be performed
- The Coroner signs the death certificate

Sign Out Unnatural:

- Often an accident, homicide, suicide, or sudden death
- A detailed and extensive investigation is conducted
- Medical records are subpoenaed and reviewed, interviews are undertaken, photos of the scene (and autopsy, if applicable) are completed. X-rays are conducted in pertinent situations
- Toxicology testing is often undertaken
- Autopsy likely performed
- The Coroner signs the death certificate

Illinois State Statues

Responsibilities of the Kane County Coroner's Office related to the investigation of certain deaths, including determining the cause and manner of deaths occurring in Kane County, are mandated by Illinois State Statues, **55 ILCS 5/3-3001-3045**. From swearing in Deputy Coroners to reporting specific kinds of death, to performing mandatory autopsies, the Kane County Coroner's Office dutifully operates within these state-required parameters.

A sampling of the office's mandated responsibilities include:

55 ILCS 5/3-3013

- Conduct investigations surrounding certain types of deaths
- Assume control of the decedent's body on-scene
- Secure blood, urine, and/or vitreous samples to conduct toxicology

55 ILCS 5/3-3015

- Conduction of Autopsies

55 ILCS 5/3-3016

- Investigation of Sudden Infant Deaths

55 ILCS 5/3-3017

- Cremation Authorization

55 ILCS 5/3-3018

- Death Certification Issuance

55 ILCS 5/3-3019

- Body Removals

State law (55 ILCS 5/3-3013) lists the **mandated instances** in which we are responsible for going to the site of the death and taking control of the body:

Every coroner, whenever, as soon as (he/she) knows or is informed that the body of any person is found, or lying within (his/her) county, whose death is suspected of being:

- (a) A sudden or violent death (suicidal, homicidal, or accidental) by drowning or suffocation, or as a result of domestic violence;
- (b) A death due to a sex crime;
- (c) A death where the circumstances are suspicious, obscure, mysterious, or otherwise unexplained or where, in the written opinion of the attending physician, the cause of death is not determined
- (d) A death where addiction to alcohol or to any drugs may have been a contributory cause
- (e) A death where the decedent was not attended by a licensed physician

Kane County Coroner's Team

The team at the Kane County Coroner's Office represents a wealth of expertise in medical, legal, investigative, and technical fields, ensuring a robust and multifaceted approach to death investigation and community service. The team includes a licensed chiropractor, licensed funeral directors/embalmers, former attorney, individuals with extensive law enforcement and military backgrounds, and three board-certified forensic pathologists. Their specialized skills range from anatomical and physiological knowledge to autopsy procedures, cold case investigations, and forensic photography, ensuring comprehensive and compliant death investigations. Additionally, they actively contribute to task forces, committees, and professional organizations to enhance community education and public health initiatives.



Kane County Coroner

Dr. Monica Silva

December 2, 2024 – To Present

Full Time Staff

Chief Deputy Coroner

Loren Carrera

Assistant Chief Deputy Coroner

Becca Nielsen

Administrative Staff

Hollie Burlack

Isabel Gonzalez

Deputy Coroners

Lisa Kriegbaum

Derick Hayden

Steve Laker

Gabriela Allison

Rachel Hall

Kiarni Jones

Yesenia Baez

On-Call Staff

These are contracted, on call, part time or volunteer positions that are not full-time employees

Forensic Pathologists

Mitra Kalelkar, M.D.

Dr. Kalekar, is a board-certified forensic pathologist with over four decades of experience in forensic pathology. She retired from Cook County as the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner and Co-Director of the Residency Training Program. After having served Cook County for over 30 years, Dr. Kalelkar continues to work part-time as a Coroner's pathologist dedicated to Kane and DeKalb counties.

James Filkins, M.D., J.D.

Physician and attorney, Dr. Filkins, is one of the few forensic pathologists who has also litigated cases in court involving wrongful deaths. As a forensic pathologist with the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, he performed several thousand autopsies and has testified in court as an expert witness in forensic pathology over 300 times. He continues to work as a part-time coroner's pathologist for the DuPage, Kane, DeKalb, Kankakee, and Iroquois County Coroner's Offices as well as a consultant in forensic pathology.

Marta Helenowski, M.D.

Dr. Helenowski is a licensed physician and surgeon with board-certifications in forensic pathology. She brings extensive expertise in her field, having performed several thousand autopsies throughout her career. She currently serves as the Assistant Medical Examiner for the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office and also works as a part-time coroner's pathologist for Kane County. Previously, Dr. Helenowski performed private autopsy consultation, and held the role of Forensic Pathologist for Lake County.

Forensic Odontology

David Wold, D.D.S.
Denise Murmann D.D.S., D-A.B.F.O.

Forensic Anthropologist

Erin Waxenbaum, Ph.D., D-A.B.F.A

Forensic Entomology

Neal Haskell, Ph.D.

Ophthalmology Pathology

Richard J. Grostern, M.D.

Toxicology

NMS Labs

Histology

Tissue Techniques Pathology Lab

Cold Case Unit

Maureen E. Kelly, J.D., Investigator
Gabriela Allison, Investigator

Morgue Tech*

Madison Schueler

Community Liaison*

Victoria Foley

Chaplain

Reverend Tim Perry, President of Nationwide Chaplain Services

Para-Deputies, Freedom of Information Act Officer

Part-time positions

**Positions funded by grants awarded to the Kane County Coroner's Office*

2023 - 2025 Statistics

A 3-Year Review

Year	2025	2024	2023
Total Reported Cases	3754	3630	3664

Case Type	2025	2024	2023
RTM	3277	3170	3183
SO	223	220	205
SOU	254	240	273
TOTAL	3754	3630	3664

Manner of Death	2025	2024	2023
Natural	3500	3388	3388
Accidental	188	167	209
Suicide	48	51	38
Homicide	10	12	16
Could Not Be Determined	8	12	13
TOTAL	3754	3630	3664

Method Within SOU	2025	2024	2023
Other	155	148	175
Suicide	48	51	38
Motor Vehicle	41	29	44
Homicide	10	12	16
TOTAL	254	240	273

Organ Procurement	2025	2024	2023
Organ Referral	No Data Available	246	228
Tissue Referral	No Data Available	266	278
Organ Donors	11	13	13
Tissue/Bone Donors	73	61	63

2023 – 2025 Statistics

A 3-Year Review

Accident	2025	2024	2023
Drug/Alcohol Intoxication	66	59	104
CO Intoxication	3	1	2
Fall	55	64	47
Motor Vehicle	41	29	44
Aspiration	9	7	2
Asphyxia	2	0	3
Drowning	1	5	4
Electrocution	0	0	2
Exposure	4	0	1
Industrial	0	0	1
Surgery / Post-Op	3	1	2
Exsanguination	0	0	0
Gunshot Wound	0	1	0
Train vs. Pedestrian	0	0	2
Other	4	0	1
TOTAL	188	167	209

Suicide	2025	2024	2023
Gunshot Wound	22	7	13
Hanging	15	22	15
Asphyxia	1	2	2
Drug/Alcohol Intoxication	1	4	5
CO Intoxication	2	1	0
Fall from Height	0	2	1
Pedestrian vs. Train	2	3	0
Motor Vehicle	1	0	0
Exsanguination	0	2	0
Other	4	0	0
TOTAL	48	51	38

Homicide	2025	2024	2023
Gunshot Wound	7	7	13
Stabbing	2	5	3
Assault with Blunt Force	1	0	0
Strangulation	0	0	0
Asphyxiation	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	12	16

Some cases may be represented in more than one statistical category based on cause or manner of death. For additional information or specific public health data requests, please contact the Kane County Coroner's Office

2023 – 2025 Statistics

A 3-Year Review

Juvenile Deaths	2025	2024	2023
Natural	13	16	26
Suicide	0	1	1
Homicide	1	0	1
Accident	6	2	8
Undetermined	2	2	0
TOTAL	22	21	36

Opiates	2025	2024	2023
Total Opiate-Related Deaths	34	34	71
Deaths Involving Xylazine	0	4	5
Deaths Involving Bromazolam	3	5	4
Deaths involving Mitragynine	4	1	4

“Drug related deaths decreased to 46 in 2025, down from 63 in 2024, and significantly down from averaging 100 per year in 2021-2023. Our office continues to partner with agencies like the Kane County Health Department and community organizations to distribute NARCAN across the county. We hope this type of preventive action will bring a continued decline in drug-related deaths.”

-Coroner Dr. Monica Silva

In-Custody Deaths	2025	2024	2023
Natural	0	0	No Data Available
Accident	2	0	No Data Available
Suicide	0	0	No Data Available
Homicide	0	0	No Data Available

Officer-Involved Deaths	2025	2024	2023
Natural	0	0	No Data Available
Accident	0	0	No Data Available
Suicide	0	0	No Data Available
Homicide	1	1	No Data Available

Open cases are not reportable

2023 – 2025 Statistics

A 3-Year Review

	2025	2024	2023
Cases Investigated	3754*	3630*	3664*
Cases Requiring On-Scene Investigation	388	372	440
Bodies Transported	414	381	458
External Exams	414	381	458
Partial Autopsies	0	0	0
Full Autopsies	283	278	336
Hospital Autopsies Under KCCO Jurisdiction	0	0	0
Cases with Toxicology Performed	350	326	371
Unidentified Bodies	0	0	0
Unclaimed Bodies	17	11	8
Exhumations	0	0	0
Cremation Permits	2568	2448	2474
FOIA Requestors	606	540	605

Includes cases where remains were determined to be non-human

Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Kane County Coroner's Office is a public body. As such, it is subject to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 ILC 140/1. Et seq. Under FOIA, members of the public can request records that are kept in the Coroner's ordinary course of business.

Under a separate statute, the Coroner's Office has the authority to charge a fee in exchange for release of records, 55 ILCS 5/4-7001.

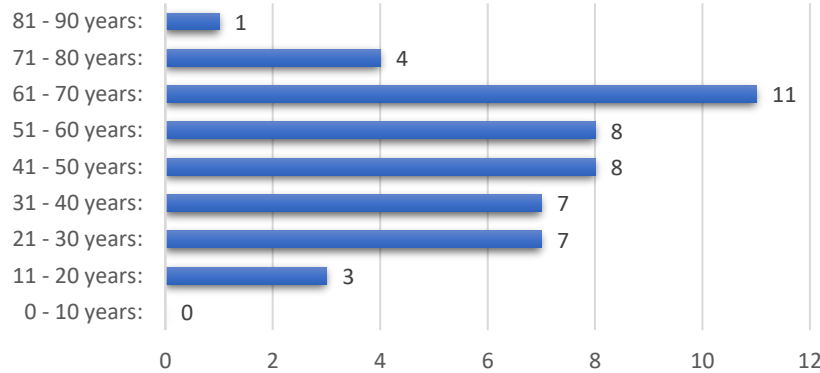
Coroner's Investigative Report: \$25. ⁰⁰	Autopsy Reports: \$50. ⁰⁰ Toxicology Reports: \$25. ⁰⁰	Inquest Transcripts Testimony: \$5. ⁰⁰ per page
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Suicide Deaths

“We saw 49 deaths attributed to suicide in 2025. Suicide deaths remained at an elevated level similar to the 51 deaths in 2024, and the five-year average is about 47 per year. This is a concern, and we continue to work with our mental health partners to bring awareness to this issue.”

-Coroner Dr. Monica Silva

2025 Suicides by Age



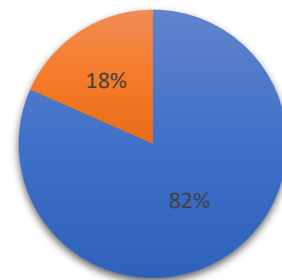
Age:

Suicide deaths in Kane County occurred across most age groups in 2025, with the highest number among individuals aged **61 to 70** years old. More than half of all suicides occurred among adults aged **40 to 70**, underscoring that suicide is not solely a concern of younger populations, but a significant issue affecting middle-aged and older adults as well.

Gender:

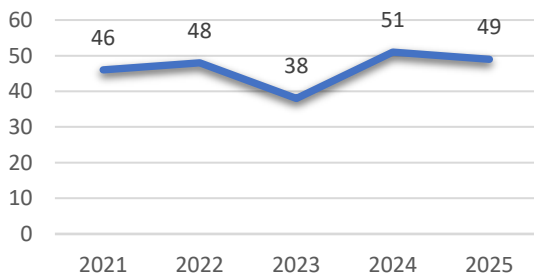
Consistent with national trends, the majority of suicide deaths in Kane County in 2025 occurred among **males**, who accounted for an overwhelming proportion of cases. This disparity highlights the continued need for targeted prevention and outreach efforts focused on men and boys.

2025 Suicides by Gender



■ Males: ■ Females:

5-Year Suicide Trend



5-Year Trend:

Suicide deaths in Kane County have remained relatively stable over the past five years. A noticeable decline was observed in 2023, followed by a return to levels comparable to surrounding years, emphasizing the importance of sustained prevention efforts and the ongoing monitoring of trends.

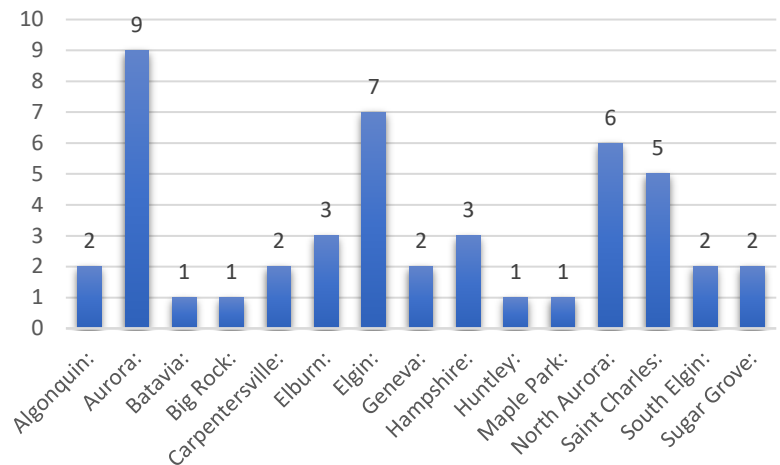
Data does not include all suicide attempts or cases where the person died outside of Kane County

Suicide Deaths

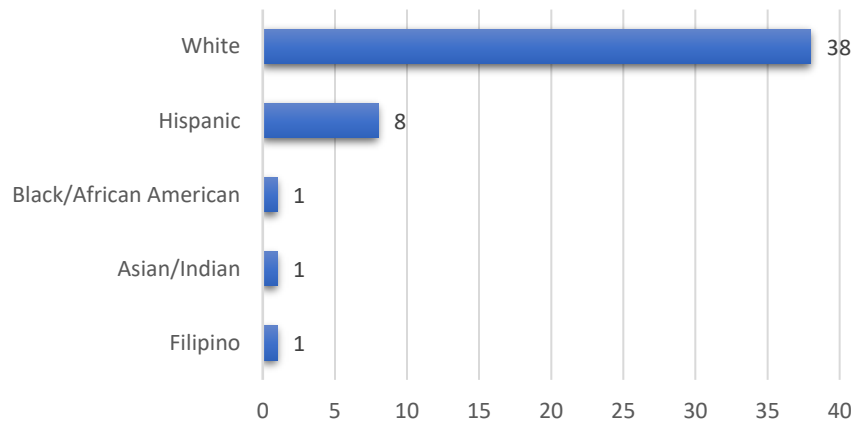
Town:

In 2025, suicide deaths were reported across multiple municipalities within Kane County. The highest numbers occurred in Aurora and Elgin, followed by North Aurora and St. Charles. These findings reflect both population distribution and the importance of ensuring access to mental health resources and suicide prevention efforts throughout communities in the county.

2025 Suicides by Town



2025 Suicides by Race & Ethnicity



Race & Ethnicity:

The majority of suicide deaths in Kane County in 2025 occurred among individuals categorized as white. However, compared to previous years, there has been an increase in suicide deaths among individuals categorized as hispanic, highlighting the need for culturally responsive prevention strategies and continued outreach to underserved populations.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or emotional distress, help is available. The **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988)** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing free and confidential support via text or call.

State, Regional, and County Involvement

Partnering to Investigate and Prevent Abuse and Preventable Deaths

The Kane County Coroner's Office proudly serves on the following teams, taskforces, and associations

Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association (ICMEA)

The ICMEA is a not-for-profit corporation for the purpose of uniting the members of the organization, upgrading the Office of Coroner and further professionalizing it through the exchange of ideas, and the development of educational programs to the end that coroners will be better equipped to discharge their statutory duties and thereby better serve the public to which their primary responsibilities lie.



Illinois Fatality Review Team Advisory Council (FRTAC)

The FRTAC is an oversight body for the regional At-Risk Adult Fatality Review Teams (FTRs). The Illinois FRTAC ensures that data, results, findings, and recommendations of the FRTs are used in a timely manner to make any necessary changes to policies, procedures, and state statutes to protect at-risk adults. The FRTAC collaborates with the Illinois Department of Aging to develop any legislation needed to prevent unnecessary deaths of at-risk adults.

Illinois Child Death Review Team

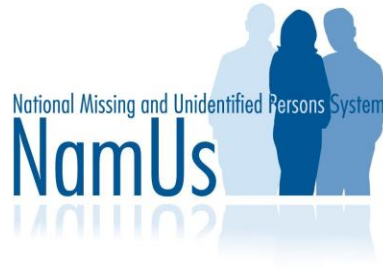
The Illinois Child Death Review Team was formed to reduce the number of preventable child deaths in Illinois. When a child dies, the response of the State and community must include an accurate and complete determination of the cause of death, the provision of services to the surviving family members, and the development and implementation of measures to prevent future deaths from similar causes. Multidisciplinary and multi-agency reviews of child deaths assist in developing a greater understanding of the incidence and cause of child deaths, methods for preventing those deaths, and identifying gaps in service to children and families.

Region 2 Adult At-Risk Fatality Review Team

The Region 2 Adult At-Risk Fatality Review Team (FTR) investigates abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of persons 60+ years old and adults with disabilities aged 18-59 who live in a domestic setting. As a regional interagency group, the purpose is to assist local agencies in identifying and reviewing suspicious deaths of adult victims of alleged, suspected, or substantiated abuse or neglect in a domestic living situation. Findings are then reported to the Illinois Fatality Review Team Advisory Council, who then makes recommendations that may help to improve the investigations of deaths of at-risk persons and increased prosecutions, if appropriate.

National Missing and Unidentified Person System (NamUs)

NamUs is the only national repository for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases. The program provides a singular resource hub for law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, and investigating professionals. It is the only national database for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons that allows limited access to the public, empowering family members to take a more proactive role in the search for their missing loved ones.



NecroSearch International Inc.

NecroSearch International Inc. is a 501(c)3 volunteer multidisciplinary team of specialists dedicated to assisting law enforcement in the location of clandestine graves and the documentation and recovery of evidence (including human remains). Requests for assistance are accepted from law enforcement agencies only. Since 1988, NecroSearch has assisted in over 480 cases in 42 states, Washington DC, and 7 foreign countries.



The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI)

The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) is a voluntary national, not-for-profit, independent professional certification board that has been established to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators.



Illinois Division International Association for Identification (IDIAI)

The IDIAI is a not-for-profit association that serves as a regional division of the larger International Association for Identification, one of the oldest and largest forensic associations in the world. IDIAI is comprised of forensic scientists, investigators, crime scene investigators, evidence technicians, and others involved in forensic investigation of crime and strives to further the profession of forensic identification. IDIAI strives to further the profession of forensic identification and scientific crime detection by promoting research, scientific techniques, and standardization through training and communication.



Kane County Opioid Task Force (KCOTF)

The KCOTF is spearheaded by the Kane County Health Department. KCOTF is a coalition of local leaders, law enforcement agencies, healthcare professionals, treatment center representatives, and advocacy groups, that meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss opioid-related issues within the county.

Fox Valley Major Crimes Task Force (FVMCTF)

The FVMCTF provides additional expertise, manpower, and equipment to member agencies involved in a major investigation. Major Crimes can include, but is not limited to, homicide, serial sexual assault, serial arson, major arson, bombing, non-parental kidnapping, complex violent crimes against people, heinous crimes, and complex crime scene processing and evidence collection. Any member agency may request FVMCTF assistance upon the discovery of a qualifying incident.

Kane County Fire Investigation Task Force (KCFITF)

The KCFITF develops and implements strategies to investigate and prosecute responsible individuals through mobilizing public and private resources, coordinating responsibilities, and integrating the effort of agencies, groups, and persons who are involved, or should be involved, in such developments. The KCFITF works closely with all fire and law enforcement agencies within Kane County. When called to do so, the Task Force assists and/or augments a fire investigation as directed by the Incident Commander at the scene. Each case presented to the State's Attorney's Office since the inception of the KCFITF in the year 2000 has resulted in a successful prosecution.

Kane County Chiefs of Police Association (KCCOPA)

The KCCOPA works to provide continued support for the following Kane County Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Fox Valley Major Crimes Task Force
- Arson Task Force
- Bomb Squad
- Auto Theft Task Force
- Kane County Accident Reconstruction Team
- Kane County Honor Guard



Each of these support services is available to every police department in the county 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. They provide highly trained, technically proficient, tactical officers and specialized equipment to each of our communities, which otherwise are unaffordable to a single community or police department.

Kane County DUI Task Force

The DUI Task Force is a local anti-crime program created to enhance public safety by aiding law enforcement agencies in the apprehension of drivers impaired by alcohol and/or drugs, thereby reducing the threat of DUI-related traffic crashes, fatalities, and injuries posed by impaired drivers.

Kane County Suicide Prevention Task Force

The Suicide Prevention Task Force is a collaborative public health effort focused on reducing suicide deaths and supporting mental well-being across Kane County. The Task Force brings together community mental health agencies, law enforcement, public health, and advocacy organizations to coordinate prevention strategies and resources with the aim of strengthening community awareness, partnerships and resource sharing.

National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)

The NAME is the premier professional organization for medical examiners, forensic pathologists, and medicolegal affiliates and administrators. Since its founding in 1966 NAME has been committed to:

- Providing leadership and advocacy for best practices and excellence in forensic pathology and death investigation;
- Developing and promulgating forensic autopsy standards;
- Offering and promoting accreditation of medicolegal death investigation systems in the United States and internationally;
- Representing medicolegal death investigation and its practicing professionals to the public and the government;

NAME's vision is accomplished through leadership, education, collaboration, advocacy, outreach, publication, and research. Is the foremost authority promoting the highest quality forensic pathology practice and medicolegal death investigation in the world.



American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS)

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) is a multidisciplinary professional organization that provides leadership to advance science and its application to the legal system. Since 1948, they have served a distinguished and diverse membership. Their 6,000+ members represent all 50 United States and 71 other countries. Membership is comprised of pathologists, attorneys, dentists, toxicologists, anthropologists, document examiners, digital evidence experts, psychiatrists, engineers, physicists, chemists, criminalists, educators, researchers, and others. The objectives of the AAFS are to promote professionalism, integrity, competency, and education; to foster research; to improve practice; and to encourage collaboration in the forensic sciences.

The Center for Forensic Science Research & Education (CFSRE)

The CFSRE conducts research, development, and new technology assessment while delivering educational and training services for the forensic science community and beyond. Their educational programs include short-term placement for visiting scholars and researchers; partnerships to deliver degree programs at area universities; and continuing professional development for forensic scientists, law enforcement, and legal professionals.

Gift of Hope

As we conclude, I would like to formally share our year-end organ donation outcomes. Through our various collaborations and the generosity of families, in 2025, we were able to facilitate:

- 11 organ donations
- 33 lives saved through organ transplant
- 70 tissue and bone donations

These donations resulted in the transplantation of:

- 2 hearts
- 18 kidneys
- 10 livers
- 5 lungs



The following outcomes are a testament to the generosity of donor heroes and their families, as well as the professionalism, diligence, and commitment of all involved who support the donation process. We fully understand that this is a very personal decision and when at all possible, respect wishes surrounding organ donation. Our collaboration is instrumental in ensuring that donation opportunities are honored and that lives are saved and improved throughout our community.



Educational Community Outreach

The Kane County Coroner's Office remains committed to education and prevention through active engagement with community members, students, and partner organizations. Outreach initiatives in 2025 focused on increasing awareness, fostering dialogue, and promoting public understanding of the role of the Coroner's Office



Staff participated in a variety of community-based educational programs, including the **Aurora Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association**, providing insight into death investigation processes and the importance of public health and safety collaboration.



Educational outreach efforts extended to local high schools and colleges, including **West Aurora High School, East Aurora High School, St. Charles East High School, Harper College, and Fox Valley Career Center**. These engagements offered students an opportunity to learn about forensic science, career pathways, and the responsibilities of the Coroner's Office.



Supporting the Community



Left: Coroner Dr. Silva at the **2025 Cremains Entombment Ceremony**. As part of its responsibility to the community, the Kane County Coroner's Office ensures that unclaimed individuals are laid to rest with dignity and respect when no family can be identified or located, while still honoring the hope of future reunification with loved ones.

Right: Chief Deputy Carrera and Assistant Chief Deputy Nielsen at the **South Elgin Fire Department Community Open House**. Coroner's Office staff joined fellow public safety partners to engage with residents, share resources, and promote a collaborative approach to community safety.



Left: Coroner's Office staff at **National Night Out** spending time with neighbors to build relationships, answer questions, and strengthen trust through open and positive community interactions.



Supporting the Community

Right: Deputy Coroner Jones and Assistant Chief Deputy Nielsen pictured with shelter dogs as part of our partnership with **Kane County Animal Control**. Coroner's Office staff welcomes shelter dogs into the office for the day to support their socialization and adoptability, while fostering compassion, connection, and staff well-being.



Left: Chief Deputy Carrera and Community Liaison Vicky at the **Donut Dash 5K**. This event allowed Coroner's Office staff to connect with the community while promoting public health, harm-reduction awareness, and the availability of Narcan to the public.

Right: Aurora **Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association** also helps create meaningful connections with Spanish-speaking residents by providing education, open dialogue, and accessible information about the Coroner's Office and other public services.



1983 Cold Case: Karen Schepers

Karen Schepers was reported missing in April of 1983 after last being seen in the Elgin area under circumstances that remained unexplained for nearly 40 years. Despite extensive investigative efforts at the time, her disappearance remained a cold case for many years. Renewed public attention generated by a true-crime podcast helped bring Karen Schepers' case back into focus, ultimately contributing to collaborative investigative efforts that yielded closure for the family.

Family thanks community for help in solving 1983 Elgin cold case: 'Miracles do happen'

Elgin Police Department's 'Somebody Knows Something' podcast aided investigation into case

By ABC7 Chicago Digital Team
Wednesday, April 2, 2025



Below: Karen Schepers' car being pulled out of Fox River

"The Elgin Police Department reopened the case and partnered with a nonprofit group to search the Fox River. Our office was able to use dental records to identify Ms. Schepers with the remains found in her vehicle. The Coroner's Office staff worked quickly to make a positive identification from the remains to bring closure to the family of Ms. Schepers."

-Coroner Dr. Monica Silva



In 2025, volunteer search organization, The Chaos Divers, located Karen Schepers' vehicle submerged in the Fox River, bringing resolution to her unsolved disappearance.

“A voice for those who can no longer speak for themselves.”

-The International Association of Medical Examiners and Coroners

The Kane County Coroner's Office dedicates this publication to those who lost their lives in 2025, and those affected by their death



The Kane County Coroner's Office investigates deaths and provides critical services to family members and loved ones with compassion and dignity. Should you have any questions regarding this annual report or this office, please do not hesitate to contact Coroner Dr. Monica Silva

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