

## Robert Beers Coroner information for 2017-2021

The following letter is a brief synopsis of what I have done during my term as the Bonner County Coroner from 2017-2021.

Since I took office on Jan 24, 2017 my office has investigated:

- a. The total number of deaths we have seen/reviewed (to include cremation authorizations) is 1,642.
- b. 633 cases/investigations
- c. 433 Natural deaths
- d. 14 Homicides
- e. 108 Accidental deaths
- f. 63 Suicides
- g. 12 Undetermined deaths and 3 cases are still Pending

### **Bonner County Mortality Data:**

In 2018, a Panhandle Health District report advised there were 445 total deaths in Bonner County (BC) in 2016.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) advises the average annual death rate in BC between 2014-2018 was 442.

**COVID deaths:** Per the Idaho Dept. of Health and Welfare, from June 2020-March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, there have been 176 deaths out of 8,535 total “cases.” However, only 7,043 had a confirmed COVID result.

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/idaho.division.of.public.health/viz/DPHIdahoCOVID-19Dashboard/Home>

### **Equipment:**

I have provided brand new Nikon digital cameras, water recovery body bags, toolboxes, uniforms, traffic safety vests and other equipment to my deputy coroners. We did not have this equipment when I started. I created the first Bonner County Coroner Facebook page.

### **ABMDI Certification:**

In 2019 I became a certified “Diplomat” by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. You must have a minimum of 640 hours of death investigation experience, have a skilled practitioner sign off on over 300 tasks and pass a 240 online multiple-choice exam. I have logged over 250 hours of additional death investigation training.

### **Mass Fatality Plan:**

I assisted with reviewing and editing portions of the Panhandle Health District’s “Region 1 Mass Fatality Plan.” I brought it before Commissioners and it was adopted for the first time in

Bonner County history. I secured over \$6,000 worth of equipment which will be used in such an event. We had nothing prior to my term.

### **Budget Increase:**

Due to increased autopsy fees and case load (between 2012 and 2017 the Bonner County Coroner's case load had doubled), I was given an additional \$20,000 spending authority for autopsies. In the last 4 years we have increased the pay window for Deputy Coroners from \$16hr to just over \$21hr with only an approximate \$3,000 increase in budget.

### **Inquests:**

In May of 2019 I presided over the first Coroner's Inquest in Bonner County in over 29 years. With the assistance of Bonner County Prosecutor, I subpoenaed 19 witnesses and 7 jurors. After two and a half days of testimony, the jury concluded that Mirissa Serrano's cause of death was a homicide and that Danny Neep, the primary suspect in this case, contributed to her death. Mr. Neep has been indicted by a grand jury and was arraigned on Monday, March 7. His jury trial is set for June 2022. During the initial investigation of this case, I contacted the University of Montana's forensic anthropology department and they sent two graduate students to assist detectives and I with the recovery of her remains. I also contacted the US Forest Service who assisted us in documenting the scene with a "Faro" scanner. This is a new piece of technology that can create 3-D scans of a scene. Neither one of these investigative tools had been used in previous Bonner County Coroner investigations.

In April of 2021, I presided over my second inquest which was an investigation of a newborn death at the hands of local midwife, Denise Midstokke. The jury found that Mrs. Midstokke acted with gross negligence. Midstokke was charged by the Bonner County Prosecutor with involuntary manslaughter and destruction of evidence. The case was mediated. She was fined, lost her midwifery license, spent 30 days in jail and will be on probation for 5 years. If I had done nothing, this woman would continue to pose a threat to our community.

### **Agreements:**

I recently authored a Memorandum of Understanding between my office and the University of Montana (Forensic Anthropology Department). They have agreed to assist with skeletal investigations/recoveries in Bonner County. We had no such agreement prior to my term. In November of 2021, 2 PhD and 2 Masters students assisted us with the recovery of Daniel Glennon who went missing in 1995. Detectives were able to locate a former dentist who had kept Daniel's dental records from the 70's and 80's. These records were provided to a forensic odontologist who confirmed Daniel's identity. Thus, providing closure to Daniel's family 26 years later. I have created a Death Notification Report for doctors' office's so they will be informed of a patient's passing and the circumstances surrounding the case.

### **Safe Start**

I coordinated an introduction between Elizabeth (Liz) Montgomery, the Executive Director of the Inland Northwest SIDS Foundation/Safe Start and Bonner General Health administration. As a result of that introduction and subsequent trainings, Bonner General Hospital is about to become a "Safe-Sleep" certified hospital. This certification should reduce the number of infant deaths due to unsafe sleep conditions in Bonner County. Because of our work together, I was asked to be one of the speakers at the "Night Under the Stars" Charity event in August at the Elk Point Estates in CDA. This event brought in over \$140,000 in donations.

I usually attend one BCRCC meeting every quarter. I have also attended (I think) all Lincoln Day dinners since 2018.

Robert (Rob) Beers