



Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

ANNUAL REPORT

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT

This report includes 2021 Death in Custody Reporting Act data for Indiana, as collected by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute for the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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Guided by a Board of Trustees representing all components of Indiana's criminal and juvenile justice systems, the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) serves as the state's planning agency for criminal justice, juvenile justice, traffic safety, and victim services. The Institute develops long-range strategies for the effective administration of Indiana's criminal and juvenile justice systems and administers federal and state funds to carry out these strategies.

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute serves as Indiana's Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). The SAC's primary mission is compiling, analyzing, and disseminating data on a variety of criminal justice and public safety-related topics. The information produced by the SAC serves a vital role in effectively managing, planning, and creating policy for Indiana's many public service endeavors.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI), as mandated by the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA), is responsible for collecting data regarding the number and manner of in custody deaths that occur across the State of Indiana. The 2020 calendar year was the first full year DCRA data was collected by ICJI. Data are reported directly to ICJI via a reporting tool housed on the ICJI's website. Additional data are collected through media alerts and searches. The data are then combined into the federally required report and submitted to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The data for the 2021 calendar year shows a total of 168 deaths in custody across the State of Indiana. This is 49 fewer deaths than were reported in 2020. The most dramatic change can be seen for those who died of natural causes/illness, which dropped from 124 deaths in 2020 to 77 deaths in 2021. This is likely attributed to the emergence of COVID-19 during 2020 and the subsequent impact it had on incarcerated individuals. In 2020, 42 deaths were attributed to COVID-19. In 2021, that number decreased to 7 individuals.

Of these 168 deaths, 55% occurred in state prisons, 23% resulted from police interactions, 15% occurred in jails, and around 7% occurred in some other circumstance. Natural causes/illness accounted for the highest volume of deaths (46%), followed by suicide (15%), use of force (12.5%), accidental deaths (12.5%), homicide (3%), and other (2%). Fifteen deaths are still pending investigation.¹

The decedents were predominately White (68%), followed by Black (27%). Pacific Islander, Asian, and more than one race each represented under 1% of decedents. The race was unknown for the remaining roughly 3% of decedents. The majority of decedents identified as non-Hispanic (83%), with only 1% identifying as Hispanic. No single age group represented an overwhelming majority of decedents, with 25 – 34, 35 – 44, 55 – 64, and 65+ each representing between 19 and 21%. When grouped more broadly, the majority of decedents (60%) were under the age of 55. Those ages 18 – 24 represented the fewest number of decedents with 7%.

LaPorte, Madison, Miami, Hendricks, and Marion counties were the top five counties reporting the highest number of deaths. Collectively, these five counties accounted for 57% of all 2021 deaths in custody across the State of Indiana. The report provides a further breakdown of decedents by agency type for the manner of death, location, and demographic data.

Overall, the majority of deaths in custody across the state were White males. The males were predominately incarcerated in state prison facilities, which accounted for 36% of total deaths in custody, with the leading manner of death being natural causes/illness, representing 32% of deaths, followed by suicide with 10%.

¹ Use of force is a death attributed to use of force by a law enforcement or corrections officer. Homicide is defined as an incident between 2 or more incarcerated individuals resulting in a death.

BACKGROUND

In FY 2019, the responsibility of collecting data on deaths in custody as mandated by the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) was redirected from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to State Administering Agencies (SAA) that receive Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) funding. As the SAA that receives Byrne JAG funding for the State of Indiana, the Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) within the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) has been collecting DCRA data since the last quarter of 2019. Once ICJI collects the DCRA data, the data is then reported to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

DCRA requires state and federal law enforcement agencies to report certain information regarding the death of any person occurring while in custody. “In Custody” is defined as the death of “any person who is detained, under arrest, in the process of being arrested, is en route to being incarcerated, or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, state-run boot camp prison, boot camp prison that is contracted out by the state, any state or local contract facility, or other local or state correctional facility (including any juvenile facility).” Relevant data that is not directly reported to ICJI by agencies is gathered via media sources. This report reflects data ranging from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, the second full calendar year of DCRA data collected by ICJI.

DATA & METHODS

Data for this report is collected in multiple ways from multiple sources. ICJI hosts an online reporting tool for agencies to report their in-custody deaths. Agencies are notified quarterly ahead of each reporting deadline. In addition, ICJI has a partnership with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) to obtain prison data. Prisons report quarterly to IDOC, which then enters those reports into ICJI’s portal. Jails and prisons remain the most prevalent and consistent death in custody reporters in Indiana, as police agencies typically have fewer deaths in custody.

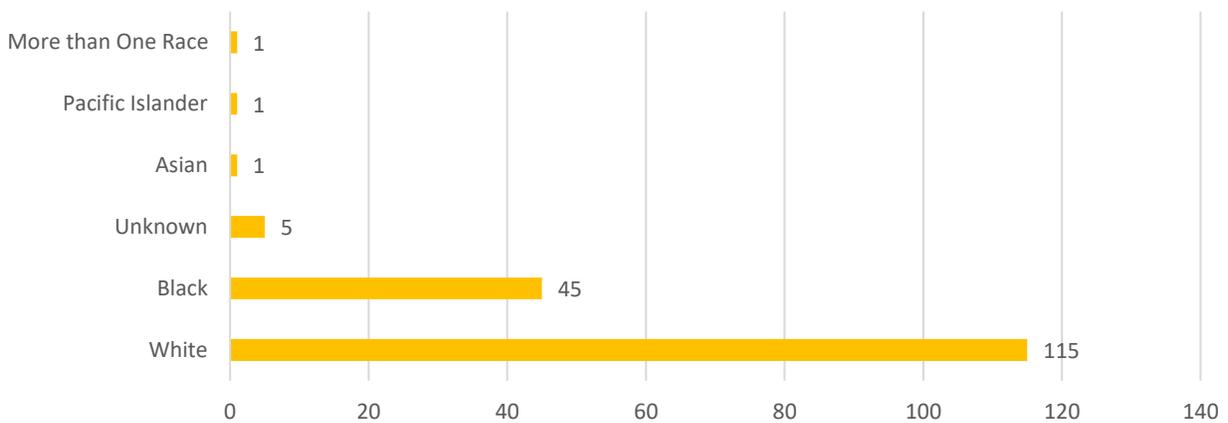
To gather custody-related deaths that are not reported to ICJI via the portal, researchers at the ICJI rely upon media reports, which are primarily gathered using Google Alerts. The ICJI collaborated with other agencies responsible for collecting DCRA data to determine the most comprehensive list of keywords to collect all media mentions of death in custody across the state. All relevant articles are reviewed weekly. If a qualifying death is discovered, the details of the death and demographics of the decedent are verified through multiple sources including obituaries, other media reports, and the Indiana Court Information Technology Extranet (INCite) which is the Indiana Supreme Courts’ secured website housing offender and court case data. At the close of each quarter, to ensure all deaths reported in the media have been captured in the dataset, the ICJI also utilizes independent third-party sites such as the Gun Violence Archive and the Washington Post’s Police Shooting Database. Despite these efforts, it is possible that not all deaths across the state are captured each quarter.

DATA OVERVIEW

In 2021, ICJI collected reports for 168 deaths in custody. Those 168 deaths represented all chronicled deaths in custody across jails, prisons, and law enforcement interactions.

Male decedents represented 95% of decedents. The remaining 5% were female. Most decedents were White (68%), and 27% were Black. Less than 1% were Pacific Islander, Asian, or More than One Race. The race for 3% of decedents was unknown. Only about 1% of decedents were Hispanic, with around 83% identifying as non-Hispanic. The ethnicity was unknown for the remaining roughly 16%.

RACE OF DECEDENTS



AGE OF DECEDENTS

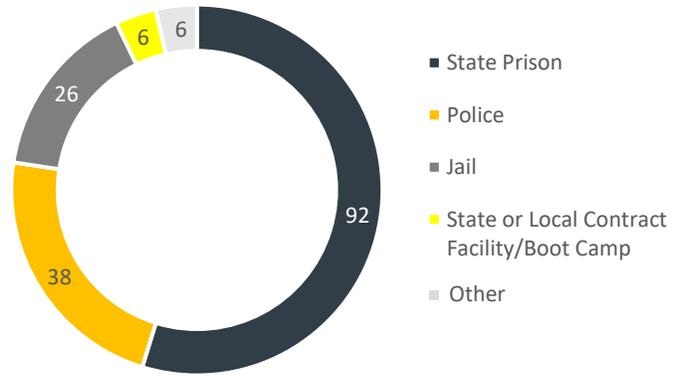


The ages of decedents were well disbursed. The four age groups with the highest number of decedents reported were 35 – 44 (21%), 65+ (20%), and both 25-34 and 55-64 (19%). The 18-24 age group accounted for the fewest number of deaths, representing 7% of decedents. Most (60%) decedents were under 55, with the remaining 40% being 55 or over. Three decedents' ages were unknown.

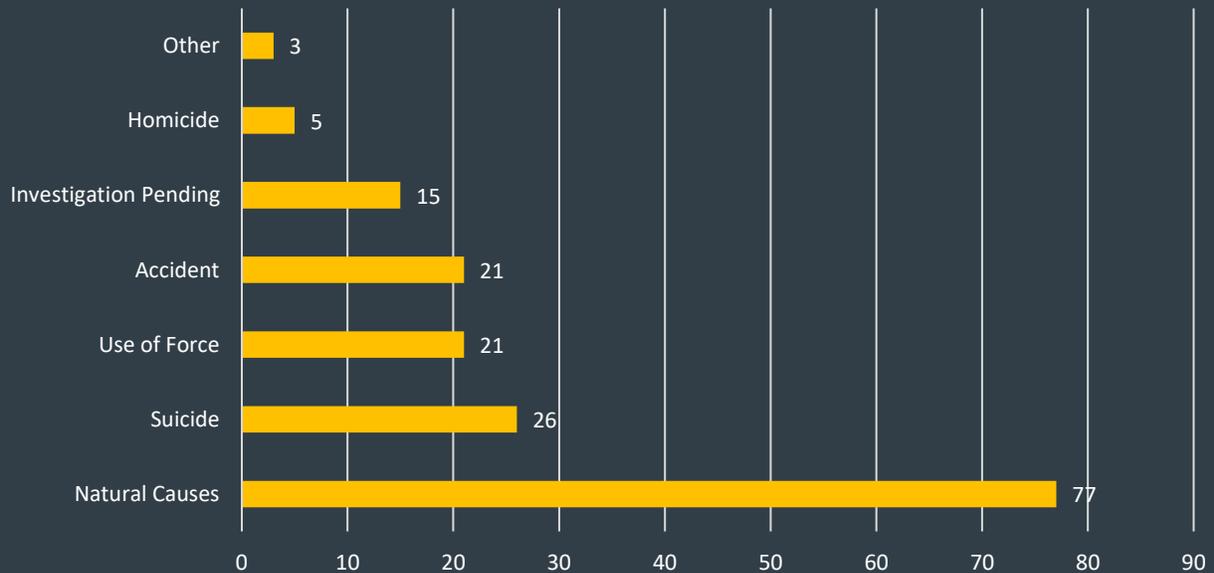
The majority of deaths occurred in state prisons (55%). Deaths during police interactions accounted for the second-largest number of decedents (23%), followed by jail deaths (15%). Approximately 7% of deaths occurred in other state or local contract facilities.

The primary manner of death reported was natural causes/illness, accounting for 46% of deaths. Suicide was the second most common manner of death (15%), followed by use of force (12.5%), accidental deaths (12.5%), and deaths caused by homicide (3%). The manner of death for 15 decedents is still pending investigation. Three deaths were ruled as undetermined, which is represented as "other."

AGENCY TYPE

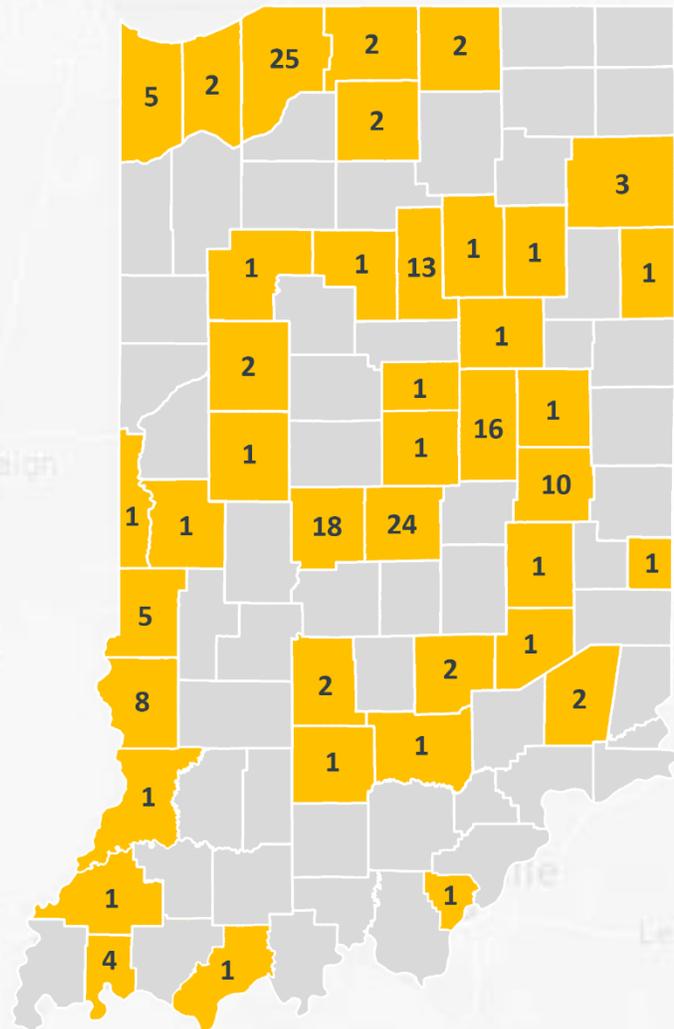


MANNER OF DEATH



In 2021, deaths in custody were recorded in 40 of the 92 counties in Indiana.^[2] LaPorte County and Marion County had the highest number of deaths, with 25 and 24 deaths, respectively. Hendricks County followed with 18 deaths. Of those 40, 21 counties reported a single death. The table below shows the ten counties with the highest number of in custody deaths. The map to the right depicts deaths in custody by county.

County	Number of Decedents	Percentage of Total
LaPorte	25	15%
Marion	24	14%
Hendricks	18	11%
Madison	16	10%
Miami	13	8%
Henry	10	6%
Sullivan	8	5%
Lake	5	3%
Vigo	5	3%
Vanderburgh	4	2%

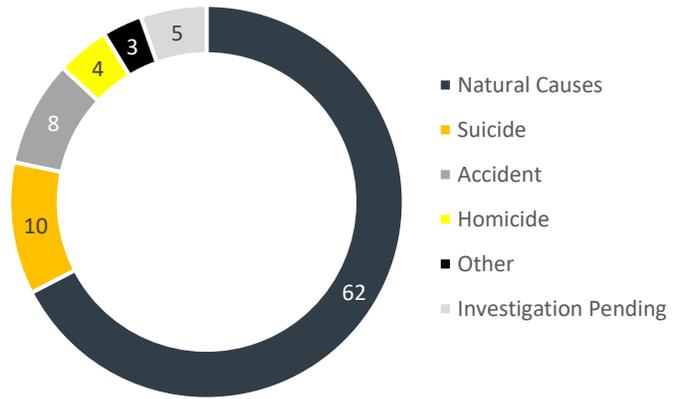


^[2] When reviewing data for the number of decedents per county, it is important to note that counties housing multiple agencies or agency types will likely have a higher number of decedents than those counties housing fewer agencies and agency types (i.e., a county with a County Jail, state prison, and multiple police departments).

STATE PRISON

Deaths occurring in the state prisons are reported to the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC). IDOC then reports those deaths to ICJI. Therefore, the data to the right is the aggregated data of all state prisons in Indiana that reported deaths to IDOC during any quarter of the 2021 calendar year. Of the 168 deaths reported for 2021, 55%, or 92, of those deaths occurred within a state prison. Nearly 67% of deaths reported within the state prisons were due to natural causes/illness. Roughly 11% of deaths resulted from suicide, 9% were classified as accidental, and 4% were homicides. Five prison deaths are still pending investigation in the manner of death and three deaths were reported as other.

MANNER OF DEATH (STATE PRISON)



Males represented 96% of decedents. White individuals accounted for 66% of decedents, Black 29%, and both Unknown and More than one race accounted for roughly 1% each. About 89% were non-Hispanic, with one individual identifying as Hispanic. The ethnicity of 9 decedents was unknown. Roughly half (49%) of decedents were under the age of 55, and the other half (50%) of decedents were 55 or older. One decedent's age was unknown. A full breakdown of decedents by age can be found below.

Within IDOC Prisons, LaPorte County accounted for the highest number of in-custody deaths with 25%. Hendricks County had the second-highest number of deaths at 20%, followed by Madison County with 14%, Miami County with 13%, Henry County with 10%, and both Sullivan and Marion Counties with 9% each.

AGE OF DECEDENTS (STATE PRISON)



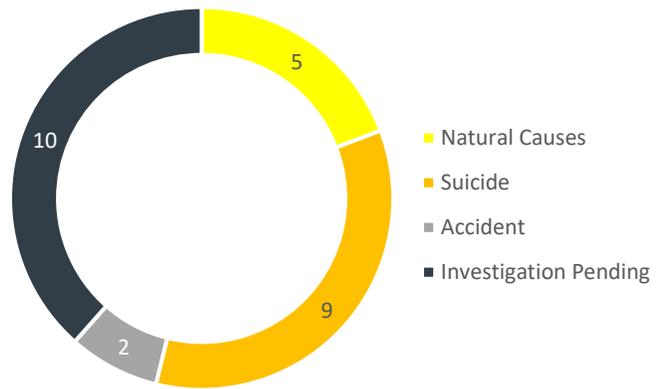
JAIL

Jails across the state reported 26 deaths in custody for the 2021 calendar year. Most (38.5%) of the reported deaths are still pending investigation. Suicide was the manner of death reported for 35% of decedents. Natural causes/illness accounted for the deaths of 19% of decedents. Accidents were the manner of death for 2 decedents (8%). No homicides were reported in jails in 2021.

Males represent 88% of decedents, with females accounting for the remaining 12%. Most decedents were White (85%), and 15% were Black. Just over 30% of decedents were between the ages of 25 and 34.

To view an in-depth breakdown of the age of decedents, see the table below.

MANNER OF DEATH (JAIL)



Marion County accounted for most jail deaths with 19% of decedents, or 5 individuals. Vanderburgh County had the second-highest number with 3 deaths. Lake and Madison Counties both had 2 deaths. LaPorte, St. Joseph, Marshall, Allen, Cass, Tippecanoe, Montgomery, Tipton, Vigo, Decatur, Bartholomew, Jackson, Lawrence, and Gibson each had one death, or 4%.

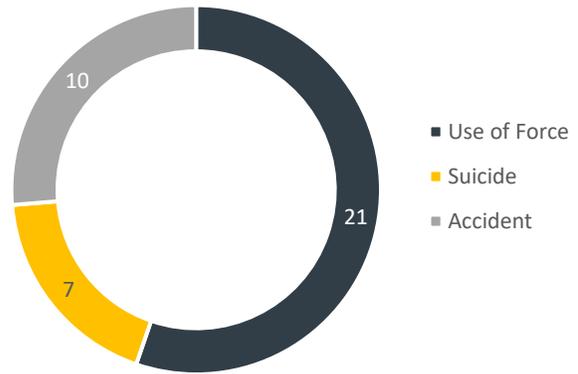
AGE OF DECEDENTS (JAIL)



POLICE

Using reports submitted into the portal and deaths gathered via ICJI’s media methodology, 38 decedents were reported for police-related deaths in the 2021 calendar year. Police-related deaths are any deaths that occur during an interaction with police. These interactions include, but are not limited to, deaths that occur during an arrest, while executing a warrant, responding to a disturbance call, and vehicle pursuit. Of those 38 decedents, 55% of the deaths were a result of the use of force by an officer, 26% of the deaths were accidents, and 18% of the deaths were suicides.

MANNER OF DEATH
(POLICE-RELATED INCIDENTS)



Ninety-five percent of the decedents were male, and 5% were female. The majority of decedents were White (58%), 29% were Black, and one individual was Asian. The race of 10% of decedents was unknown. The ethnicity of 3% of decedents was Hispanic, 58% Non-Hispanic, and the ethnicity of 39% was unknown. Decedents between the ages of 18 and 34 accounted for 55% of deaths.

See the table below for a further breakdown of age.

Most police-related deaths occurred in Marion County (18%), followed by Lake County (8%). Allen, Porter, Monroe, and Vigo Counties each accounted for 5%, or two deaths. LaPorte, Elkhart, Marshall, Wabash, Huntington, Adams, Grant, White, Tippecanoe, Madison, Delaware, Hamilton, Vermillion, Parke, Rush, Union, Bartholomew, Ripley, Spencer, and Vanderburgh all reported one death resulting from police interaction in 2021.

AGE OF DECEDENTS
(POLICE-RELATED INCIDENTS)



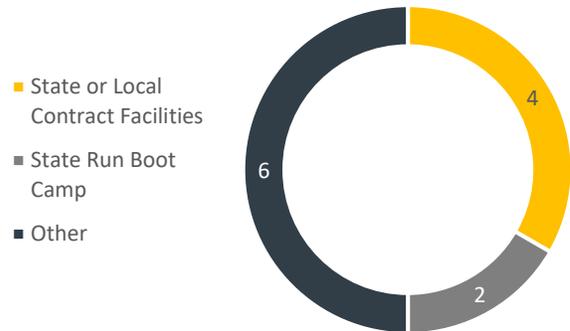
STATE OR LOCAL CONTRACT FACILITIES & STATE-RUN BOOT CAMPS

State or local contract facilities reported 4 deaths for the 2021 calendar year and state-run boot camps reported 2 deaths. Six deaths were reported as occurring in some other form of in-state custody. These three categories account for 12 of the total number of deaths, or 7%.

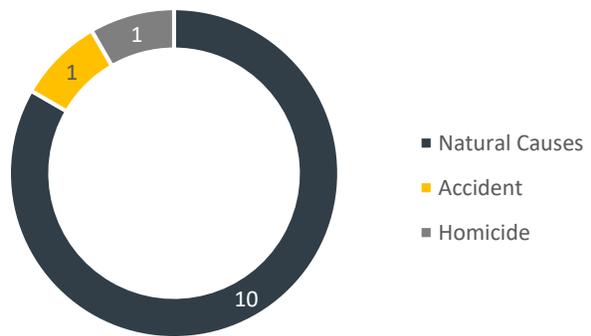
Natural causes/illness accounted for 83% of the deaths (10 individuals), while homicide and accident accounted for one death each.

All of the decedents were male. Most were White (83%) and non-Hispanic (92%). One individual was Pacific Islander, one individual was Black, and one individual's ethnicity was unknown. All decedents were above age 35. See the table below for a further breakdown of decedent age.

AGENCY TYPE

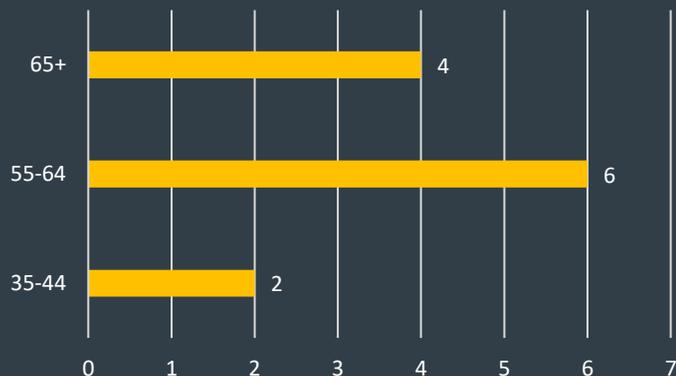


MANNER OF DEATH (CONTRACT FACILITY/BOOT CAMP/OTHER)



Marion County reported four deaths (33%), and Vigo County reported two deaths (17%). Ripley, Knox, Floyd, St. Joseph, Elkhart, and Miami each had one death occur at a state or local contract facility, boot camp, or other facility.

AGE OF DECEDENTS (CONTRACT FACILITY/BOOT CAMP/OTHER)



CONCLUSION

The ICJI is continuing to refine the collection methods for DCRA data through collaboration with other mandated reporting agencies, by following continually updated guidance from BJA, and by staying up to date with best practices. This report serves as the second annual DCRA report from the ICJI. The ICJI will continue to release DCRA data on an annual basis. In addition to the annual report, the ICJI has created an interactive dashboard of all collected DCRA data, sortable by year, which is hosted on the ICJI website. This dashboard will be updated quarterly. The ICJI will continue reporting DCRA data to BJA each quarter. BJA produces reports of nationwide DCRA data for each year of data it collects, though these reports are often on a multiple-year delay. The ICJI is expected to remain the most reliable source for “real-time” DCRA data in the State of Indiana.





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