

# Department of Medical Examiner- Coroner Overview

Civilian Oversight Commission Meeting

November 19, 2019



# Scope of Authority

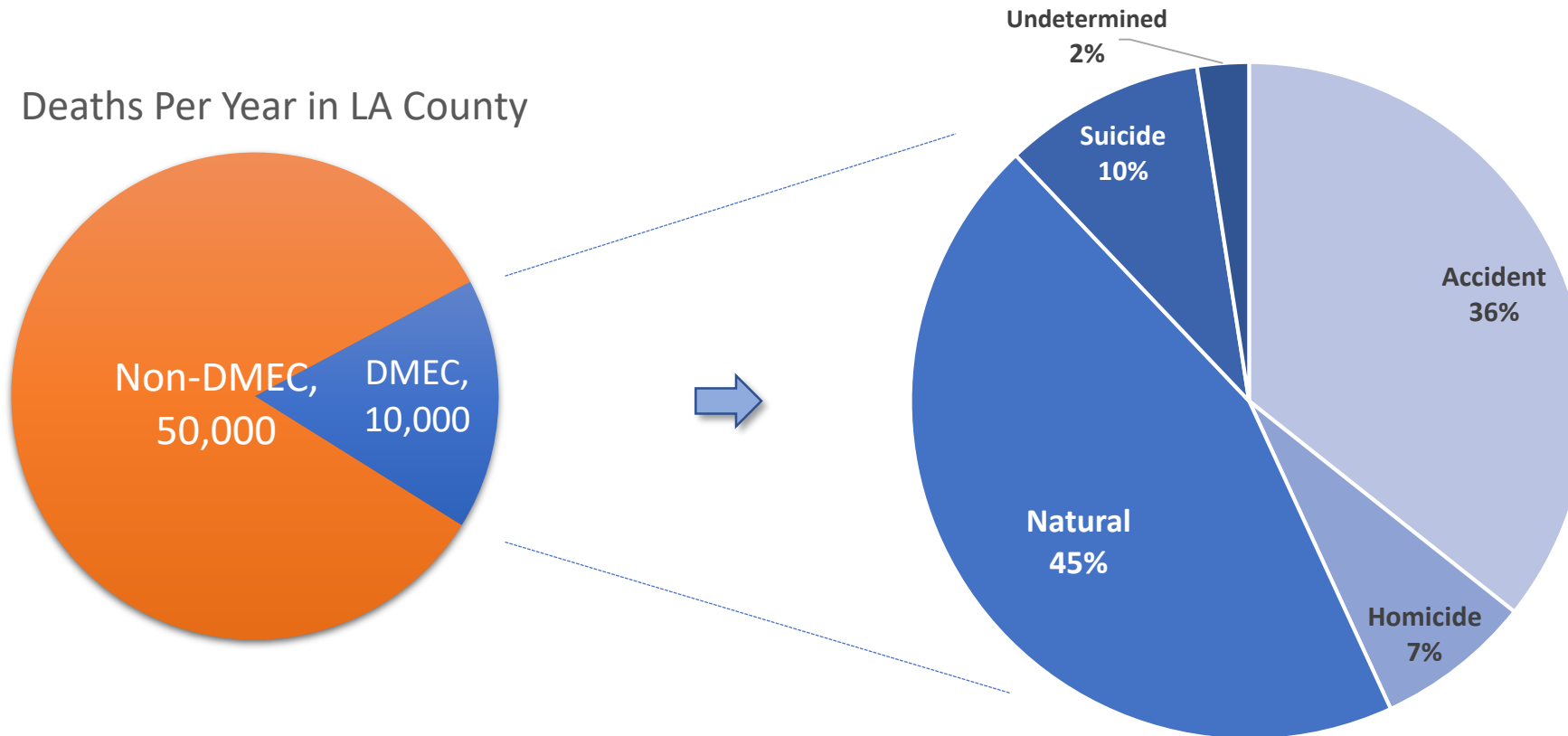
- Required to determine cause and manner of death in:
  - All violent, sudden, unusual, and unattended deaths.
  - Suspected suicide, accident, or homicide
    - **Includes all Fatal Use of Force incidents countywide**
  - Any death of public health concern
  - Others...

Includes deaths within the county of Los Angeles, including all municipalities and law enforcement agencies  
Defined by *CA Govt Code 27491* and *CA Health & Safety Code 102850*



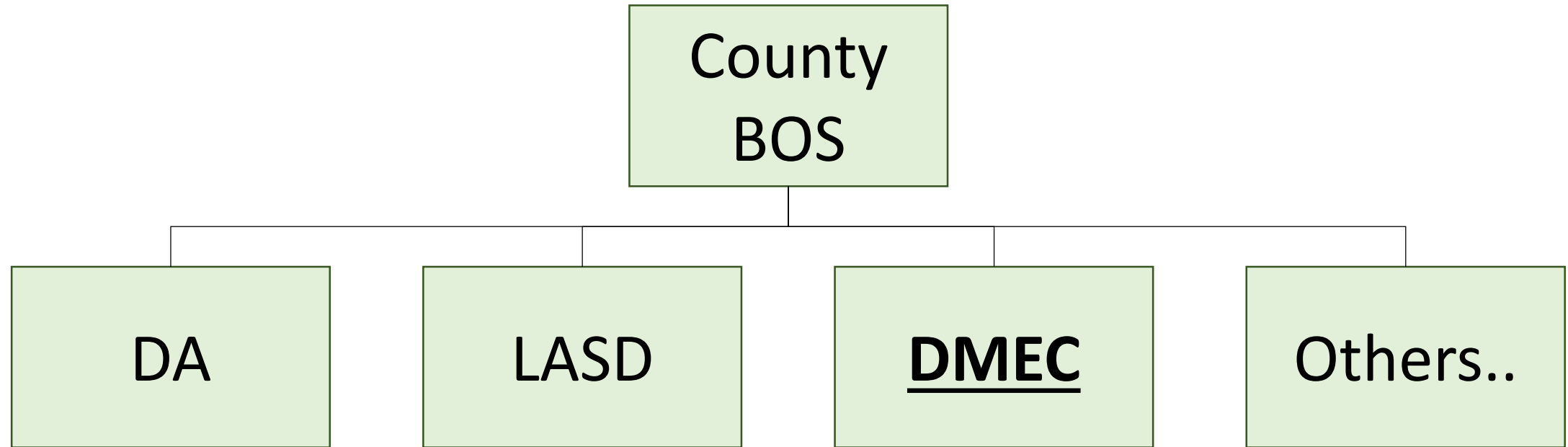
# Scope of Authority

Deaths Per Year in LA County



Defined by *CA Govt Code 27491* and *CA Health & Safety Code 102850*

# Independence



# Responsibilities in Fatal Use of Force

- Determine cause and manner of death
  - Perform scene investigation (limited to body and relevant areas of scene)
  - Perform postmortem examination (autopsy)
  - Perform ancillary testing such as toxicology, histology, x-ray, etc.
  - Complete a Death Certificate as to cause and manner of death
  - Produce reports – investigative, toxicology, and autopsy

# Responsibilities in Fatal Use of Force

- Identification of the individual
- Identification and notification of legal next of kin
- Preserve and collect evidence on body

# What we do NOT do:

- Determine whether law enforcement followed proper procedures
- Determine “guilt” or “innocence” of those involved
- Provide viewing of the body at our facility

# Access to the body – at the death scene

- Investigative law enforcement agency must have reasonable amount of time to conduct an investigation at the scene
- Only when their investigation reaches a certain point, can we respond to the scene





# Access to the body – after the death scene

- The body is taken to secure DMEC facility in Boyle Heights
- Exam occurs at facility
- Viewing of body is not practical or permitted
- Body is released to funeral home of family's choice



# Release of Reports

- Reports (investigative, toxicology, autopsy) are public documents
- However, law enforcement can request a **security hold**
- What is a Security Hold?
  - Requires that we cannot release information – including reports or other details – to the public
  - Requires an official written request by the law enforcement agency
  - Covered by Govt Code 6254(f)
  - Once released, we must provide reports to those who request them.
- \*Has no impact whatsoever on content or conclusions

# Family Assistance Program

- Board motion passed July 9, 2019
- Deaths in-custody or as a result of fatal use of force by Sheriff's Department's deputies
- Multidisciplinary approach to improving compassionate communication with families

# Improvements at DMEC

- Improved staffing
- Quality improvement
- Working on improving efficiencies and reducing turnaround time
- Focus on customer service and community engagement

# Thank you

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