

Death in Custody

Data Set Overview and History

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) collects information on deaths in custody (DIC) in California. The DIC data are reported by law enforcement agencies (LEA) in compliance with California Government Code (GC) section 12525. Contributors include: California LEAs (sheriff, police, etc.), county probation departments, state correctional facilities and any other local or state agencies with peace officer powers. Reporting agencies are to submit the required information within 10 days of the death. Additionally, an annual survey is conducted to verify the total number of subject deaths per agency per calendar year. The DIC data collected and the survey are used to provide descriptive statistical information on the circumstances related to the death reported.

GC section 12525 passed in 1961 and different programs within DOJ had record keeping responsibility over the DIC data until 1986, when it was transferred to the Bureau of Criminal Statistics (now known as CJSC). There have been multiple iterations of the data structure documented between 1986 to the present. One of the most significant changes stemmed from the implementation of the federal Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-297). The CJSC rolled out these changes to LEAs between 2003 and 2005. These changes augmented California's existing collection by adding data elements related to in the process of arrest/arrest related death information. The year 2005 represents the first full year of collection under our current collection methods and standards.

Statutory Authority

DOJ is mandated to collect DIC data pursuant to GC section 12525.

Data Characteristics and Known Limitations

1. Unlike other CJSC collected data, CJSC does not close out the DIC data file on a yearly basis. Rather, this is an open data set that is continuously updated as new information becomes available. As such, special attention should be paid to the date the data was extracted as the data is subject to change.
2. There are no specific limitations for the DIC file. Data included in the file are accurate and reliable to the extent that they are reviewed by CJSC for validity and consistency of logic and are complete to the extent that the reporting LEAs fulfilled their individual reporting obligation.
3. The CJSC is statutorily mandated to collect, not investigate, the data from the specified LEAs; CJSC is not an investigative body. The CJSC acts as a repository for the information submitted to by reporting agencies; collecting, entering, and maintaining the data set; and reporting on it when requested.

Data Element and Values Defined

Cell Location	Data Element	Description/Definition	Value
A	Record Key Number	System generated number that uniquely identifies the record in the system.	Numeric
B	Reporting Agency	The type of agency reporting the death:	Other Local Police Probation Sheriff State
C	Agency Number	The identifier assigned to the reporting agency.	6-digit alpha/numeric
D	Agency Full Name	The literal name of the reporting agency.	Alpha
E	County	The county the reporting agency resides in.	Alameda – Yuba In-State Out-of-State
F	Race/Ethnicity	The subject's race/ethnicity:	American Indian Asian Indian Black Cambodian Chinese Filipino Guamanian Hawaiian Hispanic Japanese Korean Laotian Other Other Asian Pacific Islander Samoan Vietnamese White
G	Gender	The subject's gender.	Male Female
H	Age	The age of the subject at time of death.	Numeric
I	Custody Status	The custody status of the subject immediately preceding death.	Process of Arrest In Transit

			Awaiting Booking Booked – No Charges Filed Booked – Awaiting Trial Sentenced Out to Court Other <i>(see definitions below)</i>
J	Custody Offense	The group code for the offense the subject was detained for.	3-digit numeric
K	Date of Death Year	The year the subject was pronounced dead by law enforcement or medical authorities.	YYYY
L	Date of Death Month	The month the subject was pronounced dead by law enforcement or medical authorities.	MM
M	Date of Death Day	The day the subject was pronounced dead by law enforcement or medical authorities.	DD
N	Custodial Responsibility at Time of Death	The agency or facility that has control, care, or custody of the subject immediately preceding death. (This data element should not be used to capture the subject's location where she/he was first diagnosed with, or contracted, a disease such as cancer or AIDS.)	Process of Arrest City Jail County Jail Adult Camp or Ranch Local Juvenile Facility/Camp CDC/CRC CYA State Hospital Other <i>(see definitions below)</i>
O	Location Where Cause of Death Occurred	The subject's location at the time of an unexpected injury or medical condition that led to death.	Not Applicable Crime/Arrest Scene Administrative Booking Living Common Holding Medical Treatment Other Unknown (blank) <i>(see definitions below)</i>

P	Facility of Death	LEA or facility where the subject died.	Crime/Arrest Scene Local Hospital City Jail County Jail Adult Camp or Ranch Local Juvenile Facility/Camp CDC/CRC CYA State Hospital Other <i>(see definitions below)</i>
Q	Manner of Death	Type of death based on available information.	Pending Investigation Natural Accidental Suicide Homicide Willful (Law Enforcement Staff) Homicide Willful (Other Inmate) Homicide Justified (Law Enforcement Staff) Homicide Justified (Other Inmate) Execution Cannot be Determined Other <i>(see definitions below)</i>
R	Means of Death	Instrument used to cause injuries which contributed to the subject's death.	Pending Investigation Not Applicable (Natural) Firearm Handgun Rifle/Shotgun Club, Blunt Instrument Hands, Feet, Fists Knife, Cutting Instrument Hanging, Strangulation Drug Overdose Mandated Method Cannot be Determined Other Unknown <i>(see definitions below)</i>

Definitions

Custody Status

- Process of Arrest - The subject died while in the physical custody or under the physical restraint of law enforcement officers (even if the person was not formally under arrest at the time); the subject was killed by any use of force by law enforcement officers; the subject died at the crime/arrest scene or medical facility prior to booking.
- In Transit - The subject died while being transported to another location.
- Awaiting Booking - The subject died while in a law enforcement jail facility, but prior to being officially booked.
- Booked (No Charges Filed) - The subject died between booking and arraignment and while in law enforcement custody.
- Sentenced - The subject was incarcerated or under supervision as a result of a judgment formally pronounced by a court or judge in a criminal proceeding.
- Out to Court - The subject was a sentenced inmate but was temporarily in the custody of another agency for other court appearances.
- Other - Other than the above.

Custodial Responsibility at Time of Death

- Process of Arrest - The subject died while in physical custody or under the physical restraint of law enforcement officers (even if the person was not formally under arrest at the time); the subject was killed by any use of force by law enforcement officers; the subject died at the crime/arrest scene or medical facility prior to booking.
- City Jail - A local city jail facility under the control of the police department.
- County Jail - A local county jail or other facility under the control of the county sheriff's department.
- Adult Camp or Ranch - Community correctional facilities or conservation camps.
- Local Juvenile Facility/Camp - A local juvenile facility, camp, or ranch under the control of the county probation department.
- Adult Operations and Adult Programs - Formerly the California Department of Corrections/California Rehabilitation Center (CDC/CRC). This program resides within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.
- Division of Juvenile Justice - Formerly the California Department of the Youth Authority (CYA). This division resides within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.
- State Hospital - Department of State Hospitals (i.e., Atascadero, Metropolitan, Napa, Coalinga, Patton, etc.). (Formerly Department of Mental Health (DMH).)
- Other - Other than the above.

Location Where Cause of Death Occurred

- Not Applicable (Natural) - Death was expected and was due to natural causes.
- Crime/Arrest Scene - Death occurred at the scene of the crime or at the scene of the arrest.
- Facility (Administrative) - Administrative offices within a facility.
- Facility (Booking) - Booking area within a facility.
- Facility (Living) - Living quarters such as a cell or room within a facility.
- Facility (Common) - Areas used by many inmates simultaneously such as food halls, exercise rooms/yards, and television rooms within a facility.
- Facility (Holding) - Temporary holding cell within a facility.
- Facility (Medical Treatment) - Medical ward or local hospital.
- Other - Other than the above.
- Blank – Pending further investigation/waiting for manner of death determination.

Facility of Death

- Crime/Arrest Scene - Death occurred at the scene of the crime or at the scene of the arrest.
- Local Hospital - Local hospital used by an agency or facility to treat acute conditions or injuries. This category includes subjects who were in an ambulance in transit to a local hospital when medical personnel declared death.
- City Jail - Local city jail facility under the control of the police department.
- County Jail - Local county jail or other facility under the control of the county sheriff's department.
- Adult Camp or Ranch - Community correctional facilities or conservation camps.
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- Other - Other than the above.

Manner of Death

- Pending Investigation - This information is pending at the time the "Death in Custody Reporting Form" was submitted to the DOJ.
- Natural - A death due to natural circumstances such as old age, chronic illness, or disease.
- Accidental - A death resulting from an injury caused by an unforeseen, unplanned, or negligent event or circumstance.
- Suicide - The act of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.
- Homicide Willful (Law Enforcement Staff) - A death at the hands of a law enforcement officer that was determined, upon investigation, to be willful.
- Homicide Willful (Other Inmate) - A death at the hands of another inmate that was determined, upon investigation, to be willful.
- Homicide Justified (Law Enforcement Staff) - A death at the hands of a law enforcement officer that was determined, upon investigation, to be justified.
- Homicide Justified (Other Inmate) - A death at the hands of another inmate that was determined, upon investigation, to be justified.
- Execution - The subject was a condemned inmate executed by order of the court.
- Cannot be Determined - The manner of the subject's death cannot be determined.
- Other - Other than the above.

Means of Death

- Pending Investigation - This information is pending at the time the "Death in Custody Reporting Form" was submitted to the DOJ.
- Not Applicable (Natural) - The subject's death is considered "natural."
- Firearm – A firearm was used to cause injuries which contributed to the subject's death. (After 2005, data code no longer in use.)
- Handgun - A handgun was used to cause injuries which contributed to the subject's death.
- Rifle/Shotgun - A rifle or shotgun was used to cause injuries which contributed to the subject's death.
- Club, Blunt Instrument - A baseball bat, chair leg, etc., was used to cause injuries which contributed to the subject's death.
- Hands, Feet, Fists - Hands, feet, or fists were used to punch, kick, or beat the subject to death.
- Knife, Cutting Instrument - Knives, glass, sharp metal objects, etc., were used.
- Hanging, Strangulation - When death was caused by choking because of compression of the throat (includes the use of ropes, bedding, clothes, hands, etc.).
- Drug Overdose - The subject's death was caused by alcohol or drug usage/ overdose.

- Mandated Method - The subject was executed by a mandated method.
- Cannot be Determined - The means of the subject's death cannot be determined.
- Other - Other than the above.
- Unknown