

Statewide Forensic Pathologists

1

Joint Labor, Health and Social Services
Interim Committee



Wyoming
Department
of Health

August 11, 2022

Why are we doing this brief?

2

- County coroners and the Chairmen of JtLHSS requested that the Department of Health examine the potential **costs** and **benefits** of building a **statewide Medical Examiner office**, similar to what the State of Montana has established.

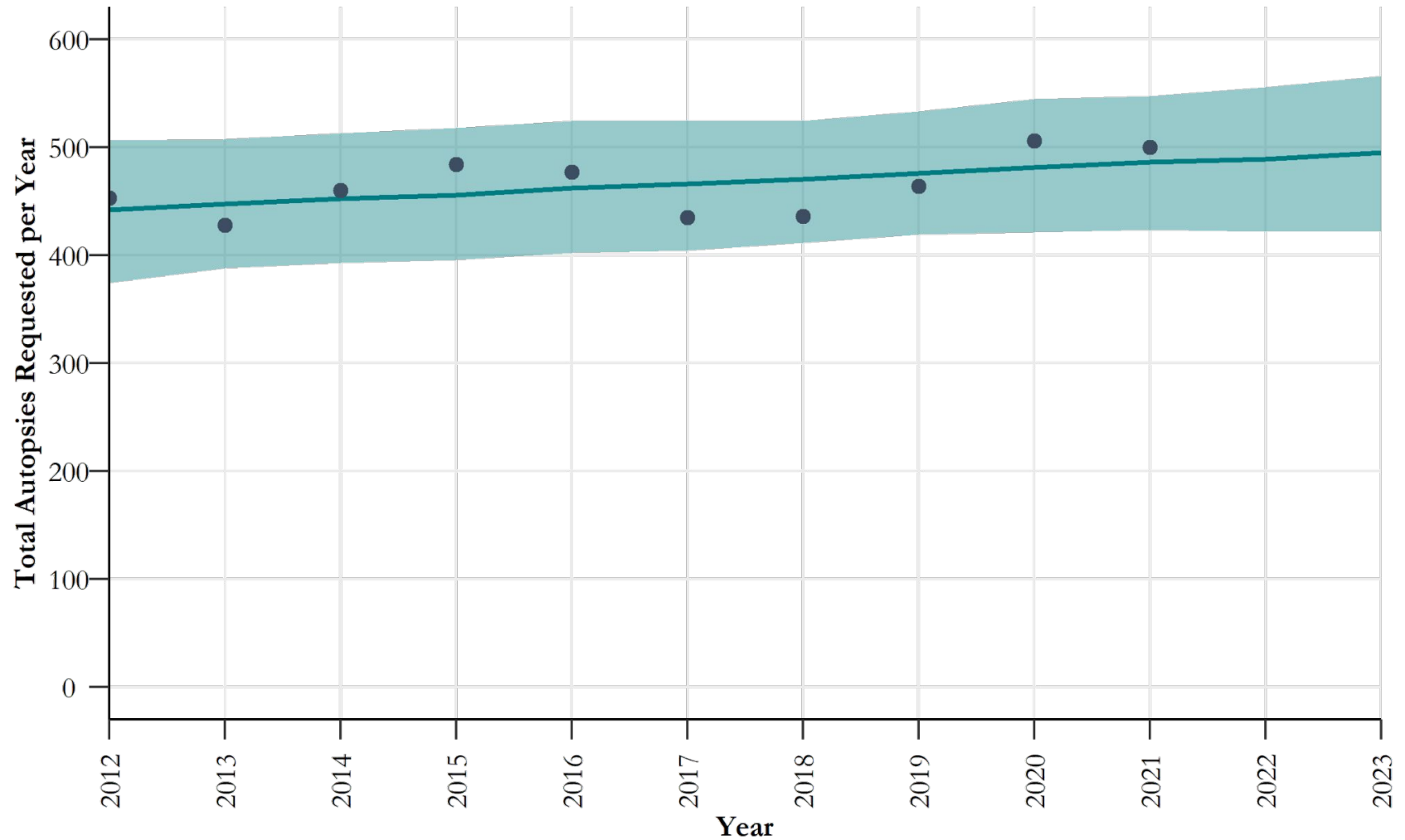
Overview

3

- **Background:** W.S. § 7-4-201 (b) (ii) requires licensed forensic pathologists to perform forensic autopsies throughout the state.
 - ◆ Forensic pathologists can perform both ‘regular’ autopsies and forensic autopsies.
- **Problem:**
 - ◆ One forensic pathologist is currently taking on the vast majority of these autopsies.
 - ◆ They cannot accommodate the entire workload and some counties contract out of state (Nebraska or Colorado) which increases waiting times.
 - ◆ If they were to leave the workforce, all coroners will be forced to contract out-of-state
 - ◆ Over-utilization of out-of-state forensic pathologists has previously led to “lock-outs”

Autopsies Requested Per Year

4



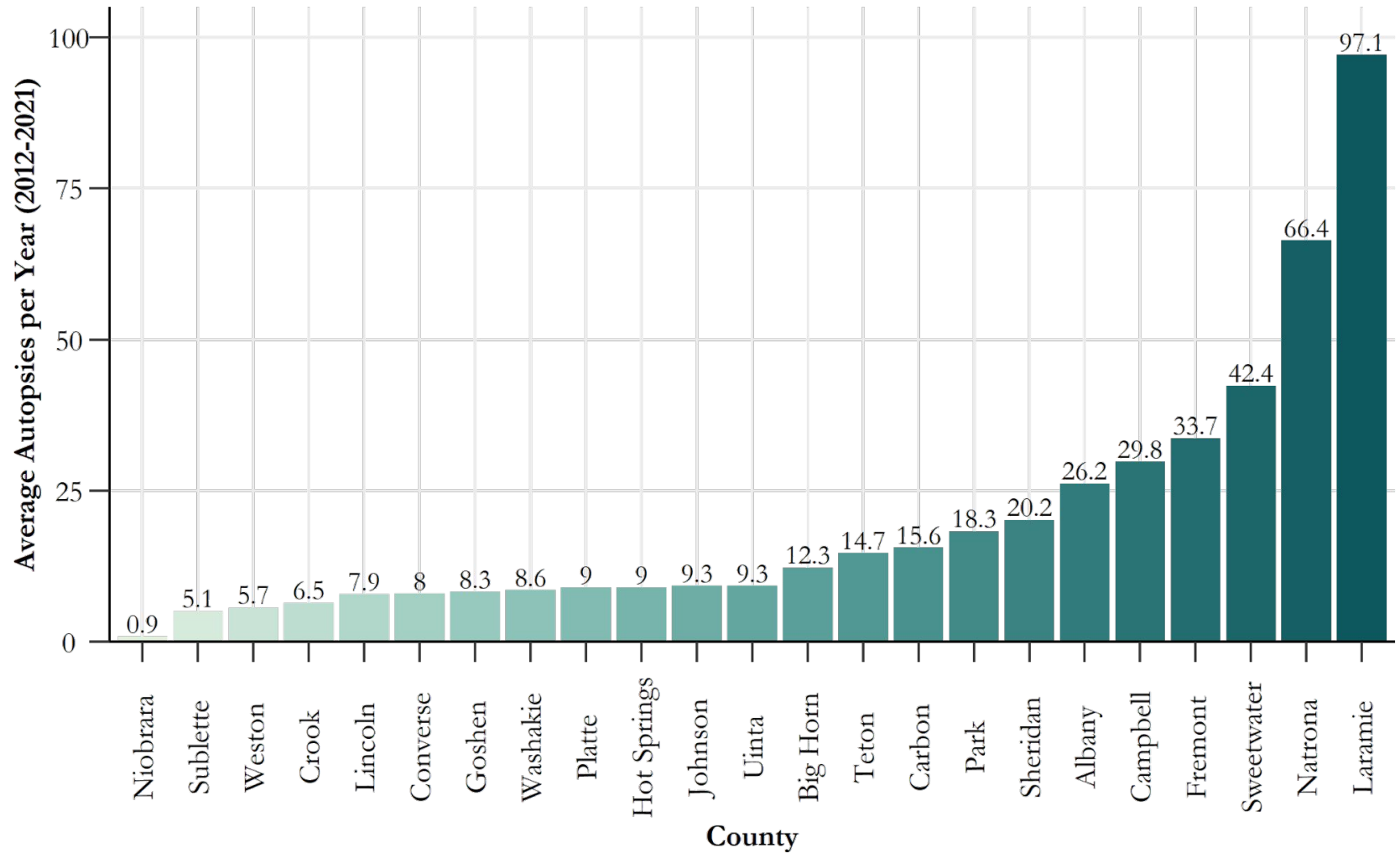
Percentage of Decedents Requiring Autopsies

5

Year	Percentage
2012	10.74%
2013	10.12%
2014	10.63%
2015	10.74%
2016	10.98%
2017	9.94%
2018	9.35%
2019	9.87%
2020	9.15%
2021	8.39%

Average Autopsies Requested By County

6



County Contracts

7

→ **10 out of the 23 counties** contract out of state for autopsies:

- ◆ Laramie
- ◆ Sweetwater
- ◆ Albany
- ◆ Carbon
- ◆ Goshen
- ◆ Fremont
- ◆ Converse
- ◆ Niobrara
- ◆ Sublette

→ **Laramie, Fremont, Sweetwater, and Albany counties account for roughly 200 autopsies per year**, nearly 40% of the state's autopsies in a given calendar year.

Objective

8

- Develop an alternative that gives the State “self-sufficiency” when it comes forensic autopsies.
 - ◆ Decreases wait times for coroners and families
 - ◆ Reduces other costs associated with contracting (travel expenses)
 - ◆ Avoids “lock-out” scenarios
 - ◆ Fixes reliance on our only forensic pathologist

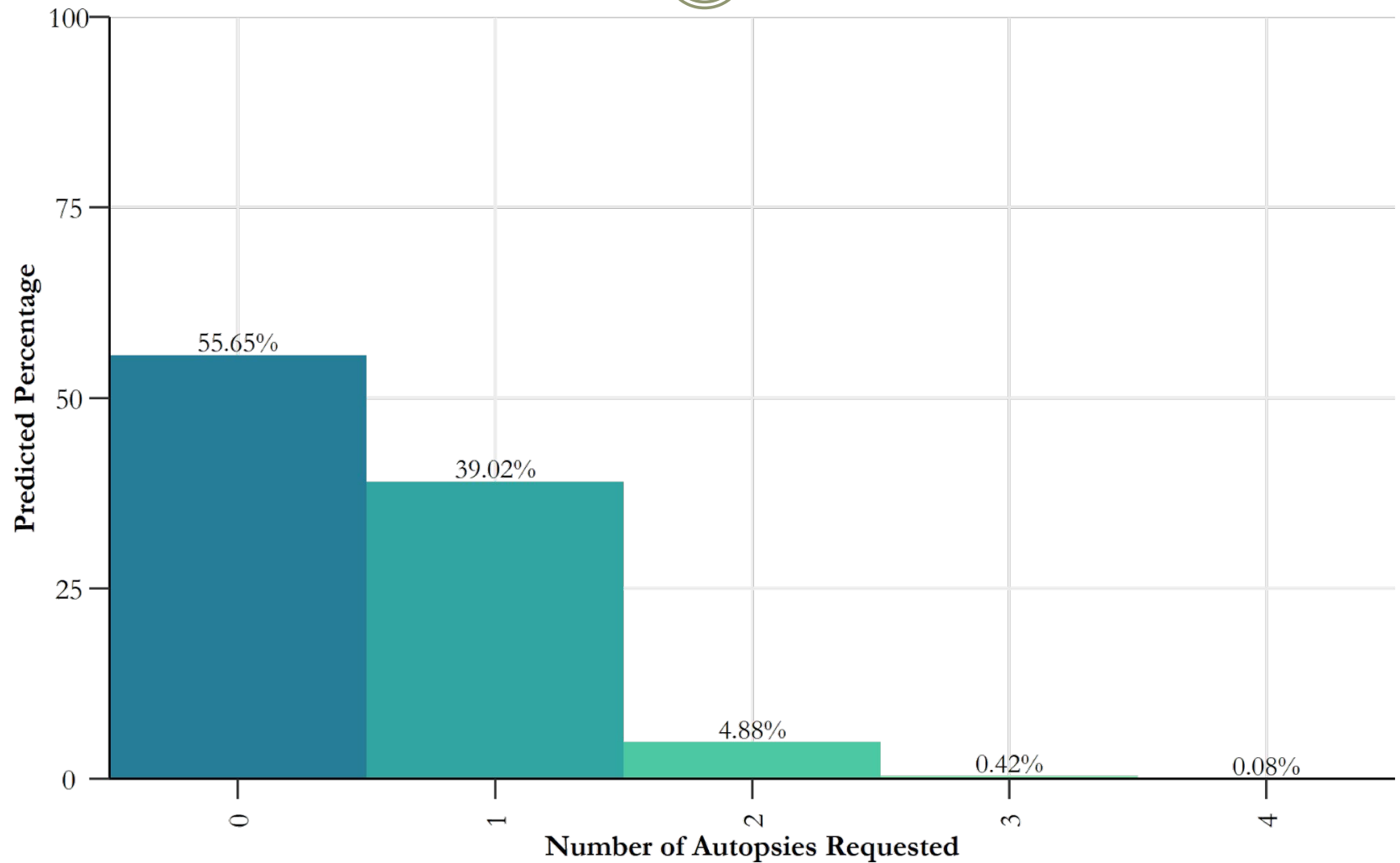
Option: State Medical Examiner's Office

9

- **Statewide medical examiner office**
 - ◆ 2 forensic pathologists hired under the Department of Health
 - ◆ Based in Casper (other placements are viable)
 - ◆ Funded through self-generated revenue
- **Montana has implemented a version of the explored system.**
- Since forensic pathologists can perform any type of autopsy, they could perform **all** autopsies in the state.

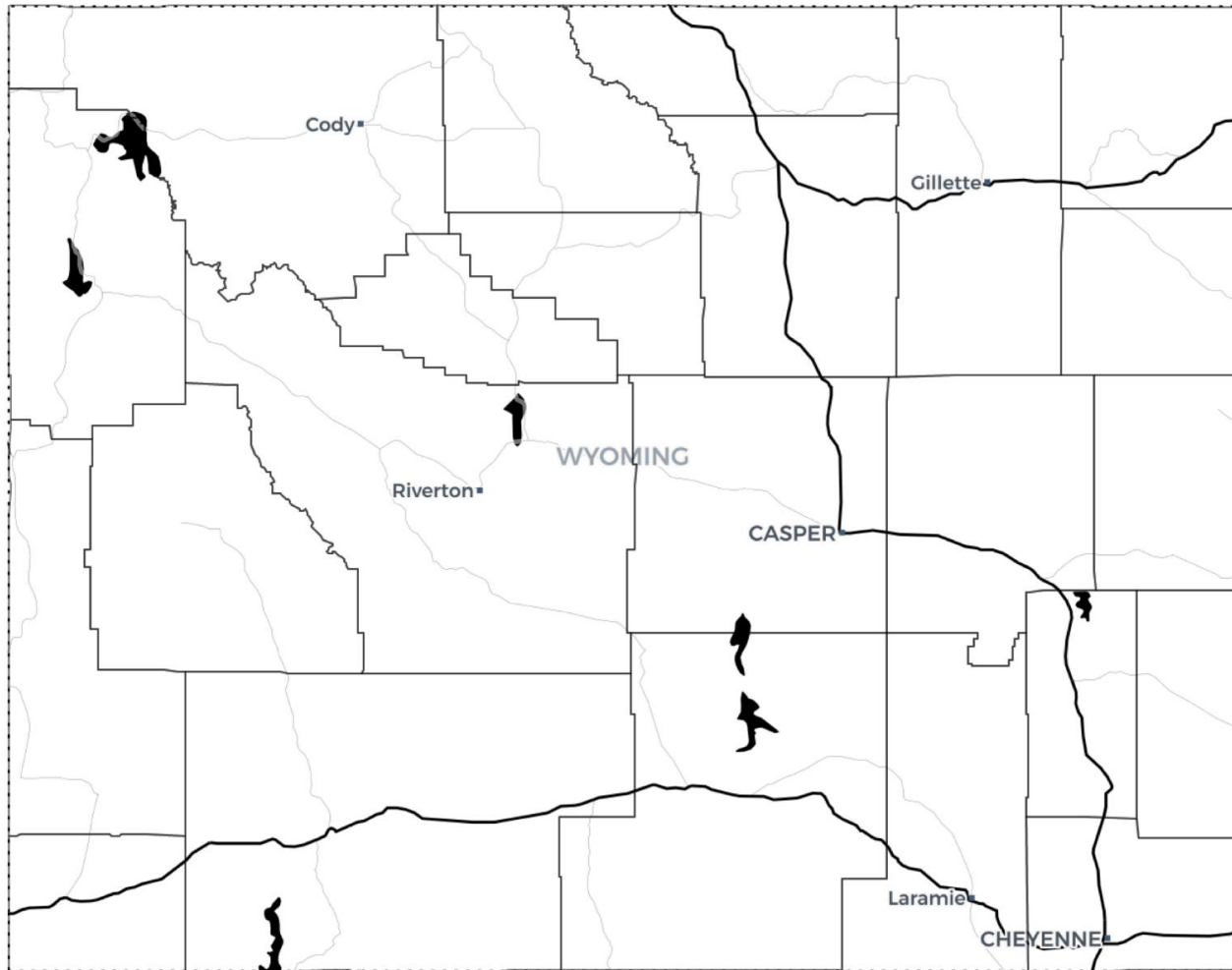
Estimated Autopsies on any Given Day

10



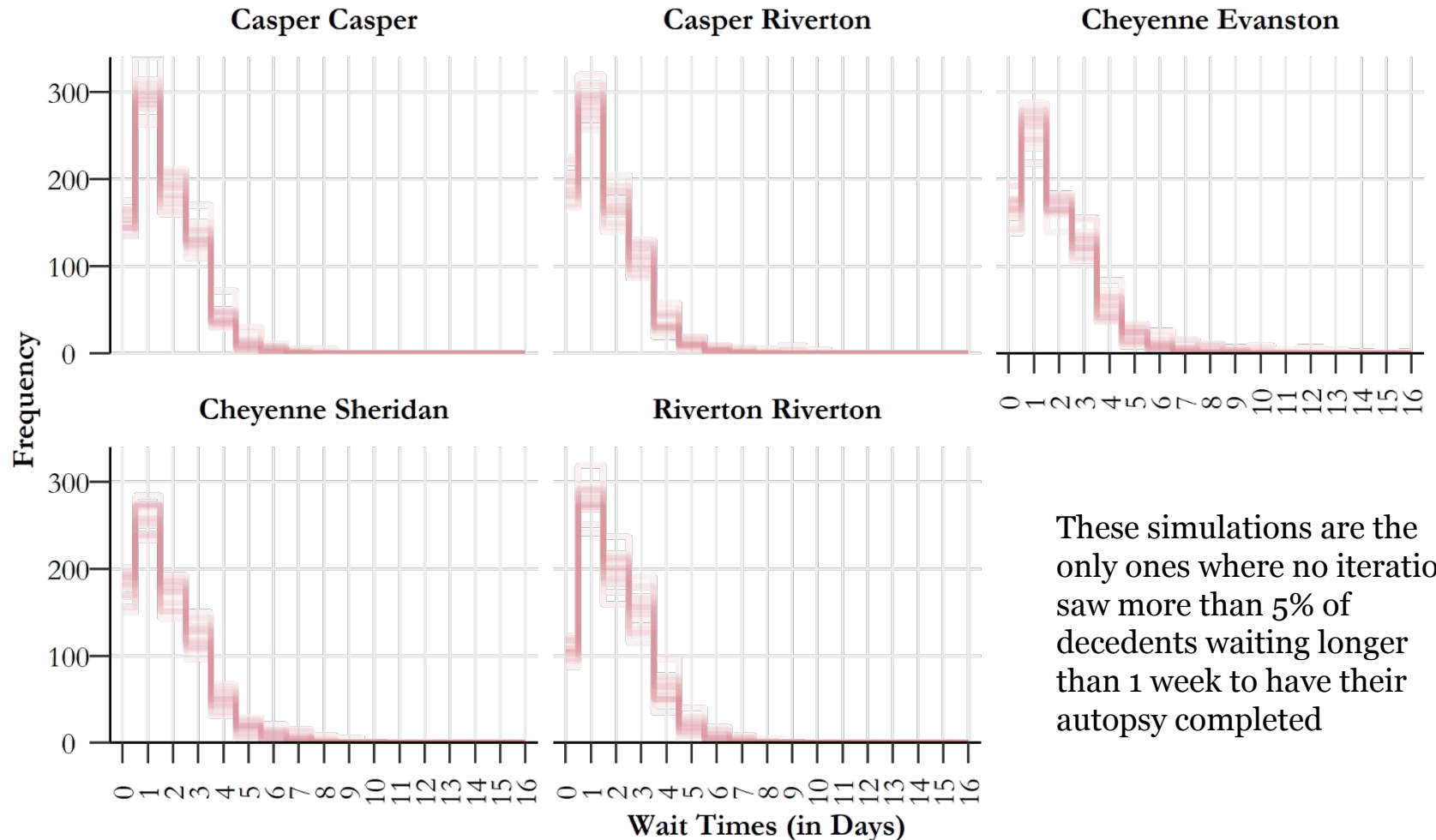
Simulation

11



Simulation Results: Two Forensic Pathologists

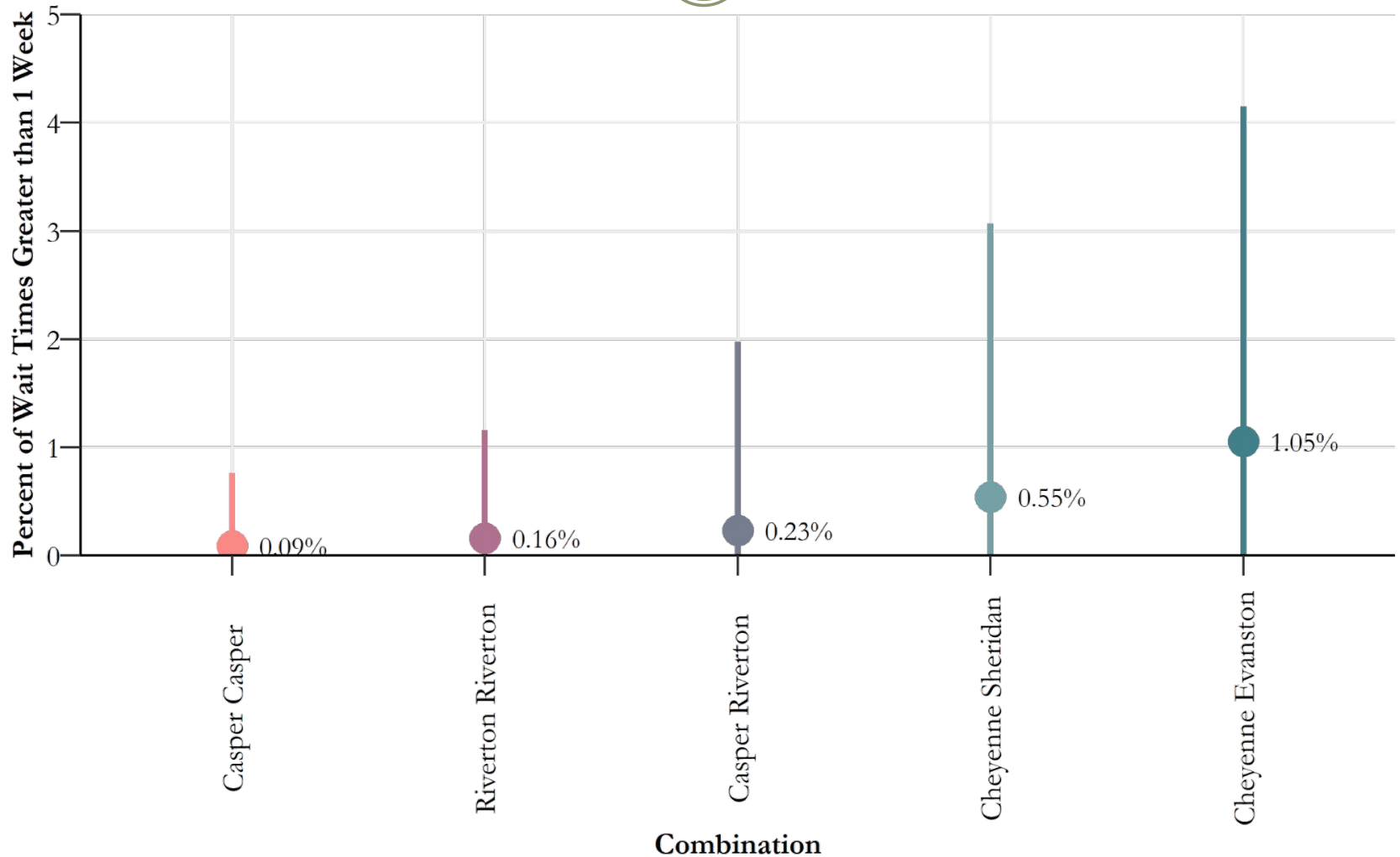
12



These simulations are the only ones where no iteration saw more than 5% of decedents waiting longer than 1 week to have their autopsy completed

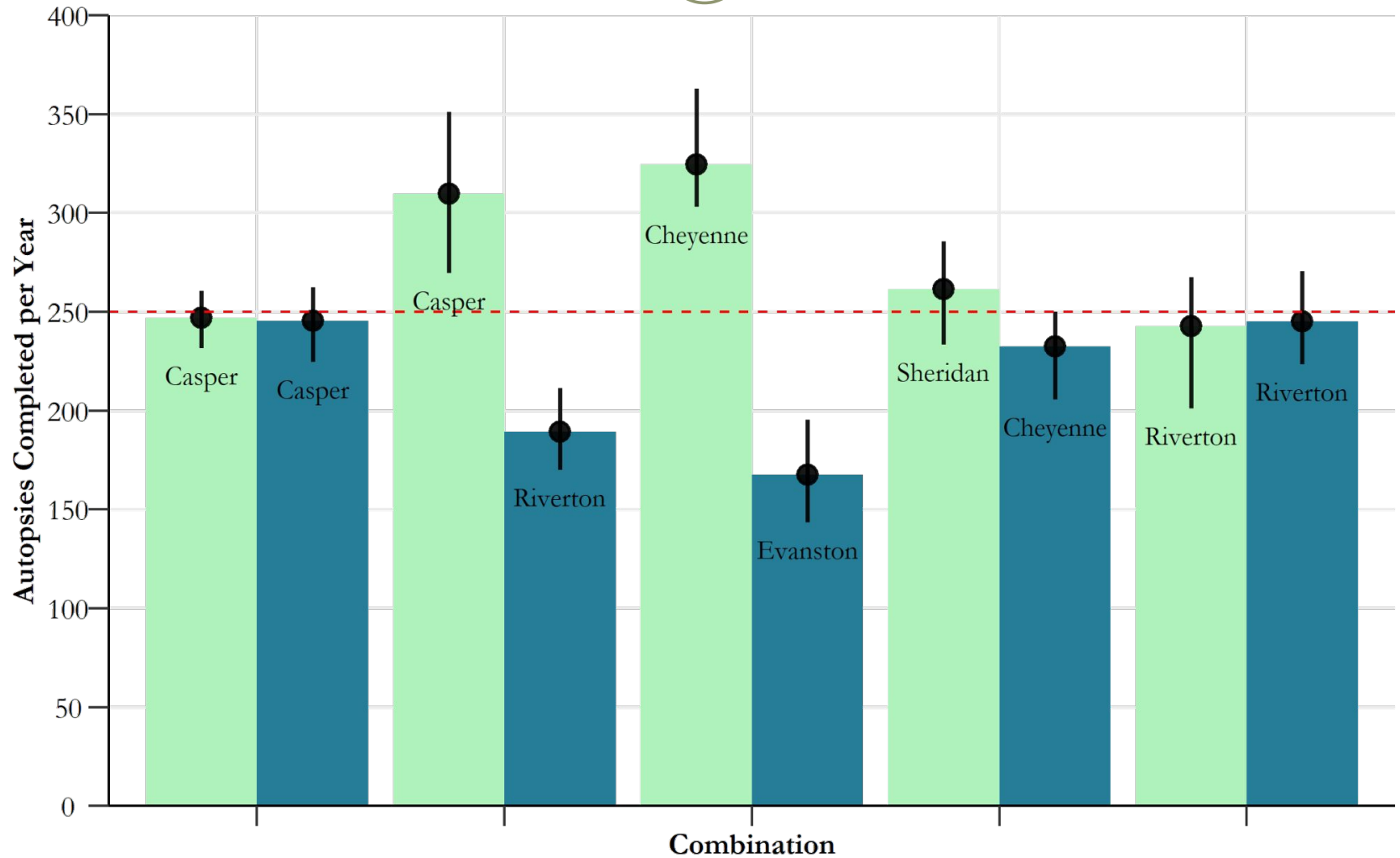
Simulation Results: Two Forensic Pathologists

13



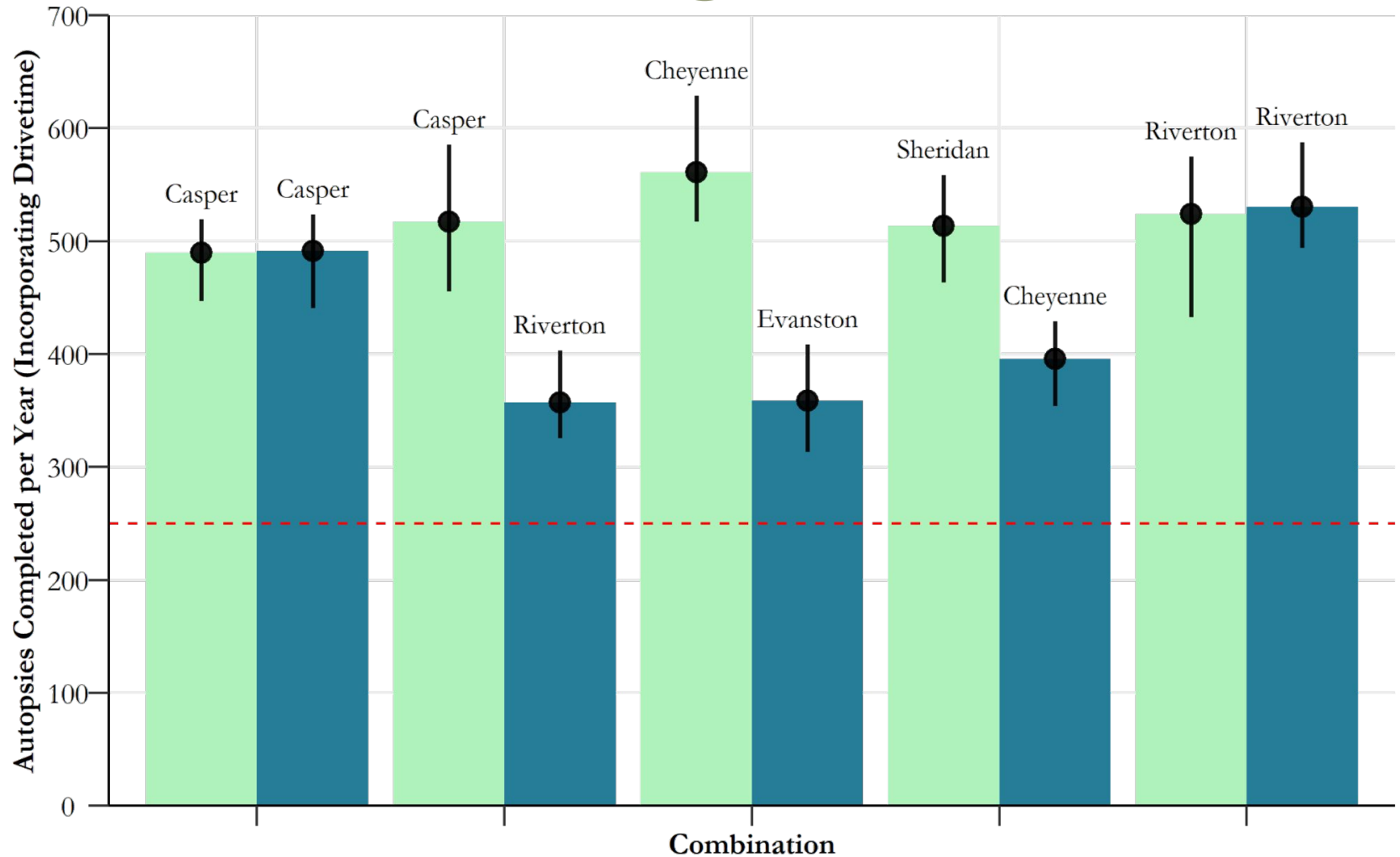
Simulation Results: Two Forensic Pathologists

14



Simulation Results: Two Forensic Pathologists

15



Estimated 100-Series Costs

16

Position	#	Base Salary	Benefits	Total Estimated Budget
Forensic Pathologist	2	\$280,000	\$83,560	\$727,120
Autopsy Technician	2	\$49,267	\$26,915	\$152,364
Administrative Specialist	1	\$45,024	\$25,873	\$70,898
Total				\$950,382

Estimated Total Costs and Revenue

17

Estimated Salary	Estimated Mileage Cost ¹	Estimated Revenue ²	Grand Total
\$950,382	\$41,305	\$903,263	-\$88,424

¹ Based on cost of \$0.50 per mile. 75th percentile estimate for Casper placements.

² Based on average autopsy cost of \$1879.35. 25th percentile estimate.

Office of Healthcare Licensing and Survey

18

Joint Labor, Health and Social Services
Interim Committee



Wyoming
Department
of Health

August 11, 2022

Purpose

19

→ **Dual Federal and State roles**

→ **Federal role:**

- ◆ Serves as the State Survey Agency on behalf of the Dept. of Health and Human Services for:
 - Medicare and Medicaid certification of healthcare facilities operating in Wyoming (Section 1864 SSA);
 - Certification of clinical laboratories (42 CFR 493)
- ◆ Purpose of CMS Survey and Certification program is to ensure basic levels of quality and safety for health care providers.

Purpose

20

→ State role:

- ◆ Serves as the regulatory agency for licensure to operate within Wyoming (W.S. § 35-2-901 et. seq.)
- ◆ Jurisdictional authority over fire safety and building codes for construction involving healthcare facilities
- ◆ Protects health, safety and welfare of patients (residents) in licensed healthcare facilities

Budget and positions

21

→ **Biennial budget (BFY 23) :**

- ◆ \$5,417,825, of which:
 - \$1,175,727 SGF (22%)
 - \$4,242,098 FF (78%)

→ **24 positions**

- ◆ Administrator
- ◆ Business Office (4 positions)
- ◆ Healthcare Surveillance (14 positions)
- ◆ Life Safety and Construction (5 positions)

Survey function

22

- **Health Care Surveillance** section conducts surveys, investigates complaints, manages CNA/LTC Abuse Registry, provides ongoing surveyor and provider training.
- **Surveys** can be scheduled or unannounced.
 - ◆ On-site, objective, and outcome-based
 - ◆ Types include licensure, certification, and emergency preparedness surveys.

Counts of providers surveyed

23

Provider	Type	No.
Adult Day Care	Licensed Only	4
Ambulatory Surgical Ctr.	Licensed + Cert	20
Assisted Living Facility	Licensed Only	34
Boarding Home	Licensed Only	5
Comp. Outpat. Rehab	Licensed + Cert	1
Critical Access Hospital	Licensed + Cert	16
End Stage Renal Dialysis	Licensed + Cert	10
Federal Qualified Health Ctr.	Certified Only	22
Home Health Agencies	Licensed Only	20
Home Health Agencies	Licensed + Cert	32
Hospice	Licensed Only	1
Hospice	Licensed + Cert	21
Rehabilitation Hospital	Licensed + Cert	1
Hospital	Licensed Only	1
Hospital	Licensed + Cert	11
Intermediate Care Facility	Licensed + Cert	1

Provider	Type	No.
Nursing Home	Licensed + Cert	36
Outpatient PT	Certified Only	3
Psychiatric hospital	Licensed + Cert	1
Psych. Resid. Treat. Fac.	Certified Only	2
Rural Health Clinic	Certified Only	25
Total		267

Nursing home surveys

24

FFY	Standard Surveys		Complaint Surveys	
	# of Surveys	% Providers Surveyed	# of Surveys	% Providers Surveyed
2018	38	100%	65	66%
2019	39	97%	92	84%
2020	16	43%	57	59%
2021	26	69%	75	80%
2022 YTD	23	64%	41	50%