

**Iowa Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Division of Behavioral Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse**  
**Opioid Update: April 2023**

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) offers the Opioid Update to share information about opioid use and Iowa's efforts to address the national opioid epidemic. Please feel free to submit topics at any time to the State Opioid Response team email: [SOR@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:SOR@idph.iowa.gov).

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**Iowa News**

**Iowa State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (IASUDORS)**

The Iowa State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (IASUDORS) is a statewide surveillance system that collects information on overdose deaths occurring in Iowa. Whereas other databases may collect similar information, overdoses that are *unintentional (accidental) or have an undetermined (not known) intent* are included in this system. IASUDORS is a unique multi-source data system combining information from death certificates, toxicology reports, and medical examiner reports supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In 2021, there were a total of 398 overdose deaths in Iowa included in IASUDORS, 383 of which were unintentional. Intent could not be determined for the 15 remaining overdose deaths. Ninety-five percent (95%) of decedents were Iowa residents. Males accounted for 65% of unintentional and undetermined overdose deaths; 24% of the decedents were between the ages of 31-40. Eighty-five percent (85%) of decedents were White and 13% of decedents were African Americans. Toxicology findings showed that opioids were a contributing cause of death for 60% of decedents in IASUDORS. The majority of opioid deaths involved Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyl (84%). In exploring the relationship between substances that were present in toxicology findings but not considered to be a contributing cause of death, IMF made up 86% (234) of the total amount of opioids (274) found to be present in toxicology reports. Lastly, prescription opioids were found to be a contributing cause of death in 14% of Iowa decedents in 2021.

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Bureau of Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, in collaboration with the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center began collecting data for IASUDORS in 2020 through support from the Overdose Data to Action Grant #CDC-RFA-CE19-190402 funded by the CDC.

For more information on SUDORS please visit the [CDC SUDORS Dashboard](#).

For more information on IASUDORS, please visit our most recent data brief on [2021 Unintentional Overdose Deaths](#).

## **DEA Reports Widespread Threat of Fentanyl Mixed with Xylazine**

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration is warning the American public of a sharp increase in the trafficking of fentanyl mixed with xylazine. Xylazine, also known as “Tranq,” is a powerful sedative that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved for veterinary use. Xylazine and fentanyl drug mixtures place users at a higher risk of suffering a fatal drug poisoning. Because xylazine is not an opioid, naloxone does not reverse its effects. Still, experts always recommend administering naloxone if someone might be suffering a drug poisoning.

Read the full public safety alert here: [DEA](#)

## **Opioid News**

### **FDA Approves Over-the-Counter Naloxone Nasal Spray**

On March 29, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Narcan, 4 milligram (mg) naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray for over-the-counter (OTC), nonprescription use. This is the first naloxone product approved for use without a prescription. This action paves the way for the life-saving medication to reverse an opioid overdose to be sold directly to consumers in places like drug stores, convenience stores, grocery stores and gas stations, as well as online.

The timeline for availability and price of this OTC product is determined by the manufacturer. The FDA will work with all stakeholders to help facilitate the continued availability of naloxone nasal spray products during the time needed to implement the Narcan switch from prescription to OTC status, which may take months. Other formulations and dosages of naloxone will remain available by prescription only.

Read the full news release here: [FDA](#)

### **Telemedicine Prescribing of Controlled Substances**

The Drug Enforcement Agency announced the proposal of permanent rules for “the prescribing of controlled medications via telemedicine, expanding patient access to critical therapies beyond the scheduled end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.” The proposed rule aims to allow prescribers in limited circumstances to prescribe controlled medications via telemedicine in the absence of a prior in-person medical evaluation.

The full text of the proposal may be found here: [DEA](#)

### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services encourages states to use Medicaid for SUD Treatment for Incarcerated People**

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services plans to release guidance this spring outlining how states could use Medicaid and federal dollars to pay for MAT and MOUD for incarcerated people before they are released. Research has shown that access to medication drastically reduces the overdose risk for people leaving prisons and jails.

It was also announced that all 112 federal prisons will offer drug-assisted treatment for substance use disorder by the summer.

Read the full article here: [POLITICO](#)

### **Drug Overdose Deaths and United States Youth**

A new Morbidity and Mortality Weekly report sheds more light on previously released data showing median monthly overdose deaths among persons aged 10–19 years (adolescents) increased 109% from July–December 2019 to July–December 2021. The new report shows that deaths involving illicitly manufactured fentanyls (IMFs) increased 182%. Of all of the reported adolescent overdose deaths during this time period, approximately 90% of deaths involved opioids and 84% involved IMFs. Counterfeit pills were present in nearly 25% of deaths. Two thirds of the deceased had one or more potential bystanders present, but most provided no overdose response.

Read the full study here: [CDC](#)

### **President Biden Calls for Historic Funding to Beat the Overdose Epidemic Being Driven by Fentanyl**

President Biden released his FY 2024 budget request to Congress, calling for a historic investment of \$46.1 billion for National Drug Control Program agencies to advance the Administration’s plan to beat the opioid epidemic. The FY24 budget request continues the Biden Administration’s record of calling for dramatic investments to address the overdose epidemic driven by illicit fentanyl, and represents a \$2.3 billion increase over the FY23 enacted level.

Read the press release here: [WhiteHouse.gov](#)

### **Recommendations for Curricular Elements in Substance Use Disorders Training**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) remains committed to addressing the nation’s overdose epidemic through the provision of person-centered and evidence-based care. In the recently announced 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act signed into law by President Biden on Dec. 29, 2022, a provision was included that U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registrants, at the time of renewing or applying for registration to prescribe controlled medications, must attest to receiving at least eight hours of education on SUDs.

The eight required hours of training can occur through classroom situations, seminars at professional society meetings, virtual platforms, or via other accredited continuing education sources.

Read the full announcement here: [Education](#)

## **Resources**

### **Iowa’s Annual Governor’s Conference On Substance Use**

The 46th Annual Governor’s Conference on Substance Use will be held virtually on April 25, 26, and 27. The purpose of this conference is to establish a meaningful dialogue among health professionals by focusing on trending topics, best practices and strategies for addressing barriers in behavioral health.

Get more information and register here: [GovConf](#)

### **Public Safety-led Community-oriented Overdose Prevention Efforts (PS-COPE) Toolkit**

The PS-COPE Toolkit is a new approach to overdose prevention and response for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities. It combines three proven models to enhance overdose prevention and response: trauma-informed care, recovery-oriented systems of care and procedural justice.

Download the toolkit here: [NC](#)

## **SAMHSA Announces Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers (CORC) Funding Opportunity**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), is accepting applications for FY 2023 for the Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Center program. The Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers (CORC) is a grant program to establish or implement comprehensive treatment and recovery centers which provide a full spectrum of treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services to address the opioid epidemic and ensure access to all three FDA approved medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD).

Learn more about the funding opportunity here: [CORC](#)