

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Behavioral Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse
Opioid Update: October 2022

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa 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

In this issue:

- **Department News**
- **Iowa News**
- **Opioid News**
- **Resources**

Department News

Naloxone Available for Iowa Schools

Iowa schools are now able to request and receive free Naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal medicine, to have on site at their buildings and events as part of a first aid response in order to potentially save a life. The Iowa HHS, Department of Education, and local contractors are providing policy guidance, training, and request forms in order to facilitate access to this important resource.

For more information, please contact: SOR@idph.iowa.gov

Iowa News

Change to Opioid Update Newsletter Circulation

The Opioid Update is moving to a quarterly distribution cycle. Please look for our next edition in January 2023. Please continue to submit topics for future newsletters to the State Opioid Response team email: SOR@idph.iowa.gov.

Iowa Attorney General Launches New Opioid Resource Website

The IowaOpioidHelp.com website was launched on September 19th as part of the efforts of the Office of the Iowa Attorney General to identify resources available to counties and cities as opioid settlement funds begin to arrive in the state. The website contains contact information for opioid use disorder treatment and clinics who have contracted with the State of Iowa. Additionally, there is a section titled 'Q&A with Dr. Lynch.' Dr. Allison Lynch, MD, MS, is the director of the Medications for Addiction Treatment clinic at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics. Dr. Lynch uses this platform to answer the most frequently asked questions about opioid use disorder.

Please click on this link to visit the new website: [OpioidHelp](https://www.iowaopioidhelp.com)

Opioid News

Xylazine: An Emerging Substance Linked to Drug Overdose Deaths

Xylazine is a veterinary tranquilizer that is used as a sedative and muscle relaxant for large animals during surgeries. New reports are showing that xylazine is being mixed with heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine to increase the value of drugs by adding weight. Xylazine can cause drowsiness, amnesia, slow breathing, increased heart rate and blood pressure. In combination with other nervous system depressants, xylazine increases risk of overdose. Because xylazine is not an opioid, the effectiveness of naloxone in some overdoses may be compromised. Xylazine involvement in overdose deaths have risen nationally from 0.36% in 2015 to 6.7% in 2020.

To read the full alert on this substance, please click on this link: [FADAA](#)

DEA Warns of Brightly-Colored Fentanyl Used to Target Young Americans

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is calling attention to a frightening new trend of colorful fentanyl that has become available across the United States. In August 2022, DEA and law enforcement across the country seized brightly colored fentanyl powder and fentanyl pills in 18 states.

To read the full article, please click on this link: [DEA](#)

Telehealth and Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) During COVID-19

A study conducted both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic examined the number of patients receiving substance use disorder treatment and the provision of MOUD with a focus on outcomes for MOUD retention and odds of medically treated overdose. Researchers used data from the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from September 2018 to February 2021. The study consisted of two cohorts of Medicare recipients, one pre-COVID-19 and a second cohort that began during the pandemic. Researchers found that a larger percentage of individuals in the second cohort received telehealth services, including telehealth services for MOUD. Those who received telehealth services for MOUD showed increased odds of MOUD retention and lower odds of medically treated overdose.

To see more regarding the findings from this study, please click on this link: [JAMA](#)

Barriers to Care Cause Drug Overdose and Death Epidemic to Deepen

The American Medical Association (AMA) has released the Overdose Epidemic Report for 2022. The report highlights a 46.4% decrease in opioid prescriptions in the last decade and also an increase in fatal opioid overdoses each year. The AMA is advocating to remove barriers to care and are citing underlying social needs, including housing and transportation, as fuel for the overdose epidemic. The report also identifies what it has labeled as '8 concrete actions to save lives' which are strategies for different stakeholder groups to address barriers to care. One action is a call on policymakers, health insurers and national pharmacy chains to remove barriers—such as prior authorization—to evidence-based care. A second identified action calls on state officials to remove punitive policies against pregnant people and parents with a substance-use disorder.

To see the remaining action steps, and for access to the full report, please click on this link: [AMA](#)

Resources

Over the next several years, states and localities will face a series of decisions on how best to invest the money that will be coming their way as a result of the opioid litigation. To help them with this process, over 60 organizations have endorsed a set of Principles that outline how these jurisdictions can make these decisions. The Opioid Litigation Principles, which have been coordinated by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, may be found [on their website](#).