

Iowa Department of Public Health
Division of Behavioral Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse
Opioid Update: May 2022

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) 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 to RaChel Greenwood at rachel.greenwood@idph.iowa.gov.

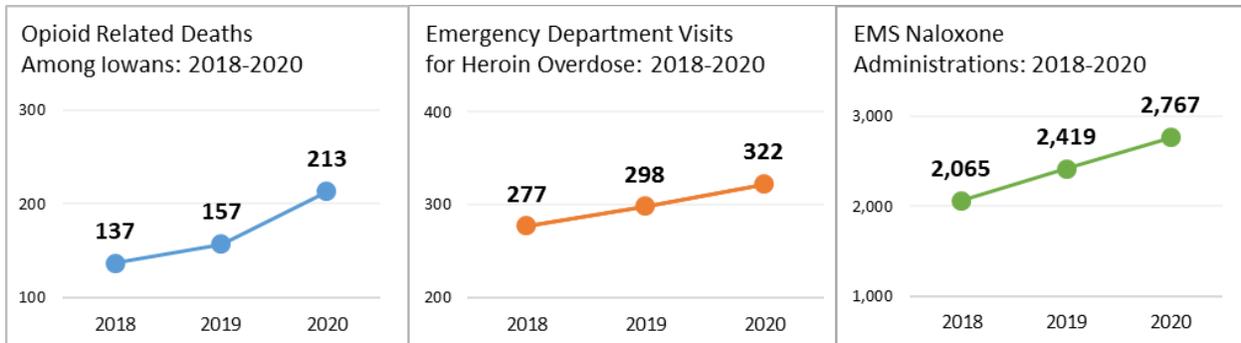
In this issue:

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

Iowa News

Naloxone Access in Iowa

Opioid-related deaths continue to rise despite federal, state, and local prevention efforts. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, over the course of the past three years Iowa has experienced an increase in opioid-involved deaths, the number of emergency department visits for heroin overdose, and naloxone administrations by EMS (see figures below).



Despite being a safe and effective medication with a very low risk of side effects, and available for free through the state's community-based pharmacy and Tele-Naloxone programs, Naloxone, which is designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose, has been vastly underutilized.

Iowans and their loved ones most in need of naloxone report an unwillingness to use these services. Some of the reasons include:

- Fears around who has access to their prescription information
- Shame associated with having an opioid use disorder
- Feeling judged by others

While these fears may seem unfounded, for people engaging in opioid misuse and their loved ones, they are legitimate concerns and create barriers to access.

The FDA is working to make naloxone more widely available as an approved over-the-counter (OTC) product and all 50 states and the District of Columbia have some form of naloxone access law to reduce barriers to naloxone access.

However, due to uncertainty when naloxone may be available in an OTC form, other states have developed a naloxone access strategy called secondary distribution which involves developing an application process that allows entities to distribute naloxone directly to those in need in their communities, without collecting identifying information through a prescription from the medical director.

Department News

IDPH Intent to Award Request for Proposal (RFP) 58823015

In order to increase access to the important service of Recovery Community Centers for people in recovery for Substance Use Disorder in Iowa, the State Opioid Response Grant within the Iowa Department of Public Health funded by federal grant funds from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) is happy to announce the intention to award up to \$250,000 per year to the following Recovery Community Centers: Circle Recovery Community Centers in Polk, Pottawattamie and Woodbury, and the Crush of Iowa Recovery Community Center of Linn County.

Recovery Community Centers are an evidence-based strategy to maintain recovery of persons with Opioid Use Disorder and other Substance Use Disorders. Their primary function is to provide peer-based recovery support services and the State Opioid Response grant anticipates that these projects will enhance the capacity of community service programs to serve individuals with substance use disorders and expand the pathways to recovery.

Opioid News

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Warns of Mass-Overdose Events

The DEA Administration warned federal, state, and local law enforcement of a nationwide spike of fentanyl-related mass-overdose events resulting in 58 overdoses and 29 deaths in recent months.

“Fentanyl is killing Americans at an unprecedented rate,” said DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. “Already this year, numerous mass-overdose events have resulted in dozens of overdoses and deaths. Drug traffickers are driving addiction, and increasing their profits, by mixing fentanyl with other illicit drugs. Tragically, many overdose victims have no idea they are ingesting deadly fentanyl, until it’s too late.”

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

High Variability in Illicit Opioid Market Found Through Drug Checking Services

Researchers in Victoria, Canada used drug checking data to examine the variability within the illicit opioid supply from November 2020 to July 2021. A total of 454 participants submitted what they believed were opioids for composition analysis.

Fentanyl was found in 96% of samples reported to be opioids and concentrations varied widely, with nearly 20% of data points falling outside the control limits. Over half of the samples contained an unexpected active and 43% contained etizolam. Study authors suggest that these findings demonstrate that the opioid crisis is more attributable to the general variability found in the unregulated market instead of bad batches of drugs.

To read this article, please click on this link: [VOMBC](#)

Pills Seized by Law Enforcement Containing Fentanyl Increased Dramatically Between 2018-2021

A recently published study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) found that the number of seizures of pills containing fentanyl increased from 68 in 2018 to 635 in 2021, with the total number increasing from 42,202 to 2,089,186.

“For the first time we can see this rapid rise in pills adulterated with fentanyl, which raises red flags for increasing risk of harm in a population that is possibly less experienced with opioids,” said Dr. Palamar. “We absolutely need more harm reduction strategies, such as naloxone distribution and fentanyl test strips, as well as widespread education about the risk of pills that are not coming from a pharmacy. The immediate message here is that pills illegally obtained can contain fentanyl.”

To read this article, please click on this link: [NIDA](#)

Resources

Free Peer Recovery Coach Training

Peer Recovery Coaching is an important service that helps promote recovery and remove barriers and obstacles to recovery for people seeking or already in recovery from a Substance Use Disorder.

With funding provided by the Iowa Department of Human Services, the University of Iowa National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice is offering four hours of virtual learning and 2 hours of individual study each day for 1 week of free Peer Recovery Coach training.

The two training periods available are:

- May 23 - May 27, 2022, from 1 - 5pm CST
- June 27 - July 1, 2022, from 4 - 8pm CST

To learn more about the training, please click on this link: [CCAR](#)

To apply for this training, please click on this link: [IPWC](#)