

Health Alert

Increase in Suspected Drug Overdose Emergency

Department Visits

*Local Health Departments Should Monitor Encounters,
Activate Community Response Plan if Needed*

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and local public health agencies utilize Ohio's statewide syndromic surveillance system (EpiCenter) to detect, track and characterize health events. The system is used to track suspected drug overdose emergency department visits.

When the number of suspected drug overdose emergency department visits within a 24-hour period is higher than the predicted number based on historical data, EpiCenter issues an alert to the local health department for investigation.

Based on EpiCenter data, ODH has seen an increase in the number of patients presenting to emergency departments for suspected drug overdose in multiple counties across the state. Since May 1st, there have been fifteen suspected drug overdose anomalies detected in nine counties – Allen, Butler, Delaware, Franklin, Hamilton, Mahoning, Montgomery, Summit, and Trumbull.

The impact of social distancing orders and corresponding isolation may necessitate the need to identify innovative ways to distribute naloxone during COVID-19. Several local health departments have developed mail order sites to continue providing naloxone, a full list of Project DAWN programs can be found at www.odh.ohio.gov/projectdawn. Harm Reduction Ohio mails statewide and could serve as a resource for clients during COVID-19: <https://www.harmreductionohio.org/get-naloxone/>. Consider promoting the Crisis Text Line and the COVID CareLine. For the Crisis Text Line, any person coping with a stressful situation can text "4hope" to 741 741 to be connected with a trained Crisis Counselor. If someone needs emotional support, the [COVID CareLine](https://www.covidcareline.org/) can be reached by calling 1-800-720-9616. This line is staffed by trained professionals from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily and transfers to a national call center after 8 p.m. The staff are able to provide personalized consultation, screening, brief intervention, and referral to resources and support if needed.

Recommendations for Local Health Departments

1. Monitor emergency department visits and work with local health care partners to investigate and verify any suspected increases in drug overdose in ED settings. Where possible, assess for increases in 911 dispatches related to overdose and increases in the number of preliminary overdose deaths from coroners.
2. After confirmation, alert your local and state partners of the increases to activate an appropriate community response, including resource identification and allocation.
3. As warranted, implement your county immediate community response plan which encourages collaboration with community partners and [local ADAMH boards](#). ODH offers this template for counties that would like to develop a [community response plan](#).
4. Communicate with emergency department physicians and staff about appropriate services for immediate care and treatment for post-overdose patients to prevent future overdoses.
5. Communicate with emergency department physicians and staff about your local Project DAWN sites to ensure those leaving the hospital after an overdose are provided with a referral for naloxone.
6. If Local Health Departments need state assistance such as additional naloxone, please contact Jolene DeFiore-Hyrmer, Chief of the ODH Bureau of Health Improvement and Wellness, at Jolene.Dhyrmer@odh.ohio.gov.