



News Release

John R. Kasich/ Governor
Richard Hodges/ Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2015

Contact: Office of Communications (614) 644-8562

2013 Increase in Drug Overdose Deaths Underscores Importance of Current Life-Saving Initiatives Combatting Drug Abuse

COLUMBUS – Reflecting a continuing national trend, unintentional drug overdoses caused 2,110 deaths of Ohio residents in 2013. Records show there were about 196 more deaths in 2013 compared to 2012, according to a new report released by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). Opiates, which include heroin and prescription painkillers, were culpable in more than 70 percent of overdose deaths.

Heroin-related deaths increased in 2013, significantly surpassing prescription opiates among unintentional overdose deaths. Heroin overdose deaths rose from 697 in 2012 to 983 in 2013. Prescription opiates remained a significant contributor to drug overdose deaths, increasing from 680 in 2012 to 726 in 2013.

“Ohio is fighting drug abuse through many initiatives on several fronts at the state and local levels involving law enforcement, public health, addiction and treatment professionals, healthcare providers, educators, parents and many others,” said ODH Director Richard Hodges. “Many of these initiatives were launched in 2013 or later, and it will take some time for their full impact to be reflected in Ohio’s drug overdose deaths. We know that we’re doing the right things, but the data underscore the need to redouble our efforts.”

An initiative that has had an immediate impact is the expanded availability and use of naloxone, a life-saving drug that has the potential to reverse drug overdoses. In a Lorain County pilot for the year 2013, naloxone saved 63 lives. Naloxone was administered by Ohio EMS personnel 12,256 times in 2013 and 15,493 times in 2014.

Counties that experienced declines in drug overdose deaths from 2012 to 2013 included Lucas County (from 88 to 72) and Summit County (from 91 to 76).

“We know that both Lucas and Summit counties have taken a collaborative community approach to fighting drug abuse. There are lessons to be learned from their efforts,” said Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. “The Governor’s Cabinet Opiate Action Team will study these local approaches to provide a guide that other communities can use to replicate successful efforts.”

Key 2013 initiatives: The Governor’s Cabinet Opiate Action Team (GCOAT) introduced opioid prescribing guidelines for Ohio prescribers for safe management of chronic, non-terminal pain. ODH funded additional Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) sites, broadening the availability of this life-saving medication that has the potential to reverse drug overdoses; Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) state hospital facilities began distribution of naloxone. Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine established the Attorney General’s Heroin Unit, which assists local law enforcement in investigating and prosecuting upper-level drug traffickers in Ohio.

(MORE)

Key 2014 initiatives: The extension of Medicaid coverage in Ohio began, making addiction treatment services available to more individuals. Gov. Kasich announced *Start Talking!*, a new youth drug prevention initiative encouraging parents, educators and other trusted adults to have frequent, ongoing conversations with children about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. Gov. Kasich signed HB 170 into law, expanding the use of naloxone so that first responders can administer the drug, and allowing family and friends to get prescriptions for loved ones at risk of overdosing on opioids. The mid-biennial budget review (MBR) included funding for drug prevention, recovery housing, and drug courts. The Ohio Attorney General's Office launched Heroin Recognition and Investigation Training for law enforcement through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy, and developed an online training course for law enforcement and an educational video for the public regarding the administration of naloxone. The Ohio Highway Patrol reported that it seized more than 38,000 prescription pills and 14,150 grams of heroin in 2014.

Key 2015 initiatives: Gov. Kasich's proposed executive budget for the 2016-17 biennium includes investments in naloxone; calls for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and OhioMHAS to expand the availability of treatment within state prisons and upon release; and provides another \$5 million to expand the Addiction Treatment Pilot Project in additional drug courts. Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine negotiated an agreement with naloxone manufacturer Amphastar Pharmaceuticals Inc., regarding rebates for public entities that purchase Amphastar naloxone. If passed by the Ohio General Assembly, HB 4 will further expand the availability of naloxone by permitting pharmacists to dispense the drug without a prescription.

ODH's report on 2013 drug overdose deaths is available on its website at [2013 Ohio Drug Overdose Data: General Findings](#), or at "odh.ohio.gov" and select "Injury Prevention" from the A-Z Index. The number of drug overdose deaths by county also are available on the website or at [Unintentional Ohio Drug Overdose Death Rates by County](#). A timeline of key initiatives to combat the opiate crisis in Ohio is available at [Timeline – Fighting Opiate Crisis in Ohio 2013-2015](#).

###

Ohio's initiatives to fight opiate abuse include:

- 2015 (Projected): HB 4 (Sprague/Rezabek) will further expand access to naloxone by permitting pharmacists to dispense without a prescription this life-saving drug that has the potential to reverse drug overdoses.
- 2015: Gov. Kasich's proposed executive budget for the 2016-17 biennium includes investments in naloxone; calls for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to expand the availability of treatment within state prisons and upon release; and provides another \$5 million to expand the Addiction Treatment Pilot Project in additional drug courts.
- 2015: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine negotiates an agreement with naloxone manufacturer Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, Inc. regarding rebates for public entities that purchase Amphastar naloxone.
- 2015: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine's Overdose Prevention Task Force issues recommendations regarding uniform tracking of opiate overdose deaths.

(MORE)

- 2014-18: ODH begins funding local prescription drug overdose prevention projects in Cuyahoga County, Clermont County and the City of Portsmouth with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The projects include coalition development, healthcare prescriber education and healthcare system changes for safer prescribing practices.
- 2014-15: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine awards \$800,000 to Lucas County to develop a pilot program aimed at helping those suffering from heroin addiction get the assistance they need to move towards recovery. The University of Toledo will study and evaluate the effectiveness of the program for its potential use as a model for recovery in other communities across the state.
- 2014: Ohio Highway Patrol reports that it has seized more than 38,000 prescription pills and 14,150 grams of heroin in calendar year 2014.
- 2014: The Ohio Attorney General's Office develops an online training course for law enforcement and an educational video for the public regarding the administration of naloxone.
- 2014: Gov. Kasich signs HB 367 into law requiring school districts to provide education on prescription medication and opiate abuse.
- 2014: The Mid-Biennium Budget Review (MBR) includes funding for drug prevention (\$6.5 million), recovery housing (\$10 million), and drug courts (\$4.4 million).
- 2014: The Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team (GCOAT) announces an Addiction Treatment Pilot Project to provide Medication-Assisted Treatment to drug court participants in six counties.
- 2014: An analysis of data from the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS) shows a 40 percent reduction in the number of prescription opioids dispensed at rates equal to or greater than 80 mg Morphine Equivalent Daily Dose "trigger point" established by Ohio's opioid prescribing guidelines.
- 2014: The Ohio Attorney General's Office launches Heroin Recognition and Investigation Training for law enforcement through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy.
- 2014: OhioMHAS partners with Ohio Medicaid to launch the Maternal Opiate Medical Support (MOMS) pilot project to develop best practices for treating addicted mothers and for addressing neonatal abstinence syndrome among newborns.
- 2014: ODH releases results of the Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey that indicates a 50 percent decrease in the number of Ohio teens who used a prescription painkiller without a doctor's prescription.
- 2014: Gov. Kasich signs HB 170 into law, expanding the use of naloxone so that first responders can administer the drug, and allowing family and friends to get prescriptions for loved ones at risk of overdosing on opioids.
- 2014: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine awards more than \$500,000 to law enforcement in Allen County to combat the flow of heroin along I-75.
- 2014: Gov. Kasich announces *Start Talking!*, a new youth drug prevention initiative encouraging parents, educators and other trusted adults to have frequent, ongoing conversations with children about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs.
- 2014: Extension of Medicaid coverage in Ohio begins, making addiction treatment services available to more individuals.
- 2013: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine establishes the Attorney General's Heroin Unit, which assists local law enforcement in investigating and prosecuting upper-level drug traffickers in Ohio.

(MORE)

- 2013: ODH funds additional Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) sites in Ross, Stark and Hamilton Counties. Once implemented, these sites would join existing sites in Cuyahoga, Scioto and Montgomery counties. OhioMHAS state hospital facilities also begin distribution of naloxone.
- 2013: Gov. Kasich signs SB 57 into law establishing a one-year naloxone pilot project in Lorain County that permits first responders to administer naloxone.
- 2013: GCOAT introduces prescribing guidelines for Ohio's opioid prescribers for safe management of chronic, non-terminal pain.
- 2013: New Southern Ohio Addiction Treatment Center is established in Jackson County, addressing a gap in local services for individuals who are opioid-dependent.
- 2013: OhioMHAS receives a \$10 million federal grant to support implementation of a screening and wellness tool for physicians called SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment). SBIRT also becomes a billable service under Ohio Medicaid.
- 2013: A partnership with local law enforcement is strengthened by investing \$3 million through local jails to reduce recidivism.
- 2012: GCOAT rolls out opioid prescribing guidelines for emergency room and acute care facilities.
- 2012: The Mid-Biennium Budget Review (MBR) includes \$3 million for opiate addiction treatment.
- 2012: ODH provides seed funding for a pilot naloxone education and distribution program called Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) in Scioto County.
- 2012: Ohio Medicaid introduces coverage of Medication-Assisted Treatment services.
- 2012: Ohio hosts the first statewide Opiate Summit, drawing more than 1,000 addiction, criminal justice, policy and medical professionals.
- 2012: The Ohio Attorney General's Office, ODH, OhioMHAS and Drug Free Action Alliance launch the Ohio Prescription Drug Drop Box Program by providing secure disposal bins to more than 60 law enforcement agencies. In the first two years of the program, more than 12 tons of unwanted prescription drugs were collected and destroyed.
- 2011: Gov. Kasich signs HB 93 into law to shut down "pill mill" pain clinics helping fuel Ohio's opiate crisis.
- 2011: Gov. Kasich signs Executive Order authorizing the expanded use of Medication-Assisted Treatment (buprenorphine, vivitrol, methadone) in responding to the state's opiate crisis.
- 2011: Gov. Kasich announces the establishment of the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team (GCOAT) to fight opiate abuse in Ohio.