

Addressing Fentanyl in the Central East Region

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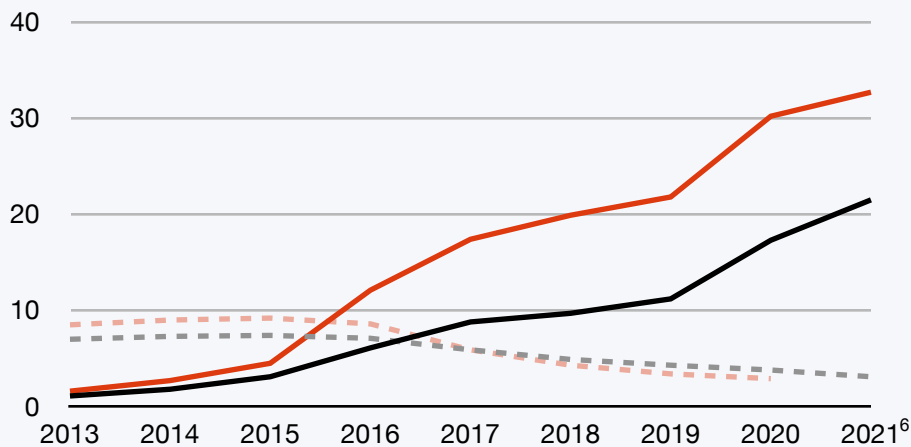
Fentanyl is a powerful opioid analgesic – up to 100 times more potent than morphine. Although it may be legally prescribed to manage extreme pain, illicit use has increased dramatically since 2014.¹ Some people knowingly use fentanyl illicitly, but many others unintentionally consume it. Fentanyl is frequently disguised as other opioids or mixed into other substances to inexpensively increase potency.² It is most commonly combined with heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine.

WHY WE NEED TO ADDRESS FENTANYL

Fentanyl plays an ever-growing role in the ongoing opioid epidemic. It is now involved in 93 percent of fatal opioid-involved overdoses and presents the same general health risks as other opioids.³ When fentanyl is mixed into non-opioids, there is an even greater risk of overdose, as the consumer may have no opioid tolerance. Fentanyl contamination has significantly contributed to the rise in stimulant-involved overdoses in recent years.⁴

THE RISE IN FATAL FENTANYL-INVOLVED OVERDOSES⁵

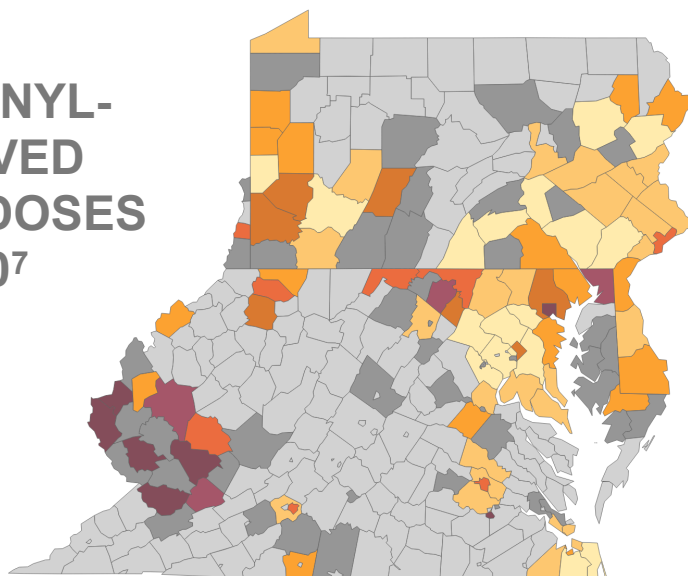
Fatal Opioid-Involved Overdoses Per 100,000 People



From 2013 to 2021, the share of opioid-involved fatal overdoses that included fentanyl increased from 15% to 93%

- National: Fentanyl-Involved
- - National: All Other Opioids Without Fentanyl Present
- Central East Region: Fentanyl-Involved
- - Central East Region: All Other Opioids Without Fentanyl Present

FATAL FENTANYL-INVOLVED OVERDOSES IN 2020⁷



- Data Missing
- Data Suppressed, Raw Deaths <10
- Data Unreliable, Raw Deaths 10 to 20
- 6 to 20 Deaths/100,000
- 20.1 to 30 Deaths/100,000
- 30.1 to 40 Deaths/100,000
- 40.1 to 50 Deaths/100,000
- 50.1 to 70 Deaths/100,000
- 70.1 to 100 Deaths/100,000
- 100.1 to 147.8 Deaths/100,000



WHAT PREVENTION & ADDICTION PROFESSIONALS CAN DO

Prevention and treatment play a critical role in working to reduce fentanyl use and the risk of overdose. These effective, evidence-based strategies can be adapted to fit community needs and capacity:

Ensure Access to Naloxone

Naloxone is an opioid overdose reversal medication that can be administered by first responders or laypersons.⁸ When distributed to laypersons, naloxone is usually paired with information on how to identify and respond to an overdose. Many naloxone distribution models exist, depending on community needs. More information on naloxone administration can be found in SAMHSA's [Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#).

Continue Implementing Effective Prevention Services

Effective prevention programs can stop substance use before it starts—including fentanyl use. Evidence-based prevention strategies range from behavioral interventions that change attitudes towards drug use to environmental strategies that address social determinants of health. More information on effective prevention services is available through SAMHSA's [Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#).

Raise Awareness of Unintentional Fentanyl Use

Up to two-thirds of people who test positive for fentanyl did not use it intentionally.⁹ Public messaging and marketing campaigns can educate consumers about the potential for accidental use. In many states, prevention organizations can provide access to fentanyl test strips, which allow consumers to test substances for fentanyl. More information on using fentanyl test strips and the federal government's efforts to expand access to them can be found through the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Collaborate Across the Behavioral Health Continuum

Services provided across the behavioral health continuum can reduce the risk of fentanyl overdose by reducing the likelihood of use.¹⁰ These include providing medication for opioid use disorder, offering peer support services, addressing co-occurring mental health disorders, and delivering other treatment and recovery services. More information on these services and opportunities for collaboration is available through HHS' [Overdose Prevention Strategy](#).

Support Other Harm Reduction Strategies

Behavioral health organizations can encourage the use of a variety of other harm reduction strategies, such as syringe exchange programs, safe injection sites, and Good Samaritan laws. Behavioral health professionals must first determine what is permissible in their state, as laws differ. More information on these harm reduction strategies is available through the [National Harm Reduction Technical Assistance Center](#).

Collaborate with Other Health Providers & Community Organizations

People at-risk for fentanyl use and overdose interact with many service providers and organizations, including primary care providers, hospital systems, social welfare organizations, and criminal justice agencies.^{11,12} Behavioral health professionals can work with these entities to address substance use through improved coordination and service delivery. More information on these opportunities is available through SAMHSA's [Center of Excellence for Integrated Health Solutions](#) and NIH's [Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network](#).

NOTES

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse (2021). Fentanyl Drug Facts. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl>
2. U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (2020). Drug Fact Sheet: Fentanyl. https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Fentanyl-2020_0.pdf
3. National Institute on Drug Abuse (2021). Fentanyl Drug Facts. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). Other Drugs <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/other-drugs.html>
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). WONDER Multiple Cause of Death. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd.html>
6. Data for 2021 is still provisional and only limited analysis of sub-national data is possible
7. IBID.
8. National Institute on Drug Abuse (2022). Naloxone Drug Facts. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/naloxone>
9. Kenney, S. et al (2018). Expected and Actual Fentanyl Exposure Among Persons Seeking Opioid Withdrawal Management. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 86, 65-69
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/featured-topics/evidence-based-strategies.html>
11. IBID.
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). Partnerships Between Public Health and Public Safety. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/strategies/public-safety.html>