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D.C. Update: Rising rates of methamphetamine seizures and overdoses, OIG releases report on State response to opioid crisis, and more



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News from the States

Kentucky sees decline in drug overdose deaths

The Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy released a [report](#) showing that for the first time in five years fatal drug overdoses decreased. According to the report, Kentucky had 233 fewer overdose fatalities, a 15% decrease from 2017. Efforts to reduce drug-related mortality have included the establishment of the KY Help Call Center, designed to increase access to information on available treatment options; increased State funding dedicated to addiction; legislation limiting opioid prescriptions to a three-day supply; and securing an \$87 million grant to fund a study that seeks to reduce opioid overdose deaths. Van Ingram, executive director of the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy stated, "We still have a great deal of work to do, but it's clear that Kentucky's efforts are making an impact." The State alcohol and drug agency director for Kentucky is Koleen Slusher, Director of the Behavioral Health Division within the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities.

Around the Agencies

CDC data finds rates of opioid overdose deaths increasing in urban areas

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a [data brief](#) indicating a shift in trends of drug overdose deaths. Using data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), the CDC found that for the first time in several years the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths was higher in urban than in rural counties. Specifically, overdose deaths involving heroin, synthetic opioids, and cocaine were higher in urban areas. According to the brief, this shift

is the result of an increasing prevalence of heroin and synthetic narcotics like fentanyl into urban cities. It was also noted that “preliminary data and projections by experts do not indicate that the epidemic will ‘shift back rural’ for the foreseeable future.”

[HRSA announces nearly \\$400 million in grants to expand integrated SUD and MH services](#)

Earlier today, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced nearly [\\$400 million in grants](#) to community health centers, rural organizations and academic institutions to establish and expand access to integrated substance use disorder and mental health services. HRSA is awarding more than \$200 million to 1,208 health centers to increase access to substance use and mental health services through the Integrated Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) program. HRSA’s Federal Office of Rural Health Policy is awarding more than \$111 million to 96 rural organizations across 37 states as part of its Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) initiative. Additionally, HRSA is awarding \$70 million to Opioid Workforce Expansion Programs (OWEP) for Professionals and Paraprofessionals to fund 64 grantees and \$17 million to Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program to fund 49 grantees.

[OIG releases report on State response to opioid crisis](#)

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently released a [report](#) titled, “Oversight of Opioid Prescribing and Monitoring of Opioid Use: States Have Taken Action to Address the Opioid Epidemic”. The OIG analyzed data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and selected eight States for review, culminating in State-specific factsheets. The review identified actions that selected States took related to oversight and monitoring of opioid use in the following categories: policies and procedures, data analytics, outreach, programs, and other actions not covered by the previous categories. The OIG found that the selected States had taken actions in every category to address opioid misuse and concluded that no recommendations were needed. The selected States were Washington, Nevada, Utah, Nebraska, Texas, Tennessee, West Virginia, and New Hampshire.

[In the News](#)

[Methamphetamine seizures and overdose rates rising in the U.S.](#)

According data provided by the National Emerging Threats Initiative, a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, to National Public Radio (NPR), methamphetamine seizures have seen a significant increase, rising 142% between 2017 and 2018. An [NPR article](#) notes that historically methamphetamine was not widely available in every region of the country, however recent data shows seizures increasing in nearly every State. Overdose deaths involving methamphetamine and other psychostimulants are also increasing and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rose by 21% from 2017 to 2018. John Eadie, public health coordinator for the National Emerging Threats Initiative, noted that the HIDTAs also show increases in prescribed stimulants and stated, “We’re seeing almost as many people starting up methamphetamines and cocaine and prescription stimulants as are abusing the opioids. So the problem is getting worse at the moment, and it’s getting more complicated to deal with.”

[NAMSDL releases updated model drug laws on warm hand-offs, naloxone](#)

The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL) announced the [release](#) of two updated model laws related to warm hand-offs and naloxone access. The Model Act Providing for the Warm Hand-off of Overdose Survivors to Treatment includes language to “ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to have overdose survivors medically stabilized and then directly transferred to appropriate substance use disorder treatment.” The Model Universal Access to

Naloxone Act would require the creation of a standing order for the dispensing and distribution of naloxone and the co-prescribing of naloxone in conjunction with opioid prescriptions.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming training on assessing and managing suicide for SUD treatment professionals

The Zero Suicide Institute at the Education Development Center (EDC) is offering a new training: [Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Professionals](#). This training better equips providers with the knowledge and skills to work with clients at risk for suicide in a safe and effective manner. The training is being held in Waltham, MA from October 30, 2019—November 1, 2019. For more information click [here](#).

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