

Prescription Drug Abuse Epidemic Fact Sheet

Overdose deaths:

- Opioids – both prescription opioids and heroin – killed more than 33,000 people in 2015, more than any year on record. Nearly half of all opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 33,000 people died from opiate overdoses in 2015, a record. Opioids now kill more people than car accidents, and in 2015 the number of heroin deaths nationwide surpassed the number of deaths from gun homicides.
- More than 183,000 people died in the US from overdoses related to prescription opioids from between 1999 and 2015.
- Since 1999, we've lost almost 200,000 Americans to prescription opioid abuse.

Opioid use and lack of treatment:

- 2.1 million Americans abuse or are dependent on opioids.
- According to the CDC, 3 out of 4 new heroin users abused prescription opioids before moving to heroin.
- Heroin use has more than doubled among young adults ages 18–25 in the past decade. 45% of people who used heroin were also addicted to prescription opioid painkillers.
- Between 2009 and 2013, only 22% of Americans suffering from opioid addiction participated in any form of addiction treatment.
- In West Virginia, 44.7% of medication-assisted treatment is paid for by Medicaid.
- Amid the current opioid crisis, Medicaid has also given access to addiction treatment to more than 20,000 West Virginians.
- Nearly 1.3 million people receive treatment for mental-health and substance abuse disorders under the Medicaid expansion, according to an estimate by health care economists Richard G. Frank of the Harvard Medical School and Sherry Glied of New York University.

Too many opioids:

- The United States makes up only 4.6 percent of the world's population, but consumes 80 percent of its opioids.
- In 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for painkillers, enough for every American to have a bottle of pills.
- The amount of prescription opioids sold in the US has nearly quadrupled since 1999 without a reported increase in pain. At the same time overdose deaths involving opioids have also quadrupled since 1999. Opioid prescribing is *clearly* driving opioid overdose deaths.

Economic costs:

- Misuse and abuse of opioids cost the country an estimated \$78.5 billion in 2013 in lost productivity, medical costs and criminal justice costs.

Opioids in West Virginia:

- West Virginia has highest drug overdose death rate in the nation. West Virginia reported 818 overdose deaths in 2016 – four times the number that occurred in 2001 and a nearly 13% increase over 2015. Of those who died, 86% had taken at least one opioid – that's more than 700 West Virginians dying from an opioid overdose last year.
- 61,000 West Virginians used prescription pain medications for non-medical purposes in 2014. This includes 6,000 teenagers.
- 42,000 people in West Virginia – including 4,000 youth – sought treatment for illegal drug use but failed to receive it.
- Drug wholesalers shipped 780 million hydrocodone and oxycodone painkillers into West Virginia between 2007 and 2012. That's 433 pain pills for every person in West Virginia – including children.
- In that same time period, 1728 West Virginians died due to an overdose on those two drugs.

Indigent Burial Program:

- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) operated a program to provide burial assistance for needy families. The program is budgeted \$2 million a year and offers an average of \$1,250 to help cover funeral expenses for families who can't otherwise afford them.
- According to a DHHR spokesman, 1,508 burials have been submitted for payment through the Indigent Burial Program but there are only funds remaining for 63.
- Funeral directors blame the spike in drug overdose deaths for the financial troubles.