



Overdose Mortality Rate in Delaware

Olivia Massar & Caroline Berner



Delaware has the second highest overdose mortality rate in the United States.

From 2000 to 2019, the rate of overdose deaths in Delaware has increased from 6.7 per every 100,000 people to 48.4 per every 100,000 in 2019. Synthetic opioids are the greatest offender, with 39 out of the 48 deaths per every 100,000 people in 2019 due to synthetic opioids, followed by cocaine, heroin, and natural opioids.

2017 DELAWARE RESIDENT DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS

Count: 343

Age-Adjusted Rate: 37.0 per 100,000 population

Crude Rate: 35.4 per 100,000 population

84.0% are opioid-related deaths.

80.5% interacted with Delaware health systems within a year of death.

New Castle County

Count: 238

Age-Adjusted Rate: 42.7 per 100,000 population

Crude Rate: 42.2 per 100,000 population

84.0% are opioid-related deaths.

80.3% interacted with Delaware health systems within a year of death.

Kent County

Count: 40

Age-Adjusted Rate: 22.3 per 100,000 population

Crude Rate: 22.1 per 100,000 population

82.5% are opioid-related deaths.

82.5% interacted with Delaware health systems within a year of death.

Sussex County

Count: 64

Age-Adjusted Rate: 34.1 per 100,000 population

Crude Rate: 28.7 per 100,000 population

84.4% are opioid-related deaths.

79.7% interacted with Delaware health systems within a year of death.

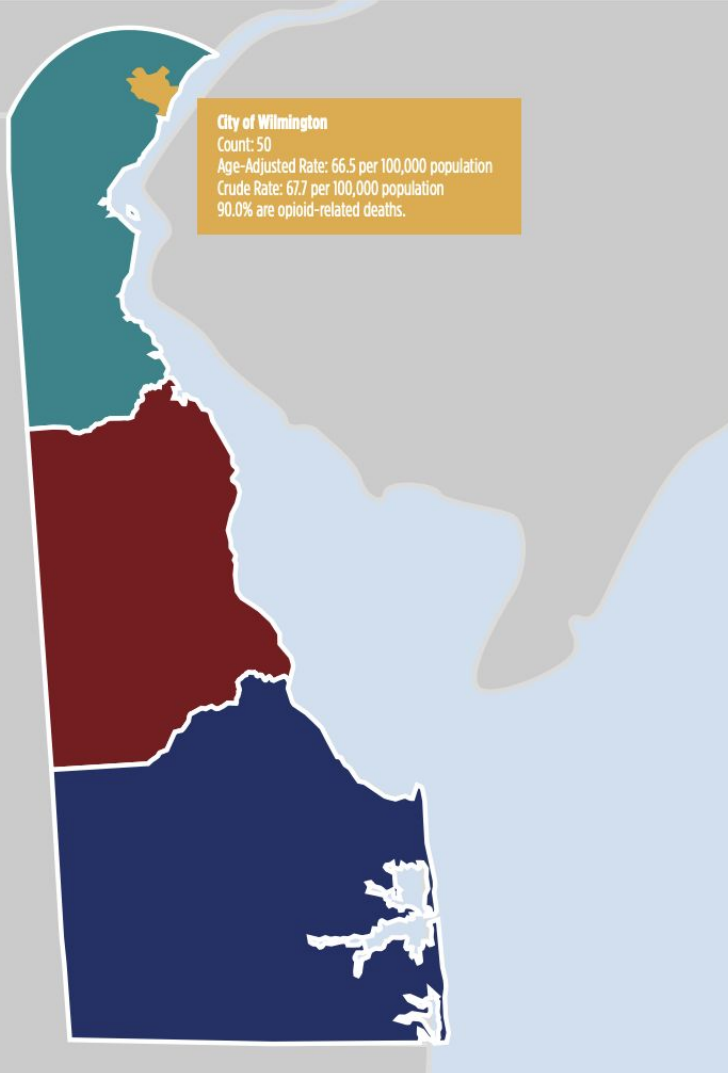
City of Wilmington

Count: 50

Age-Adjusted Rate: 66.5 per 100,000 population

Crude Rate: 67.7 per 100,000 population

90.0% are opioid-related deaths.





Background

- Title 16 of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act, a drug possession charge can be a misdemeanor or a felony
 - Attorney's fees, court costs, fines, fees, and a possible jail sentence.
- Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) created by the Delaware Prescription Monitoring Act, introduced on March 30th, 2017.
 - Office of Controlled Substances (OCS) to establish, maintain, and monitor the PMP
- Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) provides public drug and alcohol treatment services for adults, including screening, evaluation, outpatient counseling, opioid treatment, continuous treatment team programs, less intensive case management services, detoxification, and residential services.
 - Open Door, Inc., PACE, INC., and Brandywine Counseling & Community Center.
- Delaware, along with a bipartisan group of 12 attorneys, reached a \$26 billion settlement with some pharmaceutical companies saying that they caused and continued America's opioid epidemic
 - Johnson & Johnson, Cardinal Health, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen.

Background

- The laws prohibiting possession of drugs do not properly dissuade residents from obtaining these drugs illegally, which they are able to do due to their ability to travel to nearby cities such as Philadelphia or Baltimore
- Delaware PMP
 - Controlled substances and drugs of concern are excluded from reporting in situations where licensed health care facility pharmacies dispense drugs for inpatient care, emergency departments dispense drugs for immediate use, and when any Delaware-licensed pharmacy dispenses up to a 72 hour supply of drugs at the time of a patient's discharge from emergency department care.
 - When a Delaware resident travels to a pharmacy outside of Delaware and physically picks up prescriptions there, there is no reporting to the Delaware PMP because the prescription is not dispensed in Delaware.
- Reactive services

Causes & Consequences

CAUSES

- Easy to obtain drugs
- Little prescription regulations
- Spread of drugs from nearby cities
- Difficulty accessing overdose saving drugs
- Misleading advertising and information regarding addictive drugs from pharmaceutical companies
- Mental health disorders associated with substance abuse

CONSEQUENCES

- Increase of other types of infections
- Increase of other types of crimes
- Financial burden on the healthcare system
- Labor burden on the healthcare system and rehab centers
- Poverty
- Unemployment

Alternative: Narcan

- Ensure all police officers carry Narcan
- Narcan is the more commonly known term for naloxone, an overdose-reversing drug.
- Prior to 2016 only six of the 47 departments that make up Delaware's police force carried the drug and all six reported using it to save numerous lives.
- In 2016, \$50,000 from the state's Special Law Enforcement Assistance Fund went towards supplying a total of 23 departments with Narcan.
- Less than half of Delaware's police still do not carry it.



Alternative: Safe Injection Sites

- Create safe injection sites where substance users can safely gain access to life saving materials and programs
- Staff each site with medical professionals (nurses, health care workers, etc.) trained to deal with substance abuse and to supervise safe substance use
- Provide each site with Narcan, Fentanyl Test Strips, Sterile Hypodermic Needles, etc.
- Safe Injection Sites discourage some of the most harmful drug use habits.
- Although the United States currently does not have any formal safe injection sites, there are many in Western Europe and Canada.
- Several studies have pointed towards the effectiveness of this policy alternative. In fact, a report from the University of Delaware Center for Drug and Health Studies found that Safe Injection Sites “reduce needle sharing and other drug related harms as well as overdose deaths, emergency calls, and hospital costs related to drug overdoses” (“Epidemiological”, 2018).



Alternative: PMP

- Improvement of prescription monitoring program
- Expanding their coverage and requiring all doctors to register with the program.
- Must include Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware in order to properly track prescription disbursement.
- Prescription monitoring programs have been found to reduce prescription fraud, doctor shopping, and improper prescribing and dispensing (“Briefing on PDMP Effectiveness”, 2014).
 - Reducing the burden on the healthcare system
 - More informed decisions in regards to dispersing prescriptions
 - 61% prescribed no narcotics or fewer than planned, while 39% prescribed more
 - Assistance in substance abuse treatment

Questions

- What other policies could be proposed to reduce the overdose mortality rate?
- Which alternative do you think is the most politically feasible?
- Did you know this was such a large issue concerning the state of Delaware?
- How likely do you think states like Pennsylvania and Maryland would be to participate in a collaborative PMP program?
- As a citizen, would you take complete training and carry Narcan with you?