



Andy Beshear
GOVERNOR

KENTUCKY JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY CABINET

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Kentucky's Fight in the Battle Against Drug Overdose Deaths *The 2019 Overdose Fatality Report Now Available*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (August 10, 2020) – A report released today by the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy indicates lethal overdoses among Kentucky residents totaled 1,316 in 2019. Unfortunately, this data indicates a five percent increase of drug overdose deaths since 2018. According to resident cases autopsied by the Kentucky Office of the Medical Examiner and toxicology reports submitted by Kentucky coroners, the increase in the death toll is driven mostly by a rise in opioid abuse, fentanyl and fentanyl analogues.

“I share the concerns of so many that in this battle against COVID-19, which we must fight and must win, we cannot take our eyes off the increased risk of substance use and overdose deaths. I’m committed, with the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, to monitor the trends associated with opioid and substance use and their impact on the public’s health,” Gov. Andy Beshear said. “Awareness is key to survival during most medical emergencies and, as I have seen firsthand, it is certainly true in the case of a drug overdose. If you find a loved one that has overdosed or even a complete stranger, knowing how to react may mean the difference between life and death.”

For a video from Gov. Beshear on available treatment and resources, and the importance of knowing how to respond to an overdose, [click here](#).

The largest number of Kentuckians who have died as a result of drug overdoses in one year remains 1,566, an all-time high reached in 2017. After a fifteen percent decline in 2018 with a death total of 1,247, 2019 resulted in an increase of 69 additional deaths from the previous year.

“We believe the increase is due to a rise in illicit fentanyl and its analogs within the drug supply. The problem is also exacerbated by the widespread availability of potent

inexpensive methamphetamine,” said Van Ingram, Executive Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP).

Providing access to treatment to save lives

“There is no doubt that the nationwide opioid crisis is hitting Kentucky at an alarming rate,” said Mary Noble, Secretary of the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet. “Every life saved from substance abuse and opioid death is a life worth fighting for. I commend Governor Beshear on making it a priority to fight the opioid epidemic and ask for continued support at both the federal and state levels, as it is needed now more than ever.”

ODCP remains committed to changing the way substance abuse is handled in Kentucky, reducing the problem and making the Commonwealth a model for other states. ODCP has joined forces with a variety of organizations; such as, prevention/education, treatment and law enforcement in a united effort to confront this epidemic.

“As our state plans for the future, the success of our initiatives depends on the involvement and support of grassroots coalitions, local and state agencies, as well as community and faith-based organizations throughout Kentucky,” said Ingram.

ODCP has continued to work diligently with several agencies throughout the Commonwealth to increase the distribution of naloxone to those fighting an addiction. To access naloxone or for more resources on how to respond to an overdose, [click here](#).

In 2017, the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet partnered with Operation UNITE to create the KY Help Call Center, which provides information on treatment options and open slots among treatment providers. Those with a substance use disorder – or their friends or family members – may call 1-833-8KY-HELP (1-833- 859-4357) and speak one-on-one to a specialist who will connect them with treatment as quickly as possible.

In 2018, Kentucky State Police launched the Angel Initiative, which continues to be a vital resource today. Anyone suffering from a substance use disorder can visit a KSP post and be paired with a local officer who will assist with locating an appropriate treatment program.

ODCP also joined with the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC) at the University of Kentucky College of Public Health, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Justice and Public Safety to create www.findhelpnowky.org, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The website provides a vital link for Kentucky health care providers, court officials, families and individuals seeking options for substance abuse treatment and recovery. It offers real-time information about available space

in treatment programs, and guides users to the right type of treatment for their needs. The site provides a search engine for drug treatment, helping users locate treatment providers based on location, facility type and category of treatment needed.

KIPRC, with support from the CDC, launched the Drug Overdose Technical Assistance Core (DOTAC) to support local health departments, community coalitions and state and local agencies in their efforts to address substance misuse, abuse and overdose. DOTAC's goal is to support and enhance local agencies' and community organizations' access to timely local data and analytical results on controlled substance prescribing, drug related morbidity and mortality trends. For more information on the available data, analytical and community services, [click here](#).

Meanwhile, the Kentucky Department of Corrections (DOC) has undertaken a comprehensive overhaul of the department's substance abuse programming. This effort has expanded the system to include every possible treatment modality available, offering additional tools and options for clinicians and inmates. DOC has worked hard over the last year to provide services both inside and outside prison walls, and continues to provide dedicated treatment staff at Probation and Parole offices.

2019 Overdose Fatality Report

The 2019 Overdose Fatality Report was compiled with data from the Kentucky Office of the Medical Examiner, the Kentucky Injury Prevention & Research Center and the Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics. The report includes overview of the 2019 key findings and data regarding deaths by counties, age, drug and toxicology testing.

To download a copy of the report, [click here](#).

***Note:** ODCP has changed its reporting methodology this year to focus on Kentucky residents who died from overdoses. This will make comparisons with CDC data more useful.*