Issue brief: National Snapshot of Overdose Epidemic

*Updated June 26, 2023*

The nation’s drug overdose and death epidemic continues to worsen. The epidemic affects every state and continues to be driven by illicitly manufactured fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine, often in combination or in adulterated forms. More than 105,000 deaths were reported in the United States between December 2021 to December 2022. The AMA continues to urge policymakers’ action to increase access to evidence-based care for substance use disorders, pain and harm reduction measures. The news articles, state health department reports and other information below cite data from multiple and varied sources, including national, state and local public health agencies, law enforcement, emergency medical services, hospitals, treatment centers, and journals. Relevant AMA advocacy, resources and recommendations to end the epidemic also are below.

- **Recommendations from the AMA Substance Use and Pain Care Task Force** and **AMA 2022 Overdose Epidemic national report** Updated recommendations that highlight physicians’ actions as well as additional steps that must be taken to have a meaningful impact on reducing drug-related mortality and improving patient outcomes.

- **AMA-Manatt Health 2022 state policy toolkit** provides more than 400 specific laws, regulations, policy guidance and other actions being implemented to help reduce mortality and improve outcomes. The toolkit builds on the 2020 **AMA-Manatt Health national policy roadmap** use of best practices to increase access to evidence-based care for mental illness, substance use disorders, comprehensive pain care and harm reduction initiatives.

- **The Fight to End the Nation’s Overdose Epidemic and Restore Compassionate Care: Profiles in Leadership** profiles the work of more than 25 practicing physicians, policymakers, researchers and advocates working daily to reduce drug-related mortality and improve patient outcomes. December 2022.

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on November 4, 2022, released its **CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain—United States, 2022**, which CDC said “updates and replaces” the 2016 guideline. The CDC makes clear in its revision that the updated guideline “is meant to be a flexible clinical tool and should not be used as a rigid standard of care or one-size-fits-all policy or law.” The AMA urges all states, payers, pharmacy chains and others to review, revise and rescind any laws or policies based on the 2016 guideline.

- **The AMA continues to urge Congress** to hold health plans accountable for nearly 15 years of failures in complying with the 2008 Mental Health Parity And Equity Addiction Act. Also see **AMA comments on Biden Administration’s National Drug Control Strategy**.

- **AMA issue brief on What medical societies can do to help end the nation’s drug overdose and death epidemic**. This includes removing prior authorization for treatment for substance use disorders, enforcing parity laws; promoting harm reduction; and focusing opioid litigation funds on evidence-based initiatives.

See below for national news and other reports from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org

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**National reports**
(State-by-state reports begin on page 11 below)

- Pharmacy Availability of Buprenorphine for Opioid Use Disorder Treatment in the US. Research Letter. [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2805329](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2805329) May 26, 2023
- Experts slam plan to sell overdose antidote Narcan at about $50 a kit. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/04/20/narcan-price-over-the-counter/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/04/20/narcan-price-over-the-counter/) April 20, 2023
- In rural America, deadly costs of opioids outweigh the dollars tagged to address them. https://www.kunc.org/health/2022-12-14/in-rural-america-deadly-costs-of-opioids-outweigh-the-dollars-tagged-to-address-them December 14, 2022
- Schools stockpile medication to combat rise in fentanyl overdoses. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/schools-stockpile-medication-to-combat-rise-in-fentanyl-overdoses December 6, 2022
- New research finds racial disparity in use and access to medications for opioid use disorder. https://www.rti.org/news/new-research-finds-racial-disparity-use-and-access-medications-opioid-use-disorder November 29, 2022
- FDA warns about the risk of xylazine exposure. November 8, 2022. [https://www.fda.gov/media/162981/download](https://www.fda.gov/media/162981/download)
- Meth use is driving overdose epidemic in rural America—not opioids. [https://studyfinds.org/meth-overdose-epidemic-rural](https://studyfinds.org/meth-overdose-epidemic-rural) August 15, 2022
- The college checklist: Bedding, reading lamp and fentanyl test strips?


Tribal leaders sound the alarm after fentanyl overdoses spike at Blackfeet Nation. [https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/06/01/1101799174/tribal-leaders-sound-the-alarm-after-fentanyl-overdoses-spike-at-blackfeet-natio](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/06/01/1101799174/tribal-leaders-sound-the-alarm-after-fentanyl-overdoses-spike-at-blackfeet-natio) June 1, 2022

Opioid abuse treatments don’t reach those most at risk. [https://www.axios.com/2022/05/12/opioid-abuse-treatments-overdose-deaths](https://www.axios.com/2022/05/12/opioid-abuse-treatments-overdose-deaths) May 12, 2022


HHS needs to step up so CDC’s new guidelines won’t be a bridge to nowhere for most Americans living with chronic pain. [https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/29/cdc-guidelines-bridge-to-nowhere-chronic-pain-patients/](https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/29/cdc-guidelines-bridge-to-nowhere-chronic-pain-patients/) April 29, 2022

Drug overdose deaths are at a record high. Here’s what the White House plans to do. [https://www.npr.org/2022/04/21/1093974276/drug-overdose-deaths-opiod-fentanyl](https://www.npr.org/2022/04/21/1093974276/drug-overdose-deaths-opiod-fentanyl) April 21, 2022


Covid-19: US sees increase in sexually transmitted diseases and teen drug overdose deaths. [https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o991](https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o991) April 19, 2022

Treatment for opioid addiction often brings discrimination. [https://www.wizmnews.com/2022/04/16/treatment-for-opioiaddiction-often-brings-discrimination/](https://www.wizmnews.com/2022/04/16/treatment-for-opioiaddiction-often-brings-discrimination/) April 16, 2022


The future of Overdose Prevention Centers—With two U.S. centers now open, will the Biden administration intervene or look away? https://www.medpagetoday.com/psychiatry/addictions/96468 January 1, 2022


To save lives, overdose antidote should be sold over-the-counter, advocates argue. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/12/14/1063865914/to-save-lives-overdose-antidote-should-be-sold-over-the-counter-advocates-argue December 14, 2021


Overdose deaths are so high that the Biden team is embracing ideas once seen as taboo. https://www.npr.org/2021/10/27/1049245787/biden-hhs-tackle-drug-overdose-deaths October 27, 2021


Patients on high doses of opioid analgesics risk overdose when tapering study finds. https://www.pharmacist.com/Pharmacy-News/patients-on-high-doses-of-opioid-analgesics-risk-overdose-when-tapering-study-finds August 26, 2021

As opioid epidemic rages, an overdose antidote is in short supply; Pfizer says manufacturing issue led to problems producing injectable Narcan. https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/08/02/metro/opioid-epidemic-rages-an-overdose-antidote-is-short-supply-ri/ August 2, 2021


Drug overdose deaths in 2020 hit highest number ever recorded, CDC data shows.
- In pandemic, drug overdose deaths soar among Black Americans. 
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- Opinion. If Lawmakers Really Want to “Follow the Science” They Will Repeal Codified Opioid Guidelines. 
- Chronic pain can be burdensome. Isolation during the pandemic can make it worse. 
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- One in five pharmacies blocks access to key medication to treat addiction. 
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- Overdose Deaths Surged in Pandemic, As More Drugs Were Laced With Fentanyl. 
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- The Health 202: Overdose deaths may have topped 90,000 in 2020. 
  https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/04/07/health-202-overdose-deaths-may-have-topped-90000-2020/ April 7, 2021
- The Spike in Drug Overdose Deaths During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Policy Options to Move Forward. 
- Latinos grapple with opioid overdose rise as pandemic triggers surge in U.S. use. 
- House reshapes approach to mental health and addiction. 
  https://www.rollcall.com/2021/03/16/house-reshapes-approach-to-mental-health-and-addiction/ March 16, 2021
- In Birth and Death, Opioid Crisis to Leave Mark Long After Covid. 
- As the pandemic ushered in isolation and financial hardship, overdose deaths reached new heights. 
- As Addiction Deaths Surge, Profit-Driven Rehab Industry Faces ‘Severe Ethical Crisis’ 
- As Overdose Deaths Surge, White House Takes Steps To Build Drug Policy Team. 
• 81,230 overdoses set record for such deaths in a 12-month period, CDC says. https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/81230-overdoses-set-record-for-such-deaths-in-a-12-month-period-cdc-says/2021/01/22/a8b29e7a-5c06-11eb-a976-bad6431e03e2_story.html January 25, 2021


• The Opioid Crisis, Already Serious, Has Intensified During Coronavirus Pandemic. https://www.wsi.com/articles/the-opioid-crisis-already-serious-has-intensified-during-coronavirus-pandemic-11599557401 September 8, 2020


• High Rate of Stimulant Use in Opioid ED Cases. [https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/933527] July 7, 2020


• ‘Cries for help’: Drug overdoses are soaring during the coronavirus pandemic. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/07/01/coronavirus-drug-overdose/] July 1, 2020

• Expanded Telehealth Helps Communities Address Opioid Use Disorder During Pandemic; Practitioners see benefits for patients and providers, especially in rural areas.* [https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2020/07/01/expanded-telehealth-helps-communities-address-opioid-use-disorder-during-pandemic] July 1, 2020


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• Drug overdoses climb during COVID-19 pandemic; Officials nationwide report spikes less than a year after the Trump administration touted progress in battling the crisis. [https://www.rollcall.com/2020/05/27/drug-overdoses-climb-during-covid-19-pandemic/] May 27, 2020

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   - “Odds Are Alabama” Shines Light on Dangers of Fentanyl. https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/blog/2023/03/nr-fentanyl.html March 16, 2023
   - Anniston police investigating several likely fentanyl overdoses. https://www.wbrc.com/2022/04/02/anniston-police-investigating-several-likely-fentanyl-overdoses/ April 1, 2022
   - Overdose deaths are up 31.3% in Alabama. https://whnt.com/news/overdose-deaths-are-up-31-3-in-alabama/ May 21, 2021
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2. Alaska
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• How Alaska became one of fentanyl’s deadliest frontiers. [https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-alaska-overdoses-native-population-law-enforcement-addiction/] March 1, 2023
• Report details Alaska demographics hurt most by 2021 spike in drug overdose deaths. [https://alaskapublic.org/2022/08/01/report-details-alaska-demographics-hurt-most-by-2021-spike-in-drug-overdose-deaths/] August 1, 2022
• Governor Dunleavy Addresses Fentanyl Crisis in Alaska. [https://gov.alaska.gov/newsroom/2022/05/03/governor-dunleavy-addresses-fentanyl-crisis-in-alaska/] May 3, 2022
• Juneau fire department is distributing opioid overdose rescue kits. [https://www.ktoon.org/2022/04/18/juneau-narcan-opiod-overdose-kits/] April 18, 2022
• Alaska reports increase in drug-related overdoses. [https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/alaska-reports-increase-in-drug-related-overdoses/] May 22, 2021
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• Overdose inside Arizona prison points to larger problem, concern for state leaders. [https://ktar.com/story/5476053/overdose-inside-arizona-prison-points-to-larger-problem-concern-for-state-leaders/] March 28, 2023
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• Proposal that would make fentanyl deaths first-degree murder moves forward. [https://www.azcapitol.com/blog/gop-proposal-that-would-make-a-fentanyl-deaths-first-degree-murder-moves-forward/] March 7, 2023
• As cartels turn to social media to push fentanyl, experts teach parents how to keep kids safe. [https://news.azpm.org/p/news/2022/12/3/213986-as-cartels-turn-to-social-media-to-push-fentanyl-experts-teach-parents-how-to-keep-kids-safe/] December 3, 2022
• New report shows opioid deaths increased despite state initiatives.

- ‘We can’t tell how much is manufactured’: How much fentanyl is not getting seized in Arizona? https://www.12news.com/article/news/local/arizona/over-half-of-the-nations-fentanyl-pills-are-seized-in-arizona/75-9574d508-6cb2-47e7-b4a4-171f2a74007b August 5, 2022
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5. California

- **Drug Overdoses Driven by Fentanyl Have Gotten Worse in California.**

- **Fentanyl overdoses contribute to surge in L.A. County homeless deaths.**

- **California health officials call tranq ‘emerging issue’ as feds warn of deadly mix with fentanyl.**

- **New street drug is surfacing, threatening to make California’s overdose crisis worse.**

- **LASD task force predicts fentanyl will be “number one” cause of overdose deaths in coming years.**

- **Rainbow Fentanyl Alert.**
  [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Rainbow-Fentanyl-Alert.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Rainbow-Fentanyl-Alert.aspx) September 21, 2022

- **‘We Have To Teach Them To Stay Safe’—High Schooler Dies From Fentanyl Overdose Amid Rise in Drug Deaths.**

- **California governor rejects legal drug injection sites.**

- **Northern California officials warn about ‘rainbow’ fentanyl going around.**
• Quelling the ‘stigma of shame’: The county’s top doctor opens up about the pain of losing a child to fentanyl. [Link](https://lookout.co/santacruz/coast-life/story/2022-04-27/gail-newel-countys-top-doctor-opens-up-about-pain-of-losing-child-to-fentanyl) April 27, 2022
• More than 92 pounds of fentanyl seized in California. [Link](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-california-92-pounds-seized/) April 23, 2022
• San Francisco’s new rapid response teams race to save lives as ODs dramatically rise. [Link](https://www.npr.org/2021/11/03/1049637659/drug-overdose-deaths-san-francisco-mobile-response) November 3, 2021
• In L.A. County, Opioid Deaths Spiked During Stay-At-Home in One Particular Demographic. [Link](https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/opioid-related-deaths-study-la-county/) September 16, 2021
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• Residents Urged to Take Caution as Deadly Xylazine is Found in Boulder County’s Illicit Drug Market. [https://bouldercounty.gov/news/residents-urged-to-take-caution-as-deadly-xyazine-is-found-in-boulder-countyss-illicit-drug-market/] May 2, 2023
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Accidental fentanyl deaths on the rise in El Paso County. https://www.kktv.com/2022/04/16/denver-fentanyl-bust-arrests/ April 16, 2022


Law enforcement seizes 110,000 fentanyl pills from Denver-area stash houses; 19 indicted in trafficking ring. https://www.denverpost.com/2021/12/01/denver-fentanyl-bust-arrests/ December 1, 2021


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Despite efforts by Bowser and D.C. Council, opioid deaths hit record this year. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-opioid-deaths-2020/2020/12/05/95c6ba3a-34c0-11eb-b59c-adb7153a10c2_story.html December 5, 2020

Rise in fatal drug overdoses in D.C. region likely tied to pandemic, officials say. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/drug-overdose-washington-coronavirus/2020/08/20/2a4c64b8-e0a4-11ea-ade1-28daf1a5e919_story.html August 21, 2020

One doctor is working to fight D.C.’s opioid epidemic, even as a pandemic rages. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/one-doctor-is-working-to-fight-dcs-opioi-depidemic-even-as-a-pandemic-rages/2020/08/04/c5c1cc54-d662-11ea-aff6-220dd3a14741_story.html August 4, 2020

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DEA seeing surge of counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl and meth, and just one pill can kill.  https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/special-reports/dea-counterfeit-pills-laced-with-fentanyl-meth-surg/77-c0698bf6-9b82-4540-954f-4452b130c7ec  November 10, 2021

Overdose deaths in Pinellas County are rapidly rising.

Report: Opioid overdoses in Tampa Bay outpacing the rest of Florida.

Jacksonville opioid-related overdose deaths have jumped 2,000% in 6 years.

The Epidemic Within the Epidemic: Tampa Bay’s Opioid Crisis. Preliminary Assessment.  https://www.tampabay.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/project%20opioid%20preliminary%20assessment_05.10.21_0.pdf  April 15, 2021

Central Florida drug OD deaths up 70% during COVID, report shows.

Ocala sees spike in opioid overdoses during COVID-19 pandemic.


Experts: Coronavirus Contributing To Increase In Substance Abuse.

Overdose calls up 40% during COVID-19 pandemic; treatment centers seeing relapses in long-time sober patients.

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Fake pills laced with fentanyl are causing overdoses in west Pasco, deputies say.
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Some Georgia Hospitals Are Reporting A Rise In Trauma Cases.
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Health chief warns of drug overdose increase during pandemic.


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