

**Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Behavioral Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse
Opioid Update: July 2023**

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) offers the Opioid Update to share information about opioid use and Iowa's efforts to address the national opioid epidemic. Please feel free to submit topics at any time to the State Opioid Response team email: SOR@idph.iowa.gov.

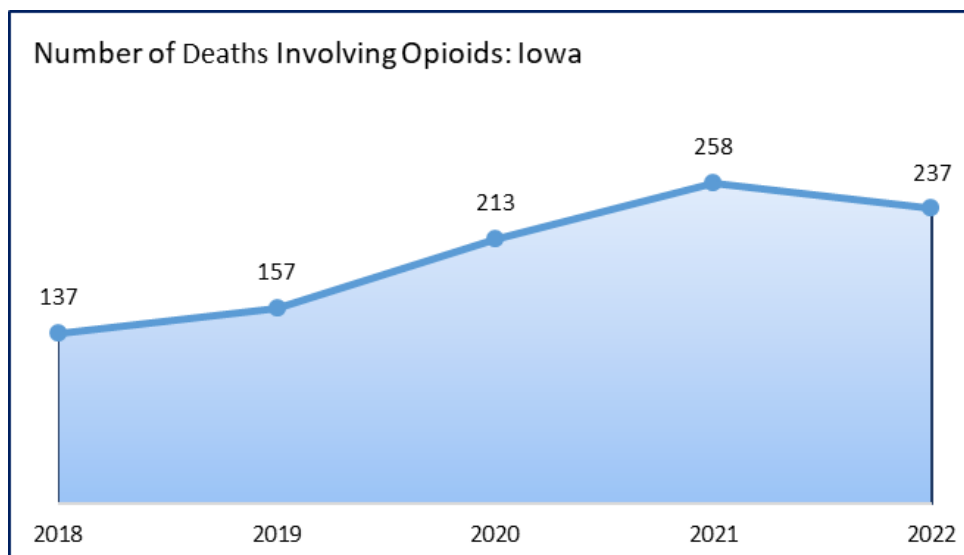
In this issue:

- **Iowa News**
- **Opioid News**
- **Resources**

Iowa News

Total Number of Deaths Involving Opioids in Iowa Decreases in 2022

According to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services – Bureau of Health Statistics, the final report of the number of deaths involving opioids in Iowa for 2022 has been finalized. In 2022, there were 237 deaths involving opioids, which is an 8% decrease from 2021 (258).



Source: Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Health Statistics, 2023

“This is great news”, said Kevin Gabbert, Opioid Initiatives Director at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. When asked about the potential cause for the reduced incidence, Gabbert said he believes, “It’s doubtful that any single effort can take responsibility for this decline.” Instead Gabbert points to a combination of prevention initiatives, media campaigns, targeted outreach, increased access

to treatment services, expanded availability of opioid overdose reversal drugs like naloxone, and community response efforts at the local level.

Despite the progress seen, Gabbert is very clear that, “Any deaths related to substance use is too many. Therefore, it’s important that we all do our part and stay vigilant with ongoing prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery efforts, to ensure the health and safety of Iowans.”

For more information regarding the number of deaths related to opioids in Iowa, please contact the State Opioid Response (SOR) helpdesk at sor@idph.iowa.gov.

Opioid News

DEA Announces Changes to Buprenorphine Prescribing for OUD

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) seeks to make medication for opioid use disorder (OUD) readily and safely available to anyone in the country who needs it. As Congressionally-mandated, medical practitioners have a new role to help patients fighting to sustain recovery and prevent opioid overdoses. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 enacted a new one-time, eight-hour training requirement for all DEA-registered practitioners, except veterinarians, on the treatment and management of patients with opioid or other substance use disorders.

Beginning on June 27, 2023, all DEA-registered and new medical practitioners are required to attest to completion of the training when renewing or completing an initial registration.

For more information on these changes, please click on the following link: [DEA](#)

FDA Approves New Opioid Overdose Reversal Medication

On May 22, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Opvee, the first nalmefene hydrochloride nasal spray for the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdose in adults and pediatric patients 12 years of age and older. Nalmefene is an opioid receptor antagonist which is used to treat acute opioid overdose. The newly approved product, which delivers 2.7 milligrams (mg) of nalmefene into the nasal cavity, is available by prescription and is intended for use in health care and community settings.

To read the full article, please click on the following link: [Opvee](#)

FDA Approves New Buprenorphine option for the treatment of OUD

On May 23, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Brixadi (buprenorphine) extended-release injection for subcutaneous use (under the skin) to treat moderate to severe opioid use disorder (OUD). Brixadi is approved in both weekly and monthly subcutaneous injectable formulations at varying doses, including lower doses that may be appropriate for those who do not tolerate the higher doses of extended-release buprenorphine that are currently available.

Buprenorphine is a safe and effective medication for the treatment of OUD. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), patients receiving medication for their OUD cut their risk of death from all causes in half.

To read the full article, please click the following link: [Brixadi](#)

Mobilize Recovery 2023

Each year, hundreds of people in recovery, family members, & recovery allies attend Mobilize Recovery - an annual convening to learn innovative strategies & tactics for grassroots organizing & recovery solutions. They connect with other recovery organizers, advocates, and grassroots allies to gain access to new tools & streamline their organizing and advocacy work to end overdose & inspire recovery solutions in their communities.

Now in its fifth year, Mobilize Recovery 2023 is hosting this year's national event in Washington, DC. (September 17-19), that will bring together a diverse cross-sector cohort of advocates, allies, and stakeholders to drive measurable, sustainable, and action-oriented solutions that create resilient communities of recovery. The Mobilize Recovery Day of Service (September 30), is a national movement that harnesses the power of the recovery community - including allies, advocates and members - and convenes service projects (in your local community) as an actionable way to uplift one another, inspire civic engagement and give back to the broader community that supported them in their recovery journey.

To learn more about the national event, please click on the following link: [DC 2023](#)

To learn more about a Day of Service, please click on the following link: [Day of Service](#)

Restoring Control to a Particular Brain Region May Help To Prevent Return to Use of Opioids

A team of neuroscientists at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) has identified changes in the activity of types of brain cells known as pyramidal neurons, which contribute to drug seeking in a preclinical model of opioid use disorder. After access to heroin was stopped, these neurons became more excitable. The activity of these neurons was restored to normal by blocking the enzyme protein kinase A (PKA). Inhibiting this enzyme also reduced opioid-seeking behavior. Unique changes in the function of these brain regions caused by opioids make stopping opioid use much more difficult.

According to Dr. Saurabh Kokane, "Our findings suggest that research should be geared toward developing pharmacotherapies that specifically target functional changes that develop during heroin abstinence in particular types of neurons, like those we identified in the prelimbic cortex."

To read the full article, please click on the following link: [MUSC](#)

White House Releases National Response Plan to Address Fentanyl Combined with Xylazine

In the continued efforts to fight the dangerous and deadly combination of xylazine mixed with fentanyl, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) released a National Response Plan this month to coordinate a whole-of-government response against this threat. Earlier this spring, ONDCP Director Dr. Gupta used an executive designation authority to designate fentanyl combined with xylazine as an emerging threat to the U.S. and proactively address this dangerous threat head-on.

Xylazine has been detected in nearly every state in the country (including Iowa). The Biden-Harris Administration made this designation for the first time U.S. in history due to xylazine's growing role in overdose deaths nationwide, and since the designation, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have continued to show an increase in xylazine-related overdose deaths.

To read more about the National Response Plan, please click on the following link: [White House](#)

Resources

Your Life Iowa

We walk beside you so you're never alone. When you don't know who to turn to about a problem with alcohol, drugs, gambling, suicidal thoughts or mental health, Your Life Iowa is here for you 24/7. We provide free, confidential support and connect you to resources meant to help you get your life back on track.

For more information, please click on the following link: [Your Life Iowa](#)