

What is an opioid?

An opioid is a drug that eases pain and may also cause feelings of extreme pleasure. Opioids act on the brain and nerves and include both prescription medications and illegal drugs like heroin. Opioids can be addictive with regular use or misuse.

What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a very powerful opioid that can be prescribed by a healthcare professional or produced illegally. Illegal fentanyl, also known as illicitly manufactured fentanyl, is now driving the opioid overdose epidemic.

What is an opioid overdose?

An overdose is when excess opioids act on the brain to decrease or stop a person's breathing.

What is addiction?

Addiction is a long-term, relapsing disease of the brain characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences. Opioid addiction affects individuals, families and communities.

What is happening in Kalamazoo County?

The number of retail opioid prescriptions in Kalamazoo County peaked in 2011 and has decreased every year since. From 2015 to 2017, the quantity and strength of retail opioids prescribed decreased by 22.6%. However, the quantity and strength of opioids prescribed in Kalamazoo County in 2017 was 3.2 times higher than the 1999 national average.

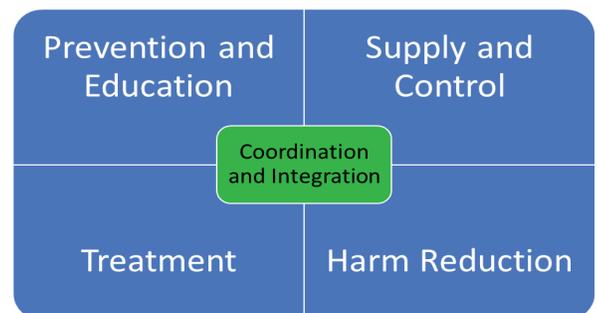
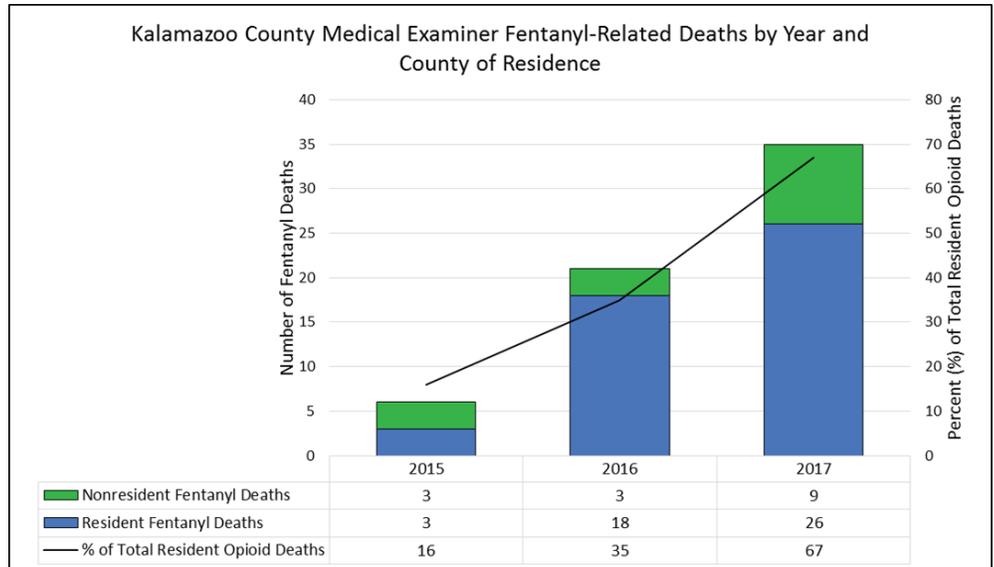
Although opioid overdose visits comprise a very small percentage of all Kalamazoo County emergency department visits, opioid overdose visits increased by more than 55% from 218 to 342 visits between 2015-2017. Following a sharp increase in deaths from 2016, Kalamazoo County's 2017 crude total opioid-related death rate of 16.7 deaths per 100,000 residents was lower than Michigan's 2017 crude rate of 19.1 deaths per 100,000 residents.

Fentanyl-related deaths in Kalamazoo County increased from 6 (3 Kalamazoo residents) in 2015 to 35 (26 Kalamazoo residents) in 2017. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl poses a serious public health threat to Kalamazoo County.

How can we address the opioid epidemic?

A multi-sector, collaborative approach across communities is required. The diagram outlines key strategic priorities necessary to coordinate and integrate action: prevention and education, supply and control of opioids, treatment across a continuum of care and the reduction of fatal overdoses and the spread of infectious disease through harm reduction efforts. Given the transition to a fentanyl-driven overdose epidemic, special focus on treatment and harm reduction is needed. The Kalamazoo County Opioid Coalition aims to address the opioid epidemic through the coordination and integration of these four strategic priorities.

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Bronson Healthcare, Ascension Borgess Hospital, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Kalamazoo County Medical Examiner



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