



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 20, 2017

Lyndi Warner, Public Information Officer
pio@kalcounty.com
(269) 373-5197

Kalamazoo County Drug-Related Deaths Significantly Increased in 2016

KALAMAZOO, MI—Kalamazoo County experienced a significant increase in accidental drug-related deaths in 2016, a problem familiar to many communities across the State of Michigan and the Nation.

According to the Office of the Medical Examiner, from 2015 to 2016 accidental drug-related deaths in Kalamazoo County more than doubled from a count of 33 to 72. In other words, more people died of accidental drug overdose than motor vehicle accidents in Kalamazoo County last year. Eight out of ten of these deaths involved an opioid. The opioid-related accidental, crude death rate increased from 11 to 22 per 100,000 Kalamazoo County residents in 2016.

“This significant change in the opioid epidemic in our community requires a multi-sector, coordinated and targeted response. We are working together with community partners to reverse the tide of opioid-related deaths,” states Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services.

An opioid is an addictive drug that eases pain and also causes feelings of extreme pleasure. Opioids include prescription medications like oxycodone and illegal drugs like heroin. When taken alone and particularly with other drugs, including prescription medications, opioids can stop a person’s breathing and result in a deadly overdose.

Dr. Nettleton notes, “Addiction is not a moral defect. It is a long-term, relapsing and all-too-often deadly disease of the brain that affects not only the lives of addicted individuals – but their families and relationships as well.”

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

3299 Gull Road | Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

Signs of opioid overdose include extreme sleepiness, slow or absent breathing, very small eye pupils and skin color turning blue. If you suspect an overdose, call 911 immediately. New Michigan law protects individuals who possess illegal controlled substances in amounts for personal use from criminal drug charges if they are seeking medical attention for themselves or someone else in the event of a drug overdose (HB 5649).

Naloxone is a drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid and prevent a deadly overdose. Learn to perform rescue breathing techniques from your healthcare provider or naloxone trainer to aid a person in overdose. Again, always call 911 when aiding an overdose victim. Naloxone is covered by Medicaid and many other insurances and is available without a prescription at the following pharmacies:

Rite Aid	1032 E Cork St	Kalamazoo	269-344-0131
OptiMed Pharmacy	1000 Oakland Dr	Kalamazoo	269-337-6330
Sanus Speciality Pharmacy	2401 Gull Road, Suite 1	Kalamazoo	269-775-7450
Portage Pharmacy	7966 Lovers Lane	Portage	269-327-0033
Fred's Super Pharmacy Inc.	121 W. Prairie St.	Vicksburg	269-649-0660

Naloxone kits are also available through the Southwest Michigan Chapter of FAN (Families Against Narcotics) at 269-580-8290.

Any individual, who feels they need help with substance abuse issues can contact the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services' Access Center at (269) 373-6000 or (888) 373-6200.

Medicaid patients may also access substance abuse services in Kalamazoo County by calling Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health's access line at (800)-781-0353.

For more information on opioids and resources for patients, families, prescribers, pharmacists and communities visit:

http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71550_2941_4871_79584---,00.html.

To review the complete 2016 Annual Report from the Office of the Medical Examiner, visit: http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs/pubs_reports_docs.htm.

#

Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department



[Like Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services](#)



Follow us [@KzooHealth](#)