



Opioid Use in Iowa: An Update

Thought to be an issue only in major U.S. cities or more populated states, use of opioids (which includes heroin and prescription pain relievers) is becoming a problem of epidemic proportions in more rural areas of the country. While alcohol, marijuana and methamphetamines remain the primary substances misused in Iowa, in the last decade significant increases have been observed in the number of Iowans identifying opioids as their drug of choice at the time of admission to treatment – and in the number of overdose deaths.

Data collected by the Bureau of Substance Abuse show that treatment admissions related to opioid use have more than tripled from 2005 (608 admissions) to 2017 (2,222 admissions). In addition, data from the Bureau of Health Statistics show that opioid *overdose* and *related* deaths have also tripled during the same time period (*overdose* meaning an opioid was identified as the *primary cause of death* in the medical examiner's report; *related* meaning an opioid was referenced in the medical examiner's report and *could have contributed to the cause of death*).

Opioid Overdose Deaths		
Year	2005	2017
Overdose Deaths	28	103

Opioid Related Deaths		
Year	2005	2017
Related Deaths	59	206

Why the increase?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid pain relievers – enough for every American adult to have a bottle of pills. Prescription opioid sales in the United States have increased by 300% since 1999, even though there has not been an overall change in the amount of pain Americans report. In a study by the International Narcotics Control Board, the United States accounts for nearly 100% of the Hydrocodone used globally and 81% of Oxycodone used.

As people use opioids continuously their tolerance increases, but they may not be able to maintain their original source for the medication. This can lead them to turn to other sources and even switch from prescription drugs to cheaper and riskier substitutes like heroin.

What treatment options are supported in Iowa?

For the past 20 years, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has funded selected opioid treatment programs to provide medication assisted treatment to Iowans in the form of methadone maintenance. As approaches to medication assisted treatment continued to evolve, IDPH began funding additional medications such as Naltrexone and Buprenorphine through use of SAMHSA discretionary grants like Access to Recovery (ATR) and Medication Assisted Treatment – Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction (MAT-PDOA). As part of the Opioid State Targeted Response (STR) funding provided through the 21st Century Cures Act, Iowa is further expanding Medication Assisted Treatment options in both rural and urban areas.

For more information about treatment for an opioid use disorder in Iowa, please visit the IDPH Medication Assisted Treatment webpage at <http://idph.iowa.gov/mat>.