

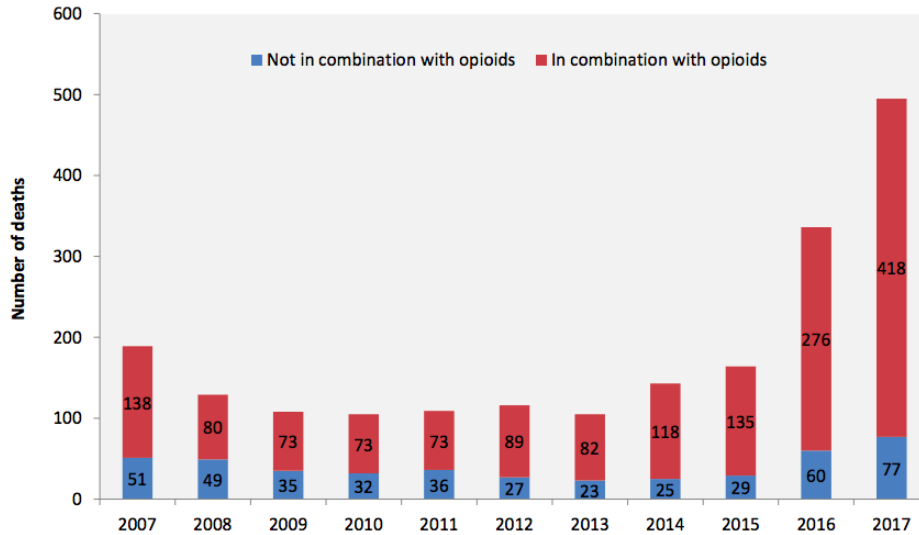
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Fentanyl OD deaths up in 2017

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Figure 7. Number of Cocaine-Related Deaths Occurring in Maryland from January through September of Each Year.*



Maryland Department of Health releases third quarterly report, above is the number of cocaine related deaths and the number of deaths associated with cocaine and an opioid combination.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

EASTON — Fentanyl-related overdose deaths are on the rise according to Maryland Department of Health's latest report. The report, released on Friday, Jan. 26, accounts for unintentional fatal overdoses through the third quarter of 2017 for fentanyl, heroin, opioid, cocaine and alcohol related deaths.

The release states that while fentanyl continues to be the most prevalent drug found in opioid-related overdose deaths; heroin-related deaths have shown a slight decline.

During this nine-month period, which encompasses January through September 2017, there were 1,705 drug- and alcohol-related deaths across the state. The vast majority of those deaths (1,501) were opioid-related deaths, including 1,173 fentanyl-related deaths.

On the Mid-Shore, there were 40 drug- and alcohol-related deaths in the first nine months of 2017. Last year for the same time period there were 30. Increases were seen in every county on the Mid-Shore with the exception of Kent, which had five deaths in the period in both 2016 and 2017.

Since the last quarterly report, released in June, there have been 553 deaths, with 472 related to opioids. Of those opioid-related deaths, 374 involved fentanyl and 261 involved heroin related. On the Mid-Shore, there have been 12 deaths since June, with the highest increase stemming from Caroline County, which had four.

Across the state, the largest increases in overdose deaths continue to be related to fentanyl and from cocaine use combined with opioids. However, there has been a slight decline in the overall number of heroin-related and prescription opioid-related deaths when comparing third quarter data for 2016 and 2017.

On the Mid-Shore, fentanyl-related overdoses were at 21 from January through September. Broken down by county, in Caroline there were six; Dorchester, five; Kent, three; Queen Anne's, four; and Talbot, three which is a significant decrease from the six last year within the same time frame.

Looking at the year-to-date data for opioid related deaths versus 2016 year-end totals, several counties are on the verge of surpassing those totals while Dorchester County is on a path to doubling its numbers. In 2016, Dorchester had five opioid-related deaths; the county had already reported eight through September 2017. Other counties are as follows Caroline 9 to 7; Kent 4 to 4; Queen Anne's 6 to 5; and Talbot 10 to 8.

Over the first three quarters of the year, the percentage of opioid-related deaths involving fentanyl increased from 56 percent of all opioid-related deaths in 2016 to 78 percent in 2017. For all of 2016 there were 1,119 Fentanyl related deaths across the state; through the first three quarters of 2017 there were 1,173; an increase of 54 deaths.

In Caroline in 2016, there were three Fentanyl related deaths and for 2017 there are six; Dorchester reported three last year and five in 2017; Kent reported three for 2016 and three for 2017, Queen Anne's reported four for 2016 and four for 2017.

Talbot County came in with the only reduced totals; last year there were seven Fentanyl related deaths and by this report there were only three.

Throughout 2016, the number of heroin-related deaths exceeded the number of fentanyl-related deaths; this trend has reversed in 2017, with fentanyl-related deaths outpacing heroin-related deaths in each quarter. More than two-thirds of all overdose deaths through September 2017 involved fentanyl.

For the state there were 903 heroin-related deaths by the third quarterly report of 2016; in 2017 during the same time period there were 847. On the Mid-Shore, there were 15 for each year.

The number of fatal cocaine overdoses increased 47 percent in the first nine months of 2017, compared to the same time in 2016. Much of this increase is due to fentanyl being combined with cocaine, often unbeknownst to the user. Fentanyl was present in 50 percent of fatal cocaine overdoses in 2016 and 68 percent in 2017 for the period of January through September.



There were 495 cocaine-related deaths in Maryland, eleven on the Mid-Shore; two in Caroline; six in Dorchester; one in Kent; one in Queen Anne's; and one in Talbot. In 2016, the Mid-Shore had nine cocaine-related deaths.

The total number of heroin-related and prescription opioid-related deaths, which were flat in a comparison between the second quarter data for 2016 and 2017, have started to show a slight drop. Through the third quarter of 2017, the number of heroin-related deaths fell by 56 when compared to the first three quarters of 2016. Prescription opioid-related deaths fell by 11 during the same period.

Maryland has enacted several laws that may be attributing the decline including the expanded access to naloxone, a life-saving drug that reverses opioid drug overdoses, and the Good Samaritan Law, which provides protection from arrest as well as prosecution for certain specific crimes and expands the charges from which people assisting in an emergency overdose situation are immune.

In addition to these initiatives, Maryland has also increased funding in prevention and treatment; including \$159 million to non-Medicaid substance use disorder and addiction programs, which includes \$13.7 million in new funding for the state's response to the heroin and opioid epidemic, \$3 million in grant funding for local boards of education to implement prevention and education programs.

"We continue to push resolve, momentum, and coordination, as well as a balanced approach of prevention, enforcement, and improving access to treatment," said Clay Stamp, executive director of Maryland's Opioid Operational Command Center. "Through our statewide partnerships and collaboration, we are committed to educating our citizens about the grave dangers of opioid addiction, while connecting those in need of treatment to the resources they need to get better."

To see the full report, visit www.bha.health.maryland.gov.

Marylanders who need help finding substance related disorder treatment resources should visit MdDestinationRecovery.org, BeforeItsTooLateMD.org, or call the Maryland Crisis Hotline, which provides 24/7 support, at 1-800-422-0009.

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