

Community Benefits of Harm Reduction in Overdose Prevention and Linkage to Care

“The U.S. is experiencing the most significant substance use and overdose epidemic it has ever faced, exacerbated by a worldwide pandemic, and driven by the proliferation of highly potent synthetic opioids containing primarily fentanyl and other analogues.”-SAMSHA¹

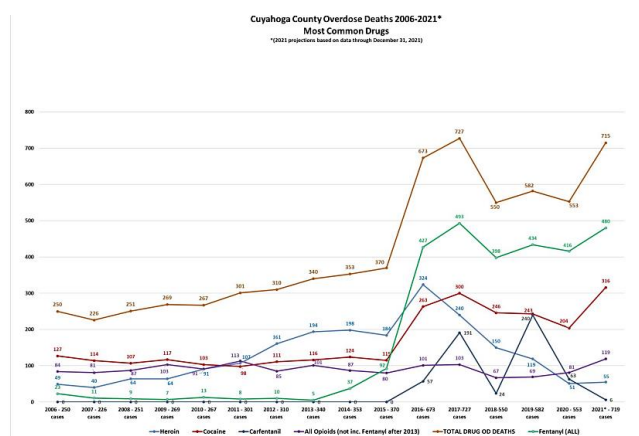
Opioid Crisis: Challenges in Prevention

- In 2020, there were 553 drug overdose deaths in Cuyahoga County. In 2021, preliminary numbers indicate a nearly 30% increase in deaths (715 fatalities). These numbers are similar to what was seen at the height of the epidemic in 2017²
- The increase is largely driven by fentanyl-related drug fatalities
- Fatal combinations of substances:²



DEA image “one pill can kill” campaign³

- Cocaine/fentanyl mixtures in 2021 are the highest they have been compared to all previous years
- 87% of counterfeit pills contain fentanyl or fentanyl analogs of (Cuyahoga County Regional Forensic Lab 2020-2021). This is higher than the DEA has reported for the nation³



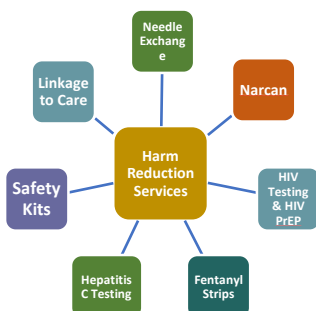
Source: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office revised 1-12-22





- The prescription opioid crisis has led to increased numbers of persons who inject drugs (PWID), placing new populations at risk for HIV and other blood-borne diseases, including Hepatitis B and C.
- Stigma and mistrust of the health care system may prevent PWID from seeking HIV testing, STI screening, and general medical care.

Harm Reduction¹

- Harm reduction is a proactive and evidence-based approach that results in a reduction of overdose fatalities, acute life-threatening infections related to unsterile drug injection, and chronic diseases such as HIV/HCV.
- Harm reduction services save lives by being available and accessible to people
- Prevents drug-related deaths and offers access to healthcare, social services and treatment



Harm Reduction Activities and Intended Outcomes¹

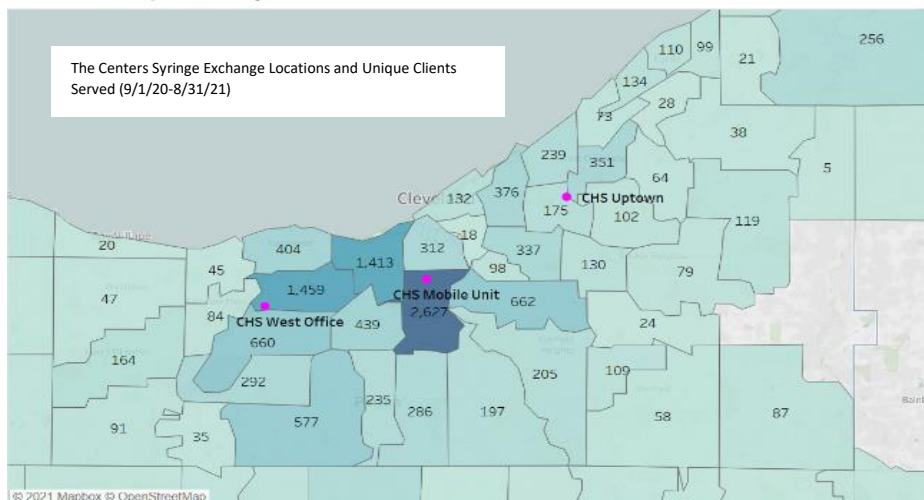
 Prevention Goals	 Related Harm Reduction Activities*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the spread of sexually transmitted and other blood-borne infections, including HIV and viral hepatitis • Increase knowledge around safer sex and sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to PrEP • Access to HIV and viral hepatitis testing and treatment • Access to condoms • Comprehensive sex education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce overdose deaths and other early deaths among people who use substances, including alcohol • Increase knowledge around safer substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syringe service programs • Fentanyl test strips • Naloxone and overdose education kits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce sharing of substance use equipment • Improve physical health • Reduce the spread of infectious diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile syringes and other injection equipment to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases • Syringe Service Programs • Medical care including wound care • Use of masks, social distancing, and vaccines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce stigma and increase access to health services • Increase referrals to support programs and health and social services (including treatment and recovery support services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling/Motivational interviewing • Low threshold medication for opioid use disorder • Fentanyl test strips; Naloxone and overdose education kits • Peer support specialists • Case managers

Impact of Syringe Exchange Services^{4,5}

In one year of services (Sept. 2020-August 2021), **The Centers** syringe services program served a total of 2,332 unique individuals, totaling 15,429 encounters. Of these unique individuals encountered and engaged, 43% were referred to services such as community-based MAT; primary care; detox, etc. 768 new clients (ages 19-74) were enrolled in services.

MetroHealth has serviced over 2,000 clients since inception (April 2020), and in 2021 they had over 12,300 patient encounters. Patients are provided naloxone, testing, syringe exchange and linkage to care.

CHS Client Zip Codes by Case 9.1.20-8.31.21



Zip Code/City	Frequency
44107/Lakewood	404
44070/North Olmsted	164
44142/Brookpark	292
44129, 44130, 44134/Parma	1098
44125/Garfield Heights	205
44124/Pepper Pike	119

Map provided by CWRU Begun Center as part of OD2A evaluation work on 2/15/2022

Cost effectiveness⁶

- Harm reduction efforts reduce health care costs by preventing HIV, viral hepatitis, and other infections, including endocarditis, a life-threatening heart valve infection
- The estimated lifetime cost of treating one person living with HIV is more than \$450,000. Hospitalizations in the U.S. for substance-use-related infections cost over \$700 million each year. Syringe services programs (SSPs) can reduce these costs and help link people to treatment to stop using drugs
 - New users of SSPs are five times as likely to enter drug treatment as those who don't use the programs
- Harm reduction programs protect the public and first responders by providing safe needle disposal and reducing the presence of needles in the community and offers residents a place to link with primary care and treatment
- SSPs do not cause or increase illegal drug use or crime

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Sources:

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction>
2. CCMEO <https://cuyahogacounty.us/medical-examiner/resources/overdose-statistics>
3. Drug Enforcement Agency. One Pill Can Kill. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/190205961@N07/sets/72157719245180132/>
4. The Centers <https://thecentersohio.org/>
5. MetroHealth Project DAWN <https://www.metrohealth.org/office-of-opioid-safety/project-dawn>
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Syringe Services Program FAQs <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-faq.html>
7. Cuyahoga County Board of Health Overdose Data Dashboard <https://www.ccbh.net/overdose-data-dashboard/>