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Research and Education

Lakewood Police Department, Ohio Drug-Related Overdose Incidents January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2020

Analysis of suspected drug-related overdose incidents in Lakewood, Ohio

Background

Lakewood Police Department (LPD) serves a mostly urban population of 50,942 near Cleveland in northeastern Ohio.¹ Like many Ohio communities, Lakewood continues to be impacted by accidental drug-related overdose deaths, which spiked in 2016 claiming the lives of 28 Lakewood residents.² Lakewood public safety personnel serve as first responders to more than 100 overdose incidents each year and invest time and effort partnering with other agencies to explore solutions to the drug epidemic. With funding support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (#2018-AR-BX-K033), in 2020 the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University partnered with LPD to provide further data analysis and report the findings of overdose incidents from 2017 to 2020 in Lakewood. This data brief highlights selected outcomes of overdose incident data provided by the LPD and drug-related death data provided by the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office (CCMEO). The full report is available at <https://www.ccbh.net/overdose-data-dashboard/>.

Key Datapoints

- LPD responded to 402 overdose incidents or an average of 101 per year
- Of the 78 fatal overdose incidents to which LPD responded, 72 were ruled accidental drug-related overdose deaths by the CCMEO
- 92% (n = 66) of accidental drug-related deaths in which LPD responded were caused by fentanyl and fentanyl analogues (including carfentanil)
- 23 of the 28 cocaine-related deaths included fentanyl or carfentanil in toxicology reports
- Persons from 20 to 44 years of age comprised 75.9% of incidents (n = 305)
- White males accounted for 66% (n = 266) of all incidents
- LPD responded to 40 persons who experienced an overdose two or more times



The Drugs Causing Overdose

Scene Reports

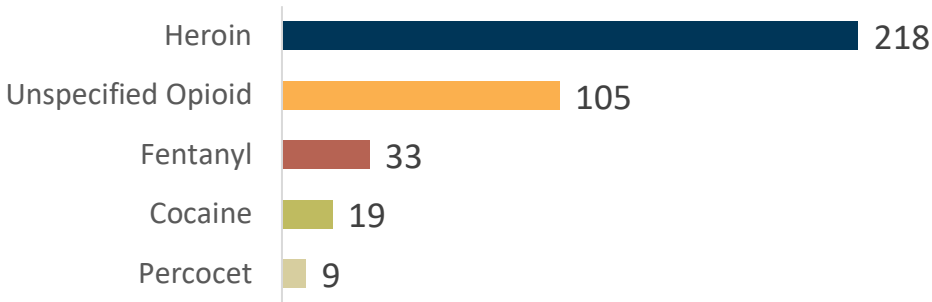
From 2017 to 2020 LPD responded to 402 suspected drug-related overdose incidents. According to police reports, opioids and their synthetic analogues accounted for most of the drugs suspected of causing these overdoses. Specifically, heroin, unspecified opiates or opioids, and fentanyl were reported as the suspected drug in 81.5% of cases (n = 356). Cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine were reported as the suspected drug in only 6% (n = 24) of incidents (see Figure 1). Percocet accounted for only 2.2% (n = 9) of these incidents.³

¹ From U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Population Census, April 1, 2020. [census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lakewoodcityohio/](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lakewoodcityohio/)

² The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office reported 31 drug-related overdose deaths in 2016.

³ A total of 437 reports of suspected drugs were made in 402 incidents because multiple drugs were suspected at some incidents.

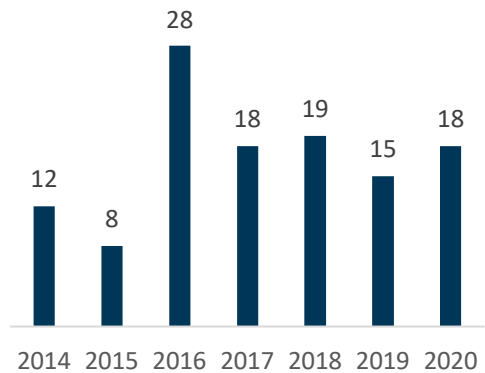
Figure 1. Top Five Known Suspected Drug Types Reported by LPD at Overdose Incident Scenes (N = 384).



Toxicology Reports

CCMEO records show that 72 of the 78 fatal overdose incidents to which LPD responded were caused by accidental drug overdose. Of these 72 deaths, 91.7% (n = 66) were caused by fentanyl and fentanyl analogues (including carfentanil). Cocaine was listed as a cause of death drug in 38.9% (n = 28) of the cases and 23 of the cocaine-related deaths included fentanyl or carfentanil as an additional cause of death drug. Methamphetamine was present in 5.6% (n = 4) of fatal overdose cases. Heroin was reported in 36.1% (n = 26) of accidental drug-related overdose deaths. Heroin as a cause of death drug steadily declined over the reporting period. Thirteen heroin-related deaths were reported in 2017 compared to one in 2020.

Figure 2. Accidental Drug-Related Overdose Deaths for Lakewood Residents from 2014-2020 as reported by the CCMEO (n = 118).



Overdose Incident Profile

LPD reported 70% (n = 280) of the overdose victims were male.⁴ Persons reported as white represented 95.5% (n = 384) of all incidents; white males accounted for 66% (n = 266). Persons from 20 to 44 comprised 75.9% of overdose incidents (n = 305). The five-year age group experiencing the most overdoses in Lakewood consisted of persons 30-34 years old, accounting for 17% of incidents (n = 68). LPD responded to 40 persons who experienced an overdose two or more times, representing 24.1% of all incident responses (n = 97).

Overdose Incident Profile

- Average Age: **37**
- Male/Female Ratio: **2.3 : 1**
- Race: White **96%**, Black **4%**
- **40** persons were involved in an overdose incident more than once

⁴ Data pertaining to demographics (age, sex, and race) reflect reporting that may or may not be based on self-reports.

Cities of Residence & Overdose Incident Locations

LPD reported 46 cities of residence for individuals who experienced an overdose in Lakewood. The majority were residents of Lakewood (n = 258). The city of Cleveland was the residence of the next highest number of those who experienced an overdose in Lakewood, accounting for 16% of incidents (n = 65). Homeless individuals ranked third, representing 2.9% of incidents (n = 12) in Lakewood (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top Cities of Residence

City	Number of Overdoses
Lakewood	258
Cleveland	65
Homeless	12
Parma	8
Fairview Park	4
Strongsville	3
North Olmsted	3



Naloxone

Naloxone was administered in 71.1% of all incidents (286 of 402), 23% of fatal overdose incidents (18 of 78), and 82.7% of non-fatal overdose incidents (268 of 324). All of Lakewood's officers are issued the lifesaving drug naloxone to administer to those experiencing an overdose.



Ongoing Efforts

To connect persons who have experienced an overdose with recovery opportunities, LPD participates in *Project SOAR* (Supporting Opiate Addiction Recovery) with partners including: The Woodrow Project; City of Lakewood; Lakewood Fire Department; Lakewood Municipal Court Probation Office; Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County; Cleveland Clinic Lakewood & Lutheran Emergency Departments; and Berea, Bedford, Middleburg Heights, Newburgh Heights, Olmstead Township, Solon, and Strongsville police departments. LPD also participates in *Operation Medicine Cabinet* by providing the community with a prescription and over-the-counter drug disposal box in the department lobby. The Begun Center continues to work with the LPD and other partners in Cuyahoga County to analyze data related to the drug epidemic, identify facilitators and barriers to sharing information across communities and sectors, explore solutions, and inform policy and practice.

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