



# Multidisciplinary Review of Drug Overdose Death Evaluation (MODE) Team

## December 2017 Report

### Quarterly Trends: January 1, 2017 – June 30, 2017

- There were 157 unintentional drug overdose deaths in Rhode Island in quarters 1 and 2 of 2017. This is a 12.3% decrease from 179 deaths during the same time period in 2016.
- Fentanyl continues to be a causal agent in the majority of unintentional drug overdose deaths. Of all unintentional drug overdoses, 91 of 157 deaths (58%) were attributed to fentanyl.
- There were more unintentional drug overdose deaths among females compared with the same period in 2016 (40.1% vs. 31.3%, respectively).
- Proportionally, there were more unintentional drug deaths among non-whites compared with the same time period in 2016 (12.7% vs. 6.1%, respectively).
- The majority (56.7%) of unintentional drug deaths were among individuals age 30-49. During the same time period in 2016, this age group represented 41.3% of unintentional drug deaths.
- There were nine unintentional drug overdose deaths – 6% of all deaths – among individuals who had been incarcerated in the past 12 months.
- Of the 757 suspected opioid overdoses reported by hospital emergency departments in Rhode Island, 68% were among males. Of those males, 624 of 757 reported race and ethnicity – 9.5% were Hispanic, 5% were black non-Hispanic, and 80.6% were white non-Hispanic.

### Emergent Themes

- The number of unintentional drug overdose deaths was lower in quarters 1 and 2 of 2017 compared with the same time period in 2016; however, a higher proportion of the unintentional drug overdose deaths for quarters 1 and 2 of 2017 occurred in females, non-whites, and individuals age 30-49 compared with the same time period in 2016.
- The post-incarceration period is one of high risk of overdose and new initiatives underway to reduce risk in this population are well targeted.

### Recommendations for Structural or Community Prevention

#### Structural

- Explore expansion of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) services, including a Center of Excellence, in the East Bay and specifically, to the Tiverton/Bristol area to improve access points for evidence-based treatment.
- Ensure that all inmates at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) who are taking an opioid pain medication at admission are referred to the RIDOC MAT program (CODAC).
- Educate psychiatrists at RIDOC to screen for substance-use disorder and refer inmates with substance-use disorders to the RIDOC MAT program (CODAC).

#### Community

- Promote access to the Rhode Island Centers of Excellence (COE) in MAT services for individuals with opioid-use disorder living in the East Bay, including referring patients to CODAC in Newport.
- Encourage prescribers in the East Bay to prescribe buprenorphine to patients with opioid-use disorder or to affiliate with a (COE) to encourage MAT uptake.

- Develop new and/or translate existing educational and social marketing materials related to naloxone and other harm reduction strategies into Spanish and disseminate them in neighborhoods with large numbers of Spanish-speaking residents. In addition, disseminate information about recovery services to Spanish-speaking individuals.
- Partner with pharmacies to offer naloxone and education on its use to anyone who purchases syringes. Examples of stickers that can be placed on syringe packaging and/or sharps disposal containers are available to download at [www.prevent-protect.org](http://www.prevent-protect.org).
- Support the development and dissemination of signage to assist the public in locating places where naloxone is available, specifically in high-risk public areas where overdoses have occurred.
- Support naloxone distribution to families and friends who visit inmates at RIDOC.
- Engage barber shops and other community businesses in the dissemination of information on the opioid epidemic, recovery services, and harm-reduction methods such as naloxone availability and bathroom safety policies for overdose prevention.
- Develop a public service announcement with testimonial-style content about
  - Someone who was directly protected by the Good Samaritan Law and can attest to its' benefits
  - An overdose survivor who was connected to MAT.
 Video, audio, or print formats in English and Spanish should be considered.
- Partner with first responders to provide follow-up to individuals who have witnessed an overdose and/or are close contacts of someone who died of overdose and provide them with information about treatment, recovery, and bereavement services.

## **Summary**

Compared with the same time period in 2016, Rhode Island had a lower number of unintentional drug overdose deaths in the first half of 2017, and a decrease in the number of deaths among individuals who were recently incarcerated. Compared with the same time period in 2016, there was an increase in the percentage of unintentional drug overdose deaths among females, non-whites, and individuals ages 30-49 in the first half of 2017.

## **Sources**

Rhode Island Department of Health. <http://www.health.ri.gov/data/drugoverdoses/>. Updated 10/18/2017  
 Rhode Island Office of the State Medical Examiners, prepared by Traci Green, PhD  
 Rhode Island Department of Corrections  
 State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting Surveillance (SUDORS)  
 48-hour Opioid Overdose Reporting System, Rhode Island Department of Health  
 Rhode Island Survey of Active Drug Users