



October 2019 Report: Rhode Island Review of Overdose Accidental Deaths (ROAD) Team

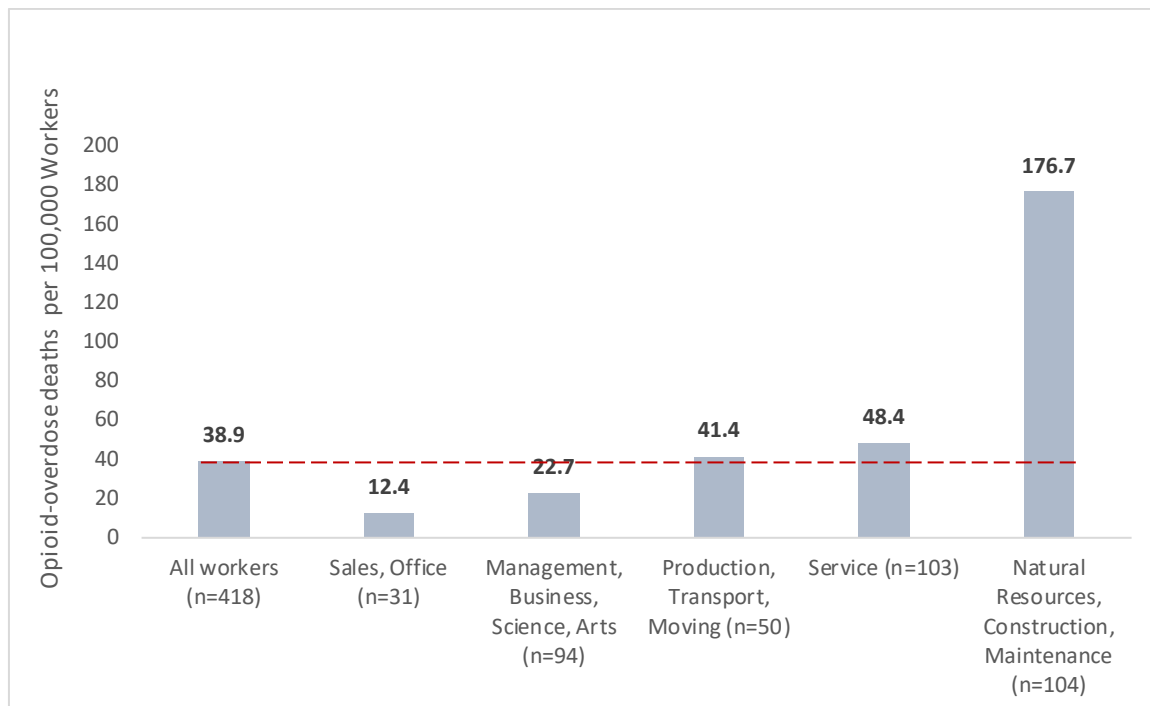
The ROAD Team at the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) convened in October 2019 to conduct its overdose death review process. Data findings from Rhode Island’s State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS) offered insight into emerging drug overdose death trends and themes.

The ROAD Team recommends several systemic and community initiatives that can be implemented by state and local partners to prevent the incidence of drug overdose in Rhode Island.

Data Trends

- Nationally and regionally, analyses of multiple data sources have found higher proportional mortality ratios and higher rates of fatal opioid overdose among specific occupations, particularly among those working in construction occupations.^{1,2}
- Using Rhode Island SUDORS data from July 2016 to June 2018, RIDOH analyzed rates of accidental or undetermined, fatal opioid-involved overdose by usual occupation category and found a significantly higher rate of opioid-involved fatal overdoses among those in natural resources, construction, and maintenance (NRCM) occupations: **176.7 per 100,000 workers compared to 38.9 per 100,000 workers among all workers.**³

Figure 1. Rate of Opioid-Involved Accidental or Undetermined Drug Overdose Death in Rhode Island by Standard Occupation Category



Source: SUDORS, RIDOH; Updated as of March 2019; Population denominator from the American Community Survey 2017

Notes: Rates for 151 victims with occupations outside of the Standard Occupation Categories could not be calculated. Data reflect accidental or undetermined opioid-involved drug overdose deaths occurring in Rhode Island and do not necessarily reflect all Rhode Island residents. Substance categories are mutually exclusive, so while all deaths were opioid-involved, other substances may have also contributed to the cause of death.

Emergent Theme: The ROAD Team identified a higher rate of fatal opioid-involved overdose among workers in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations – particularly among construction and extraction workers.

- From July 2016 to June 2018, approximately one out of four fatal opioid-involved overdose victims worked in NRCM occupations, and approximately one out of five were specifically in construction and extraction occupations.
- In comparison to victims in other occupation categories, victims in NRCM occupations were:
 - More likely to have had alcohol contribute to the cause of death (32% compared to 23%) and less likely to have antidepressant(s) contribute to the cause of death (6% compared to 15%);
 - Less likely to have a known mental health problem (35% compared to 49%);
 - Less likely to have a mental health diagnosis of anxiety (16% compared to 26%), depression (19% compared to 31%), or diagnoses of both anxiety and depression (6% compared to 15%); and/or
 - Less likely to have both a known mental health problem and known substance abuse problem (29% compared to 40%) compared to victims in other occupations.

ROAD Team Recommendations for Community Overdose Prevention

- Promote the services of BH Link, Rhode Island's 24/7 behavioral health crisis walk-in triage center and hotline, 401-414-LINK (5465), to address the trauma associated with witnessing an overdose.
- Embed a certified peer recovery support specialist within Rhode Island's Social Security Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.
- Support recovery-friendly environments within Rhode Island labor organizations, including addressing alcohol use as a barrier to creating a recovery friendly environment.
- Address the stress associated with, and effects of, the cycle of employment and layoffs within the construction industry.
- Increase the availability of peer Safe Ride programs at local opioid treatment facilities and hospitals.
- Connect additional labor unions with certified peer recovery support specialists.

References:

1. Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Surveillance Program (2018); Opioid-related Overdose Deaths in Massachusetts by Industry and Occupation, 2011-2015.
2. Harduar Morano, Laurel et al. "Occupational Patterns in Unintentional and Undetermined Drug-Involved and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths - United States, 2007-2012." MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report vol. 67,33 925-930. 24 Aug. 2018, doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6733a3
3. Scagos R, Lasher L, Viner-Brown S. "Accidental or Undetermined Opioid-Involved Drug Overdose Deaths in Rhode Island and Usual Occupation – Higher Rates Observed in Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations". Rhode Island Medical Journal. Oct 2019. 03 Dec 2019. <http://www.rimed.org/rimedicaljournal/2019/10/2019-10-46-health-scagos.pdf>