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Pritzker Administration Announces Illinois Overdose Deaths Declined 8% in 2023

IDPH unveils expanded Overdose Data Dashboard as Semiannual Overdose Report shows 317 fewer overdose deaths in 2023, first decline since 2018

SPRINGFIELD – The Administration of Governor JB Pritzker announced that Illinois recorded an 8.3% drop in overall drug overdose deaths in 2023, exceeding a nationwide decline of 4%. Specifically, opioid overdose deaths declined 9.7% in the state, compared to 3% nationally. The new data shows 3,502 overdose deaths in Illinois from all causes in 2023, 317 fewer than in 2022.

The new data comes as the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) unveiled an expanded [Overdose Data Dashboard](#) that shares more data and makes the tool easier to use for both researchers and the general public. Governor Pritzker also announced in his Budget Address that, subject to review by the General Assembly, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) will consolidate its mental health and substance use divisions into an integrated Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery in order to improve access to care and positive outcomes for consumers.

“My administration has worked closely with community providers, experts in the field, and people in recovery to produce a comprehensive statewide overdose response plan anchored in equity—and today’s announcement reflects those efforts,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “From expanding overdose education and Naloxone distribution services to increasing access to recovery homes, we are seeing how our targeted investments are making a difference and saving lives.”

“I am encouraged by the reduction in overdose deaths here in Illinois,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra**. “This decrease is a testament to the leadership of Governor Pritzker and the joint and sustained effort from our communities, advocates, and family members to address this public health crisis. However, much more work needs to be done. Mental health and substance use disorder is a priority of our [Healthy Illinois 2028 State Health Improvement Plan](#), and IDPH is proud to display our new upgraded overdose data dashboard as an effort to bring more information to the public and engage in deeper partnerships for impact. Our goal remains implementing evidence-based solutions to further decrease overdose deaths here in Illinois.”

“Providing life-saving resources for communities is effective, and we are heartened to see this downward trend in overdose deaths. Harm reduction saves lives,” **said IDHS Secretary Dulce M. Quintero**. “I want to thank Governor Pritzker for his support and leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic from many angles, and we look forward to continuing these efforts with our partners at IDPH.”

According to the new [Semiannual Overdose Data Report](#) compiled by IDPH, there was an 8.3% decrease in overdose deaths from any drug in Illinois, **the first annual reduction in drug overdose deaths in the state since 2018**. Looking just at opioids, there were 2,855 fatalities attributed to opioid overdoses in Illinois in 2023, 305 fewer than 2022, a decrease of 9.7%. In 2022, total overdose deaths in Illinois increased 5.1% from 2021, and deaths involving opioids were up 8.2%.

Deaths involving synthetic opioids (i.e., fentanyl and fentanyl analogs) decreased by 9.5% in Illinois in 2023. Deaths involving heroin and natural and semisynthetic opioids decreased by 21.2% and 17.4%, respectively in 2023. One drug category that saw a notable increase in deaths in 2023 was xylazine, a non-opioid sedative that is used as an adulterant. The report indicates deaths involving xylazine were up 6.4% to 249.

State officials note several factors likely contributed to this decline, including sustained efforts to increase naloxone distribution throughout the state; community outreach through harm reduction organizations and drug overdose prevention programs; the availability of fentanyl test strips and other drug checking technologies; updates to the statewide standing order for opioid reversal agents; and improved access to treatment and medication-assisted recovery.

IDHS and IDPH acknowledge that racial disparities in overdose morbidity remains a significant issue, as Black individuals are still more likely to experience an overdose death than other racial groups. As such, implementing effective interventions to address these disparities, such as the West Side and South Side Heroin/Opioid Task Forces, the Community Outreach and Recovery Services program, and a variety of other Illinois Remediation Funded programs remain a high priority.

IDHS has distributed 1 million 2-dose boxes of Narcan (generically called naloxone) to community-based organizations, substance use disorder treatment centers, harm reduction organizations, hospitals, and clinics across Illinois in the last four years. IDHS has also partnered with [The Naloxone Project](#) to reduce stigma over naloxone use and increase hospital participation in take-home naloxone distribution efforts. In addition, the IDHS Medication Assisted Recovery (MAR) in Jails program has worked in county jails in 32 participating counties to focus on a population at highest risk of overdose to provide treatment for opioid use disorder.

The downward trend in overdose deaths followed the release of the Pritzker administration's 2022 State of Illinois Overdose Action Plan. The plan was based on three pillars: prevention (preventing the further spread of the opioid epidemic), treatment and recovery (providing evidence-based treatment and recovery services), and response (averting overdose deaths).

The newly revised Overdose Data Dashboard was developed by IDPH staff in various divisions of the agency in cooperation with partners at IDHS and other stakeholders. It provides additional data in a format that is easier to use than the old dashboard. The expanded dashboard includes data on additional substances, such as cocaine, benzodiazepines, psychostimulants, and alcohol, and allows users to download data.

IDPH will be offering online training sessions for users of the dashboard on March 19, 2025 at 10:30am. Please register [here](#).

If you or someone you know has an opioid use disorder, there is help, including treatment, available immediately, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With the Medication Assisted Recovery Now (MAR



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NOW) service, a care manager can help callers determine the best treatment options and connect them to a provider for an immediate telephone appointment and medication prescription. Care managers can also facilitate a same- or next-day, in-person appointment. Callers are connected to ongoing treatment with a community provider that best meets their needs. To connect with a MAR NOW care manager, visit the Illinois Helpline online at <https://helplineil.org>, call 833-234-6343, or text “HELP” to 833234.

For more information on opioids, visit <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/opioids.html>.

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