

## **Description of Quarterly Reports from the Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention (ODSMP)**

### **Quarterly Overdose Death Data Report**

This report highlights trends in overdose deaths for residents of the county for which the report was created, regardless of which Pennsylvania County the resident died in. Annual counts of overdose deaths are provided, as well as quarterly data trends and demographic rates. Drug combination trends are included for counties with sufficient counts to support breaking down the death data in this way. Counts, and rates associated with counts, between 1 and 5 are suppressed to protect decedent confidentiality. For the purposes of this report, an overdose death is defined as a death related to acute drug toxicity from any illicit, prescription, or over-the-counter drug, alone or in combination, but exclude deaths where alcohol is the only substance contributing to the acute toxicity event. Counts do not include suicides or homicides where someone intended to harm another person by poisoning. Please note that drug overdose deaths are typically reported by County of Death and this data is available on the ODSMP's [Drug Overdose Surveillance Interactive Data Report](#).

### **Quarterly Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Data Report**

This report highlights trends over time for Opioid, Benzodiazepine, Stimulant, and Buprenorphine Dispensations over time for County residents, as well as two Risky Prescribing measures:

1. The Number of County Residents receiving greater than 90 Average Daily Morphine Milligram Equivalent (MME). This metric is used to assess higher potential for opioid overdose as Average Daily MME between 50–99 has been found to increase risk for opioid overdose two-fold to five-fold compared with dosages of 1–19 MME/day, and dosages  $\geq 100$  MME/day increase risk of overdose up to nine times the risk at 1–19 MME/day<sup>1</sup>.
2. The Number of County Residents receiving greater than 30 days of overlapping opioid and benzodiazepine prescriptions. This metric is also used to assess higher potential for overdose as the use of benzodiazepines with opioids at least doubles the risk of respiratory arrest and death<sup>2</sup>.

Limited demographic data for County residents receiving Opioid prescriptions are also provided.

### **Quarterly Overdose-Related Emergency Department Data Report**

This report pulls data from Pennsylvania's syndromic surveillance system, EpiCenter, and highlights the count and rate of emergency department visits related to suspected drug overdoses from any illicit, prescription or over-the-counter substance, including alcohol, as well as the subset of overdoses suspected to be related to illicit or prescription opioids. Data is presented for County Residents regardless of where the overdose or emergency room visit occurred. Demographic breakdowns for the most recent quarter of data are also presented for counties with sufficient counts to support breaking down the non-fatal data in this way. Counts, and rates associated with counts, between 1 and 4 are suppressed to protect patient confidentiality. Please note that there are limitations associated with syndromic surveillance, including the fact that many overdose-related visits do not include drug specificity, so Suspected Opioid overdoses are likely underestimated, and these are events that do not get investigated by any local or state public health agency so they are estimates used for trend monitoring and should not be considered confirmed events used for "case counting" purposes. Please see the [Overdose Data Technical Notes](#) for additional details on the limitations associated with syndromic surveillance data.

Additional PDMP and overdose surveillance data, including the drugs involved in overdoses at the state and county levels, is available on the ODSMP's [Interactive Data Reports](#).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/providers/prescribing/faq.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Opioids/PA%20Guidelines%20on%20Benzo%20Prescribing.pdf>

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is there no data in my report?/Why didn't I receive a death data report?

A: For overdose death and PDMP data, counts (and associated rates) between 1 and 5 are suppressed in an effort to protect confidentiality. For Emergency Department data, counts (and associated rates) between 1 and 4 are suppressed. Custom aggregate reports can be requested by reaching out to [RA-DH-PDMP@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DH-PDMP@pa.gov) where data can be aggregated across larger timeframes in order to produce actionable data.

Q: Why have my overdose death data counts decreased for certain years since the last report?

A: Every 6 months, ODSMP reconciles case lists with CDC, which may result in changes to counts as cases are re-reviewed. More details about our case definition for overdose death can be found here in our [Overdose Data Technical Notes](#).

Q: Why are alcohol-only overdoses excluded from the overdose death data?

A: Currently, only drug overdose deaths are within the scope of our surveillance efforts. More information on alcohol-related deaths can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/features/excessive-alcohol-deaths.html>.

Q: Why are the emergency department visits "suspected" overdoses instead of actual overdoses?

A: Overdose is not a reportable condition in Pennsylvania and this data is gathered via Pennsylvania's syndromic surveillance system, EpiCenter. Individual overdose events identified via syndromic surveillance are not investigated for case ascertainment purposes.

Q: How do I know if the hospitals in my county are contributing to the Emergency Department data reports?

A: Currently, 100% of emergency departments in the state are connected to our syndromic surveillance system, EpiCenter. As new emergency departments open, the Department of Health will onboard and connect the facility to the EpiCenter system.

Q: How can I compare data from my county to other counties around me?

A: Additional PDMP and overdose surveillance data at the state and county levels is available on the ODSMP's [Interactive Data Reports](#). Please note that the Drug Overdose Surveillance Interactive Data Report provides overdose death data by county of death, while the Quarterly Reports aggregate data by county of residence. If you would like to receive reports for additional counties, please reach out to Carrie Thomas Goetz at [cathomasgo@pa.gov](mailto:cathomasgo@pa.gov).