Confronting the Crisis of Our Generation

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN COLORADO

FEBRUARY 2018

Drug Poisoning Deaths in Colorado, 1999-2016

The Point: Nearly three Coloradans a day die from drug overdoses, and opioids now cause more than half of those deaths.

Prescription Opioid and Heroin Overdose Death Rate in Colorado, 1999-2016

The Point: The death rate for prescription opioids leveled off in 2007, but heroin deaths are rising dramatically.

Source for both graphics: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

coloradohealthinstitute.org
Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rate by Colorado Region, 2014-2016 Average

Deaths per 100,000 people

- 2.1 to 5.5
- 5.6 to 8.0
- 8.1 to 11.7
- 11.8 to 16.0

The Point: Overdoses as a percentage of the population are most severe in the Denver metro area, the San Luis Valley and southeast Colorado.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Rate of Opioid Prescriptions in Colorado Counties, 2016

Prescriptions per 100 residents

- 41.0 to 68.3
- 68.4 to 91.2
- 91.3 to 111.8
- 111.9 to 150.4

The Point: Several counties, including some with the highest overdose death rates, have one or more opioid prescriptions per year for every resident.

Source: Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), 2016
**Addiction Rates in Colorado, 2003-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prescription Opioids</th>
<th>Heroin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-06</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-10</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-14</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

**The Point:** It’s less common now than 12 years ago for Coloradans to be dependent on prescription opioids, but the rate of heroin dependency is rising steeply.

**80%** of heroin users reportedly started their opioid use with prescription pain relievers.

**Source for both graphics above:** National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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**Number of Medication-Assisted Treatment Locations by County, April 2017**

- **No Treatment Locations**
- **1 Treatment Location**
- **2 to 10 Treatment Locations**
- **11+ Treatment Locations**

**The Point:** Much of rural Colorado lacks access to the most effective opioid dependency therapy — medication-assisted treatment.

**Source:** Colorado Health Institute analysis of federal prescriber data

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**Initial Prescription Influences Long-Term Use**

**The Point:** Even a five-day prescription begins to increase the likelihood of long-term opioid use by patients. A caveat: Some long-duration prescriptions are likely written for patients with chronic pain who might be expected to use opioids for a year or more.

**Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Evidence-Based Foundations of a Public Policy to Combat Substance Use and Opioids

**Prevention and Provider Practice**
- Social resources to steer youth and adults away from substance use
- Prescriber education about the risk of opioid dependency and alternative pain management treatments
- Smaller initial supply of prescription painkillers

**Treatment**
- Access to medication-assisted treatment
- Reduced stigma for those seeking treatment
- Insurance benefits for range of options, ranging from outpatient therapy to residential treatment

**Harm Reduction**
- Wide availability of Naloxone (anti-overdose drug)
- Availability of clean needles
- Supervised injection facilities

### Colorado General Assembly Substance Use Legislation Package, 2018

**Where does each bill fit into the three foundations outlined above?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Harm Reduction</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Bill 1003</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>In Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>More research and grants for screening and treatment</td>
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<td>House Bill 1007</td>
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<td>Insurance payment for substance use treatment</td>
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<td>House Bill 1136</td>
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<td>Medicaid waiver to pay for residential treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate Bill 22</td>
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<td>In Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven-day prescription limit for opioid painkillers</td>
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<td>Senate Bill 24</td>
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<td>Expand counselor workforce through incentives</td>
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<td>Senate Bill 40</td>
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<td>Defeated February 14 in Senate committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permit a supervised injection facility pilot</td>
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Learn more on our website: [www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/opioids](http://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/opioids)