

OVERDOSE DATA TO ACTION

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THEME: OD2A YIELDS RESULTS

DECEMBER 2022

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY OVERDOSE DATA TO ACTION (OD2A) GRANT FRAMEWORK

The Public Health Services department, in the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA), is one of the recipients of the Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant awarded, in 2019, by the Centers of Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Grantees were awarded funding to focus on surveillance and prevention strategies. This quarterly newsletter serves as a communication tool to 1) highlight new and innovative ways to identify and collect data and 2) share prevention strategies to address drug misuse and overdose. Through innovative surveillance activities linked with evidence-based prevention, the County is motivated to reduce opioid use disorder, increase resources for treatment, reduce emergency department visits and deaths, and protect the health and safety of San Diego County communities. 🌱

*Let's Examine, Enlighten, and Empower
San Diego.*



Figure 1.

The image above illustrates the key strategies of the OD2A grant. Please view the next page for more information on the 5 key strategies.
Image Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022

Overdose Data To Action Surveillance & Prevention Grant Strategies



Surveillance Strategy

- **Innovative Surveillance Strategy:** Focus on new and innovative ways to collect data on drug misuse and overdose tailored to a community's needs. (Strategy 3)

Prevention Strategies

- **Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs):** Better utilize prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data to inform prescribing practices. (Strategy 4)
- **State and Local Integration:** Improve state and local prevention efforts to build more effective and sustainable surveillance and implement community-level interventions. (Strategy 5)
- **Linkage to Care:** Ensure people are connected to the care they need by leveraging systems and upstream prevention efforts. Such as, developing a system to track care connections to Medication Assisted Treatment for individuals experiencing nonfatal overdoses. (Strategy 6)
- **Provider and Health Systems Support:** Support healthcare providers and health systems with drug overdose prevention and response, including expanding the use of evidence-based prescribing and treatment practices. (Strategy 7) 🌟

NO-COST OPIOID TRAINING COURSE WITH CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

Strategy 4, 5 & 7

The Public Health Services department, in the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA), has partnered with Champions for Health and The Doctor's Company to develop a self-paced no-cost opioid training course for health care professionals. The curriculum is entitled *Innovations and Smart Approaches in Safe Prescribing* and is comprised of a series of on-demand courses, at no cost.



Course content includes eliminating internal bias regarding opioid use disorder, providing alternatives to opioids, safe prescribing of opioids, and treatment of substance use disorder.

Other topics include opioid stewardship, benzodiazepine stewardship, opioid and benzodiazepine tapering, and naloxone instruction.

These training tools can be accessed online.

If interested in learning more about substance use disorder (SUD), SUD treatment & safe opioid prescribing, please view the [no-cost opioid training course](#). Participants can obtain CME credit upon completion. 🌟

Academic Detailing: Schedule a FREE consult with a safe prescribing expert!

Would you like an opportunity to engage in a personalized, virtual, one-on-one Q&A with a safe prescribing expert? Sessions are about 30 minutes, and completely customizable to fit your schedule. Topics on safe and practical alternatives to opioids, benzodiazepine stewardship, opioid and benzodiazepine tapering, buprenorphine training, and naloxone.

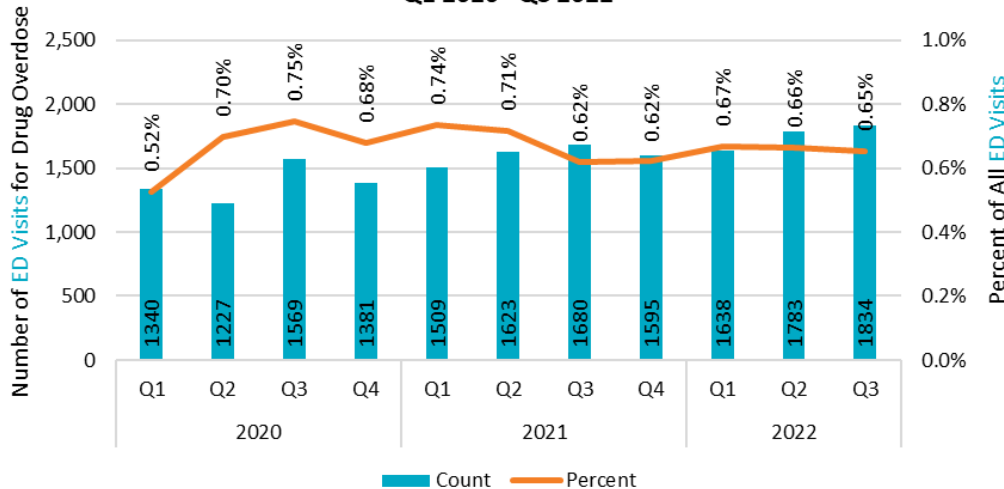
If you are interested in scheduling a session, please contact Katy Rogers at katy.rogers@championsfh.org or (619) 508-4460. 🌟

Drug Overdose Surveillance in San Diego County

Strategy 3

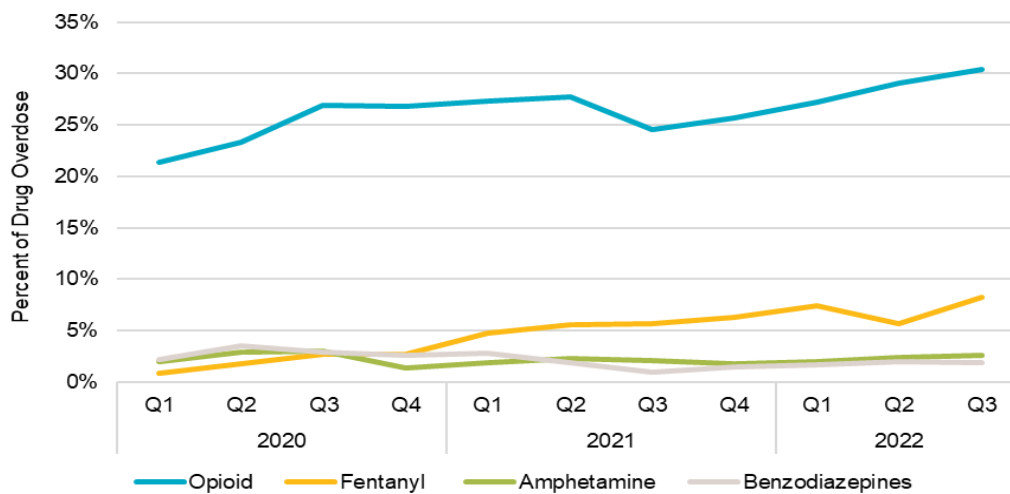
The County of San Diego's Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch conducts drug overdose surveillance using emergency department (ED) data from 16 hospitals. On December 13, 2022, the County Board of Supervisors approved the development of an overdose unit in the Epidemiology and Immunization Services branch of the Public Health Services department.

Figure 2. Emergency Department Visits for Drug Overdose, Q1 2020 - Q3 2022



- Figure 2 shows the number of ED visits for drug overdoses increasing from quarter 1, 2020, through quarter 3, 2022, while averaging 0.7% of all ED visits.

Figure 3. Emergency Department Visits for Drug Overdoses by Drug¹, Q1 2020 - Q3 2022



- Figure 3 displays the proportion of ED overdose visits by select drugs. In quarter 3, 2022, opioid-related overdoses accounted for 29% of all drug overdoses.

¹Drugs are categorized based on key words in chief complaint data and ICD-10 diagnostic codes when available. They may not represent the final diagnosis. Categories are not mutually exclusive; a single ED visit may involve more than one drug category.

IMPORTANT CURES 2.0 UPDATES

Strategy 4

What is CURES 2.0?

Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System

(CURES) 2.0, is the California Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). CURES 2.0 helps health care providers make informed prescribing and dispensing decisions.

The mandate to consult CURES 2.0 prior to prescribing, ordering, or administering a Schedule II-IV controlled substance became effective on October 2, 2018. This instructs prescribers to review a patient's controlled substance history and to make informed decisions prior to prescribing a controlled substance. There are exemptions to consulting CURES 2.0.

Please review [CURES Mandatory Use Reference sheet](#) for more information.

CURES 2.0 Updates

On April 11, 2022, CURES 2.0 was updated to provide an improved user interface and new system features, including functionality mandated through recent legislation.

Below are some important CURES 2.0 updates to the Patient Activity Reports (PAR):

- Search the previous 24 months.
- Perform an interstate search.
- Includes morphine milligram equivalents (MME) information.
- Includes prescription serial number.
- Verify serialized prescription as lost/stolen/authorized by the prescriber and/or dispensed by pharmacy.

A prescriber is defined as a licensed medical professional (i.e., physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, dentist, or other health care personnel) permitted to issue prescriptions for drugs for human use. 🌐



CURES 2.0 PATIENT ALERTS

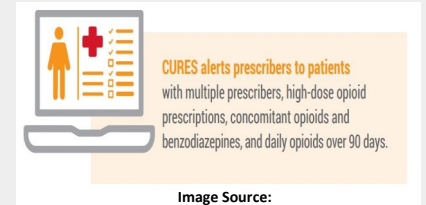


Image Source:
State of California
Department of Justice, CURES 2.0, 2022

While many electronic health record (EHR) systems provide a direct link to CURES 2.0 patient activity reports, it is very important for prescribers to refer back to the CURES 2.0 website regularly for system updates, secure peer-to-peer messaging about a mutual patient, and to review their CURES 2.0 alerts. CURES 2.0 provides alerts to health care practitioners when a patient's aggregate prescription level exceeds certain thresholds.

These thresholds are:

1. Patient is currently prescribed more than 90 morphine milligram equivalents per day
2. Patient has obtained prescriptions from 6 or more prescribers or 6 or more pharmacies during last 6 months
3. Patient is currently prescribed more than 40 morphine milligram equivalents of methadone daily
4. Patient is currently prescribed opioids more than 90 consecutive days
5. Patient is currently prescribed both benzodiazepines and opioids

The purpose of CURES 2.0 is to reduce the illegal distribution and abuse of prescription drugs and to prevent prescription drug use for the purposes not intended by the prescriber. Reviewing your patients' activity reports regularly and checking for CURES 2.0 alerts help reduce drug overdoses and deaths. 🌐

Important CURES 2.0 Tools

Strategy 4

What is the Save Search List?

Image Source:
State of California
Department of Justice, CURES 2.0, 2022

One of several useful tools in CURES 2.0 is the “Save Search List.” With this tool, prescribers have the ability to save patient searches. Each time a prescriber logs in, the prescriber can select a previously saved search to review patient activity reports with more ease.

What is Peer-to-Peer Communication?

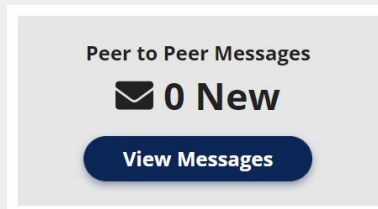


Image Source:
State of California
Department of Justice, CURES 2.0, 2022

Peer-to-Peer Communication is a secure messaging tool available on the CURES 2.0 website. This allows users to have the ability to send messages to and receive messages from other CURES 2.0 users who have prescribed to a mutual patient. We encourage prescribers to use peer to peer communication more often. If you suspect prescription medication abuse or have concerns about a patient’s controlled substance history, contact the prescriber(s) listed on the patient’s activity report (PAR).

For more information about CURES 2.0 and its features, please visit [CURES Frequently Asked Questions](#). 🌐

Calling ALL PROVIDERS to participate in a needs assessment SURVEY!

Public Health Services is asking all physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, dental practitioners, and pharmacists to participate in a needs assessment survey for the County of San Diego Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant. The purpose of this survey is to identify access to and use of California’s prescription drug monitoring program, **CURES 2.0 (Controlled Substances Utilization Review and Evaluation System)**. Your feedback will provide valuable insight into the use of the CURES system, particularly tools such as delegation, patient contracts, and messaging among licensed health care providers in San Diego County.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. Your responses will remain confidential and will be grouped with those of other respondents for reporting. ***The deadline for completion has been extended to January 31, 2023.*** 🌐

Please use the link below to take the survey : <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NH2BMBM>

The Overdose Data to Action grant is designed to use surveillance data to inform evidence-based strategies to address the opioid crisis. California's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES 2.0) is a database of Schedule II-V controlled substance prescriptions dispensed in California. The County OD2A evaluation team in Public Health Services analyzed de-identified CURES data, from 2019 to 2021, to assess prescribing behavior. The overall prescribing trends provide valuable information to inform continuing efforts in opioid stewardship and provider education.

Key Findings Comparing Data Metrics 2020-2021

- The number of prescriptions decreased by 2%.
- Average daily dose decreased by 2%.
- Average days supply per patient decreased by 5%.
- The number of prescriptions written for over 50 morphine milligram equivalent (MME)/day decreased by 12%.

**Figure 4. Location of All Prescribers in CURES 2.0
San Diego County, 2021.**

Number of Prescribers Frequency

- 1-58
- 59-157
- 158 - 344
- 344 - 588
- 589 - 1125

Healthy Places Index Quartiles

HPI Quartiles

- 1-Less Healthy
- 2
- 3
- 4- More Healthy
- No Data

Learning about Medical Examiner Notifications

Meet Dr. Steve Campman

San Diego County Medical Examiner

Strategy 4



On October 26, 2017, the opioid crisis was declared a national public health emergency under federal law. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 534 unintentional deaths due to prescribed or illicit opioid use in San Diego County, with only 13% excluding fentanyl. In 2021, there were 873 unintentional deaths due to prescribed or illicit opioid use, with only 7% excluding fentanyl. The County Public Health Services (PHS) and the Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) Departments are working to monitor overdose mortality from prescription drugs to help combat this epidemic. Please learn more about this collaboration and the development of medical examiner notifications through a recent interview with San Diego County Medical Examiner, Dr. Steven C. Campman.

1. **Q:** Please explain the goal of distributing the joint medical examiner & health officer notifications to prescribers whose patients have died from a prescription overdose.
A: The goal is to increase safety regarding patients using prescription opioids and reduce future deaths from prescription drug overdoses.
2. **Q:** Are other counties/states doing the same?
A: New York City had a similar program before the County studied the process. Between July 2015 and June 2016, the County conducted a randomized trial of 861 clinicians. After publishing the findings, in 2018, other states and counties requested a copy of the medical examiner's notification letter.
3. **Q:** When did you begin implementing the joint medical examiner & health officer notification letter?
A: The Medical Examiner & Health Officer began developing the joint notification process in 2019 and 2020, but it was side-tracked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The process was finalized in August 2021.
4. **Q:** What are some recommendations you would give prescribers to decrease the risk of receiving a joint medical examiner & health officer notification?
A: Consult CURES 2.0; prescribe opioids judiciously; taper opioids to safer doses; offer naloxone to high-risk patients; determine if patient meets criteria for opioid use disorder; and integrate resources and tools into your practice.
5. **Q:** What are common trends you see regarding prescribed medications and illicit drug use and deaths?
A: Since the initial study, the Medical Examiner has seen that only occasional accidental overdose deaths are due to taking prescribed drugs – most are now from taking illicitly manufactured and obtained drugs, especially fentanyl. Another trend is that most overdose involve more than just one drug. A common combination is fentanyl and methamphetamine.

To date, only one joint medical examiner and health officer notification letter has been issued. This illustrates how the cause of death has shifted from prescription drugs to illicit drugs. 🌱

PRESCRIPTION DISPOSAL

Raising awareness about the proper use, storage, and disposal of prescription medication creates safer homes and communities. The theft of prescription medicine, more specifically controlled substances, is a serious and dangerous problem. Educate your patients on ways to properly store and dispose of old prescriptions. The following link displays an interactive map of prescription drug drop-off site locations in San Diego County.

[Prescription Drug Drop-Off Site Interactive Map \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/prescription-drug-drop-off-site-interactive-map)



Please share the following public service announcement link with your patients to illustrate the importance of proper medication disposal.

[Keep Kids Safe PSA - Scott Silverman - YouTube](#) 🌱



Naloxone



Naloxone is a lifesaving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose when administered to individuals who are acutely experiencing an overdose. Due to rising deaths, from illicit opioid overdoses in the region, enhanced distribution of naloxone into the hands of community members is vital in saving lives that might otherwise be lost. 🌈

Syringe Service Programs in San Diego

Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) provide essential harm reduction services and resources to people who use drugs. Currently, there are two SSPs in San Diego.

On Point (Harm Reduction Coalition of San Diego)

Phone: 1-888-NARCAN-0

(1-888-627-2260)

Hours (phone line):

Monday – Saturday, 8am-9pm

Email: harmreduxs@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.hrcsd.org/>

Safe Point San Diego (Family Health Centers of SD)

Address: Imperial Ave and 16th Street

Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays,
6pm-9pm

Address: North Park Way and 31st Street

Hours: Fridays, 11am-1pm

Phone: 619-993-0216

Website: <https://www.fhcsd.org/syringe-services-program/>

County of San Diego Naloxone Distribution Program

Strategy 5

Overdose deaths continue to rise, both nationally and locally, with illicit fentanyl contributing to a large proportion of these deaths. Preliminary 2021 data from the County of San Diego's Medical Examiner Office indicate opioids were involved in 822 drug overdose deaths; among these, 743 (90%) involved fentanyl. These numbers continue to increase as pending cases are closed. Notably, from 2019 to 2021, the rate of accidental illicit fentanyl overdose deaths increased by 415%.

With the support of Overdose to Data Action (OD2A) grant funds, on July 1, 2022, the County of San Diego executed a contract with the Harm Reduction Coalition of San Diego (HRCSD) to expand upon the County's naloxone distribution network and saturate the community with naloxone.

The Naloxone Distribution Program integrates focused outreach

and training efforts, partnerships with community-based programs, and the implementation of naloxone vending machines. The overarching goal is to distribute 33,000 naloxone kits by June 30, 2023. Community interest and support in this program has been tremendous, resulting in numerous inquiries from local media, community organizations, and individuals seeking information and training opportunities.



Since launching the program, HRCSD has distributed an estimated **4,900 (14.8%) kits** to community members. Additionally, HRCSD has ordered the first of 12 naloxone vending machines to be placed throughout San Diego County. **The first naloxone vending machine will be placed at the McAlister Institute South Bay Regional Recovery Center in Chula Vista, in early 2023.**

Providers play a critical role in raising awareness about naloxone. Talking with your patients, especially those at high risk of experiencing or witnessing an overdose, about the risks of overdose and how to access naloxone can save lives!

For more information on how to receive a naloxone training, access naloxone, or become a naloxone distribution provider, contact the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services Harm Reduction Team at HarmReduction.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov. 🌈

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

PLEASE VISIT: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/overdose>

FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR SUGGESTIONS,

PLEASE EMAIL:

PHS.OD2A@sdcounty.ca.gov

The Public Health Services department, in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), in collaboration with HHSA Behavioral Health Services department, would like to thank the medical community for their efforts and support during the opioid epidemic. While the County is seeing a decrease in the morphine milligram equivalent (MME) dosage and the overall number of opioids prescribed in San Diego County, the medical community must remain vigilant and persistent as the illicit opioid-related overdose numbers continue to climb. It is the intent of this OD2A grant to promote efforts in opioid surveillance, prevention, linkages to care, and treatment to reduce overdoses related to opioid prescription drugs, as well as reduce illicit opioid drug use.

The Overdose Data to Action Quarterly

Newsletter is published by the Public Health Services department, in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA).

Below are the editors:

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Public Health Officer

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Physician Assistant

This newsletter is produced as a result of funding from the CDC Overdose Data To Action (OD2A) grant with a focus on five surveillance & prevention strategies. These activities are implemented by Public Health Services (PHS) and Behavioral Health Services (BHS).

Below are the OD2A Strategy Leads

Surveillance Strategy 3:	Jennifer Nelson, Senior Epidemiologist Sarah Rosenberg, Epidemiologist
Prevention Strategy 4 & 7:	Wilma J. Wooten, MD, MPH, Public Health Officer Ashley Denise Cruz, MSPAS, MPH, Physician Assistant Alena Schwob, Program Coordinator
Prevention Strategy 5 & 6:	Danyte Mockus-Valenzuela, Health Planning & Program Specialist Stephanie Lao, Program Coordinator
Evaluation Lead:	Deirdre Brown, MPH, Senior Epidemiologist

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2022). Centers of Disease Control and Prevention Website, assessed 13 July 2022. <<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prevention/index.html>>.

²State of California Department of Justice. (2022). State of California Department of Justice Website, assess 20 July 2022. Frequently Asked Questions. <<https://oag.ca.gov/cures>>.

