

2020

Sussex County Overdose Fatality Program Annual Report



Sussex County Overdose Fatality Review Program 2020: Year 1 Report

An executive committee was formed in July of 2019 to explore the need and potential of establishing an Overdose Fatality Review Team in Sussex County. The committee met several times and developed affiliation and confidentiality agreements, drew up a letter inviting stakeholders to join the team and decided on a data collection form that would be used for the reviews.

On November 6, 2019, the Sussex County - OFRP was created by a resolution passed at the Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting. The resolution identified the membership of the team and stated the objectives of the team were to, “review the determining factors that cause or are correlated with fatal overdoses; developing strategies; review plans and programs to prevent and intervene with overdoses and individuals at high risk for overdoses; provide recommendations and implement changes to the policies and procedures of government agencies or private entities to improve communication and coordination among stakeholders.” The Office of Substance Abuse and Alcohol Services in the Division of Community and Youth Services was given the task of coordination of the team under the supervision of the Director of the Division of Health.

Invitations to join the team were presented to a variety of stakeholders in the community including the County’s Medical Examiner, the Sussex County Prosecutor, Atlantic Health Systems (Newton Medical Center), the Sussex County Divisions of Health, Community and Youth Services, and Social Services, substance use treatment and prevention providers, the Sussex County Sheriff, Sussex County Chiefs of Police Association, representatives of local EMS squads as well as the NY/NJ High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), the United State Drug Enforcement Administration, and the New Jersey Department of Health.

It was agreed that meetings would be held on the third Thursday of each month. Affiliation agreements were obtained from all participating entities and on January 23, 2020 the OFRT conducted its first review meeting. Four cases were identified and reviewed by the team.

Sussex County Overdose Decedent Data

At the end of 2020, 12 agencies were affiliated to conduct social autopsies with the Sussex County Overdose Fatality Review Program representing federal, state, county and local entities. The COVID-19 crisis impacted the ability of the team to meet until a secure virtual format was established. A total of 14 cases had been reviewed with 9 male cases (64%) and 5 female cases (36%). The ages in the reviewed cases ranged from the youngest decedent who died at the age of 25 to the oldest who died at the age of 62. In review of all cases from January 1, 2020-December 31, 2020, the following has been found:

* Please note this information is obtained by multiple agencies. Some data may be missing.

- ❖ 11 or 79% had a known criminal history
- ❖ 10 or 71% had been linked to substance use treatment
- ❖ 4 or 29% were reported to have underlying health issues
- ❖ 5 or 36% had been diagnosed or linked to mental health treatment
- ❖ 5 or 36% had been convicted of a DUI
- ❖ 5 or 36% had reported family substance use
- ❖ 7 or 50% were not employed
- ❖ 3 or 21% lost employment due to Covid-19
- ❖ 6 or 43% were identified as having ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Key Issues Identified in 2020

The recommendations and observations of the SC-OFRP could be organized into five general categories, which are outlined below. It is the recommendation of the SC-OFRP that providers should look at the issues below to see if they can facilitate any changes in their processes to address the items listed below.

Client Trends	Needed Programs/Gaps	Agency Policy and Procedures	County Level Issues	State Level Issues
<p>Primary Support issues -parental, spousal use -domestic violence -lack of support</p> <p>Use of benzodiazepines</p> <p>Chronic pain reported</p> <p>DUI prevalence</p> <p>History Trauma (ACE)</p> <p>Polysubstance use</p> <p>Clients were employed and had private insurance so data on treatment is unknown</p> <p>Domestic Violence reported in decedent cases</p> <p>Multiple criminal charges</p> <p>Underlying and untreated mental health issues</p>	<p>Case management for those with SUD</p> <p>Workforce development/case management</p> <p>More education for doctors and primary care</p> <p>Housing for those in recovery</p> <p>Increased prevention and early intervention programming</p> <p>Resource navigation to the families of those with SUD</p> <p>More trauma informed care for agencies</p>	<p>Enhanced supervision for clinicians and recovery specialist</p> <p>Discharge summaries with secured referrals, follow up procedures to ensure compliance</p> <p>Ensure consents are being obtained to get an accurate history</p> <p>Tracking of clients after discharge for compliance, provide assistance if needed</p> <p>PMP checks and mandatory urine screens for decedents receiving multiple prescriptions</p> <p>Education on potential of relapse to those in recovery</p>	<p>Need for improved communication</p> <p>PMP being checked</p> <p>Uncontracted providers need to participate in OFRP</p>	<p>NJSAMS</p> <p>Access to school records</p> <p>Need for standardization in data</p> <p>Flexibility in record sharing</p> <p>Expansion of legislation to include PMP, medication counseling, and urine screens mandatory and doctor compliance supervised</p> <p>A Baker's Act for NJ</p>

Sussex County Data

The SC-OFRP aims to have transparency in its process and corresponding data collection.

2007-2019 County Percentages of Total Admissions as per NJSAMS

2007- Essex (14.3%), Monmouth (8.0%), Camden (6.9%), Ocean (7.2%), **Sussex (1.9%)** of 60,868 admissions
2008- Essex (12.5%), Monmouth (8.3%), Camden (7.5%), Ocean (7.5%), **Sussex (2.1%)** of 65,371 admissions
2009- Essex (11.1%), Monmouth (8.8%), Camden (8.2%), Ocean (8.0%), **Sussex (2.3%)** of 71,209 admissions
2010- Essex (9.7%), Monmouth (9.3%), Ocean (8.6%), Camden (7.4%), **Sussex (2.4%)** of 73,583 admissions
2011- Monmouth (9.8%), Ocean (9.0%), Essex (9.0%), Camden (7.9%), **Sussex (2.0%)** of 75,497 admissions
2012- Monmouth (9.5%), Ocean (8.8%), Essex (8.7%), Camden (8.2%), **Sussex (1.7%)** of 77,019 admissions
2013- Ocean (9.6%), Monmouth (9.5%), Essex (8.1%), Camden (7.8%), **Sussex (1.8%)** of 75,491 admissions
2014- Ocean (10.0%), Monmouth (9.2%), Essex (8.6%), Camden (7.9%), **Sussex (1.8%)** of 65,561 admissions
2015- Ocean (10.2%), Monmouth (8.7%), Essex (8.5%), Camden (7.6%), **Sussex (1.6%)** of 69,483 admissions
2016- Ocean (9.5%), Camden (8.6%), Essex (8.5%), Monmouth (8.1%), **Sussex (1.7%)** of 76,731 admissions
2017- Ocean (9.2%), Camden (8.9%), Essex (8.9%), Monmouth (7.6%), **Sussex (1.5%)** of 82,744 admissions
2018- Essex (9.4%), Camden (8.6%), Ocean (8.6%), Monmouth (7.7%), **Sussex (1.6%)** of 89,727 admissions
2019- Camden (8.9%), Essex (8.5%), Ocean (8.5%), Monmouth (7.3%), **Sussex (1.6%)** of 98,727 admissions

2007-2019 Percentages of Admission for Opioid Use

2007- 41.6% (25,345 admissions)
2008- 40.2% (26,259 admissions)
2009- 40.4% (28,777 admissions)
2010- 39.9% (29,337 admissions)
2011- 41.4% (31,292 admissions)
2012- 43.7% (33,678 admissions)
2013- 44.4% (33,553 admissions)
2014- 43.8% (28,717 admissions)
2015- 46.9% (32,583 admissions)
2016- 50.2% (38,486 admissions)
2017- 51.2% (42,380 admissions)
2018- 50.4% (45,197 admissions)
2019- 48.3% (47,733 admissions)

Sussex County has remained relatively stable in the number of overall admissions since 2007. However, there was a 11.3% increase in admissions for Opioid Use between 2010 and 2017.

New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System, Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions Sussex County Residents (%)													
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Under 18	5.1%	5.3%	5.3%	5.4%	5.2%	5.2%	4.4%	2.5%	2.8%	2.1%	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%
18-21	9.3%	10.5%	11.1%	11.3%	11.2%	11.3%	9.9%	8.4%	7.4%	6.9%	5.9%	4.7%	4.1%
22-24	8.9%	9.6%	10.4%	11.0%	12.2%	12.2%	12.4%	11.7%	10.8%	10.5%	9.3%	7.8%	6.5%
25-29	13.4%	14.6%	15.2%	15.7%	16.0%	16.8%	18.0%	19.2%	19.4%	18.9%	19.3%	18.4%	17.1%
30-34	11.2%	11.0%	11.3%	12.1%	12.9%	13.4%	14.4%	15.6%	16.3%	16.2%	16.6%	16.9%	17.3%
35-44	28.7%	25.6%	23.6%	21.1%	19.8%	18.8%	18.9%	19.7%	19.8%	20.2%	21.5%	23.1%	24.1%
45-54	19%	18.9%	18.3%	18.2%	17.3%	16.7%	16.3%	16.6%	16.7%	17.1%	17.1%	17.5%	18.2%
55 and Over	4.3%	4.6%	4.7%	5.3%	5.3%	5.6%	6.1%	6.2%	6.8%	8.1%	8.6%	10.3%	11.3%

NJCARES Historic Data							
Sussex County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Suspected Overdose Death	13	17	25	36	36	34	41
Naloxone Administration	n/a	n/a	50	74	146	127	121
Opioid Prescriptions Dispensed	90,629	90,600	89,363	81,932	81,085	72,476	70,329
https://www.njcares.org , retrieved 2/28/2021							

- There are an estimated **12,745** adult problem drinkers or **11.2%** of the adult population in Sussex County in need of treatment.
- There are an estimated **8,931** adult problem drug users or **7.9%** of the adult population in need of treatment.
- That is an additional **21,676 or 19.1%** not captured in the information we are discussing
- That is bigger than every municipality population in Sussex County except Vernon Township.

Estimate of Treatment Need for Alcohol and Drug Addiction New Jersey 2010 retrieved: https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/publications/need/T_x_by_Type_2010.pdf on 3/3/21

Reflections on 2020

Successes

- The implementation of the Overdose Fatality Review Program brought together many partners in the community and enabled an increased sharing of information and data regarding the prevalence of substance use disorder and the potential for overdose.
- The inclusion of interviews of decedent's family and loved-ones by the social workers from the NJ DOH has been a critical success in that they provided insight into the stigma and feelings of helplessness in finding services and supports for persons with SUD. This has led to the recognition of the need for communicating the availability of services and supports in Sussex County.
- COVID-19 threatened to bring a halt to the review team's efforts. This was overcome when Sussex County became the first county in New Jersey to conduct virtual reviews via Zoom.
- The team recognized the importance of obtaining information from the Sussex County Intoxicated Driver's Resource Center and added a representative to the team.
- The team recognized the prevalence of Mental Health issues in many of the cases reviewed and asked members of the Mental Health Treatment community to become part of the review process, both for data capture and insight.

Barriers

- Some agencies are unable to participate in the fatality review due to confidentiality. This has resulted in significant gaps in information.
- The shutdown that COVID brought about impacted the ability for partners to participate in reviews.
- The reluctance of families to participate in interviews or share information has been an obstacle.
- The educational community has not been an active participant.
- Recovery supports are lacking in many (if not all) workplaces and employers are reticent to discuss the inclusion of employee assistance services.

**Thank you to the Sussex County Board of County Commissioners
and Sussex County Department of Health and Human Services for your support!**

For more information on the Sussex County Overdose Fatality Review Program, please contact:

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