

KEY FINDINGS



The Overdose Crisis In Florida:

A Critical Analysis of Recent Trends and Recommendations for Sustaining Effective Interventions

Overdose deaths in the United States reached record levels in 2022

- The latest data from the CDC show that in 2022 more than 110,000 people died from drug overdoses nationwide – more than 300 people each day
- This tragically high level of overdose deaths shows little change from the alarming new highs seen during the COVID-19 pandemic

In Florida, there were some encouraging signs as overdose deaths declined for the first time since 2018

- In a positive development, Florida witnessed a 2.6% decrease in drug overdose fatalities in 2022, marking the first decline in four years
- Some counties previously burdened with high overdose death rates have seen impressive reductions, indicating targeted interventions and community initiatives are having positive impact
- In contrast, several counties with lower death rates are now experiencing escalating numbers, suggesting new challenges might be affecting previously less-impacted areas

Prescription opioids are contributing less to the crisis than before

- In the first phase of the opioid crisis, beginning in the late 1990s, the over-prescription of painkillers, fueled by misinformation about addiction risks, led to a surge in misuse and overdose deaths
- Around 2010, following tighter regulations on prescription opioids, addicted individuals turned to more accessible heroin, causing a sharp rise in heroin-related overdose deaths

Fentanyl remains the major driver of the opioid crisis, implicated in the majority of overdose deaths

- Starting in 2013, the crisis intensified with the emergence of synthetic opioids, particularly illicitly manufactured fentanyl, causing a significant increase in overdose deaths
- More than 450,000 Americans have died of drug overdose since a national public health emergency was declared in 2017
- Two thirds of overdose deaths are now attributable to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids

Opioid-related deaths are skyrocketing affecting younger Americans, with no corresponding increase in drug-seeking behavior, indicating growing risks for the “opioid naïve”

- Overdose is now the leading cause of death among those aged 18 to 49
- Fatal overdoses among adolescents, 14- to 18-year-olds, jumped an alarming 94% in 2020 (versus 29.5% for the overall population) and a further 20% (versus 11.5% for the overall population) in 2021

Medications such as naloxone and buprenorphine have proven to be useful tools in addressing the opioid crisis

- The wider availability of naloxone has undoubtedly saved numerous lives in recent years, but its usage may simultaneously obscure the full extent of the opioid crisis, as death totals could underrepresent the number of opioid overdoses occurring
- Despite recent regulatory changes aimed at expanding access to buprenorphine, data show that actual prescriptions of the medication have not increased significantly