



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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2016 Drug Overdose Deaths Reach 613, Vast Majority from Opioids

PITTSBURGH – Dr. Karl E. Williams, Allegheny County Medical Examiner, announced today that 613 drug overdose deaths occurred in the county last year, an increase from the 2015 number of 424. Opioids have been found in three-quarters of the overdoses, with the vast majority (95%) of those cases including either fentanyl or heroin.

“This rise is fueled by the opioid class of drugs, and follows a pattern seen throughout the larger Appalachian and Midwest regions,” said Dr. Williams. “For the past several years, we have seen a progressive increase in the contribution of fentanyl. In 2016, for the first time, fentanyl occurs more frequently than heroin in the multidrug mixtures typically seen in these overdoses.”

The data on the cases also showed a trend in the emergence of a variety of new synthetic opioids which includes analogues of fentanyl, but also additional synthetics with opioid-like effects in the brain. Dr. Williams noted that overdoses almost always involved more than one drug and that, in addition to the complex mixtures, there are still ongoing problems with alcohol, prescription medications, and the benzodiazepine class of drugs, in particular, Alprazolam.

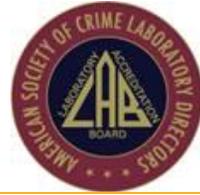
All available data on drug overdose deaths, including the demographics of the victims, locations of deaths, and drugs found in the cases, is being uploaded to www.overdosefreepa.pitt.edu. It is expected to be available at the end of the day today. Overdosefreepa.pitt.edu is a collaboration between Pennsylvania communities and organizations to increase community awareness and knowledge of overdose prevention strategies, as well as to support practices and initiatives that will decrease drug overdoses and deaths within our communities.

The overdose epidemic remains a focus of multiple county agencies. The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) monitors the administration of Naloxone by Pittsburgh EMS and the number of emergency room visits for which the chief complaint was overdose. In 2016, over 2,320 doses of Naloxone were administered while 5,698 visits were for overdose. In comparison, in 2015 there were 1,198 doses of Naloxone administered and 3,756 emergency room visits for overdose. The department continues to work with community organizations and pharmacies to obtain and dispense naloxone to individuals at risk of a heroin or opioid-related overdose, or those who may witness one. In addition, the department is actively working with providers and the highest risk communities to address the issue. For more information on the work ACHD is doing, visit: www.achd.net/overdoseprevention/.

The Department of Human Services continues to work with partner agencies to provide drug and alcohol services for adults. For those in need of immediate help due to a drug or alcohol related crisis, the Pennsylvania Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Crisis Hotline is staffed 24/7 by persons who providing screening and referrals immediately: 1-800-662-HELP (4357). For those with drug or alcohol related concerns, contact re:solve Crisis Network at 1-888-796-8226 (1-888-7 YOU CAN). Walk-ins are also accepted 24 hours a day, every day at 333 N. Braddock Avenue in Point Breeze. The network provides around-the-clock telephone, mobile crisis, walk-in and crisis overnight residential services that are available to any Allegheny County resident no matter age, ability to pay or whether they have used behavioral health services in the past. For more information on DHS programs, visit: <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Disabilities/Drug-Alcohol/Drug-and-Alcohol-Services-for-Adults.aspx>.

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