



***Heroin and Opioid Use and Treatment in Iowa: An Update***

Thought to be an issue only in major U.S. cities or more populated states, use of heroin and other opioids (Hydrocodone, Oxycodone) is quickly becoming a problem of epidemic proportions in more rural areas of the country. While alcohol and marijuana remain the primary substances of abuse in Iowa, in the last decade significant increases have been observed in the number of Iowans identifying heroin and other opioids as their drug of choice at time of admission to treatment, and in the number of overdose deaths.

**Treatment Admissions:**

Drug Classification	Number of admissions in 2005	Number of admissions in 2015
Heroin:	186	904
Other Opioids:	422	1,601

IDPH: Central Data Repository

**Overdose Deaths:**

Drug Classification	Number of overdose deaths in 2005	Number of overdose deaths in 2015
Heroin:	2	15
Other Opioids:	26	46*

\*Provisional Data - IDPH: Bureau of Health Statistics

***Why the increase?***

According to the CDC, in 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid pain relievers – enough for every American adult to have a bottle of pills. Prescription opioid sales in the United States have increased by 300% since 1999, even though there has not been an overall change in the amount of pain Americans report. In a study by the International Narcotics Control Board, the United States accounts for nearly 100% of the Hydrocodone used globally and 81% of Oxycodone used.

As people use opioids repeatedly, their tolerance increases and they may not be able to maintain their original source for the medication. This can lead them to turn to other sources and even switch from prescription drugs to cheaper and more risky substitutes like heroin. While no cause and effect relationship has been proven, prescription use and its possible connection to substance abuse and overdose warrants continued monitoring.

***How is opioid dependency treated?***

Several options are available for effectively treating prescription and other opioid dependence. These options include a combination of behavioral counseling approaches and medications such as Naltrexone, Methadone, and Buprenorphine.

***What treatment options are supported in Iowa?***

For the past 20 years, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has funded selected opioid treatment programs to provide medication assisted treatment to Iowans in the form of methadone maintenance. As approaches to medication assisted treatment continued to evolve, through its Access to Recovery (ATR) grant, IDPH began funding additional medications such as Naltrexone and Buprenorphine. In 2015, SAMHSA awarded IDPH a Medication Assisted Treatment – Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction (MAT-PDOA) grant to further support Iowa’s efforts in addressing opioid misuse.

***What is being done to prevent opioid overdose deaths?***

Almost every U.S. state has enacted legislation addressing abuse of opioids, both prescription medications and heroin, by deterring drug distribution, increasing treatment and legal diversion options, and expanding immunity programs to save lives. 46 states have laws providing immunity to medical professionals who prescribe or dispense naloxone or to persons, who administer naloxone ([National Conference of State Legislators](#)) as a means of preventing overdose death. In 2016, Governor Branstad signed *Senate File 2218* and *House File 2460* which increases availability of Naloxone for persons in position to assist.

For more information about heroin and opioid dependency treatment options in Iowa, please visit the IDPH Medication Assisted Treatment webpage at <http://idph.iowa.gov/mat>.