An epidemic of unintentional medication and drug overdose deaths continues to affect North Carolina. While the number of these deaths increased by more than 700 percent from 2000 through 2017, numbers have decreased by 7% from 2017 to 2019. The percent of unintentional medication and drug overdose deaths involving multiple substances is on the rise, and we continue to see increases not only in opiate-involved overdose deaths, but also stimulant-involved overdose deaths. It is important to keep in mind that we cannot tell from death certificates if individuals are intentionally using more than one substance. Fentanyl is now present in both opiate and stimulant products, which may be adding to the potency of these products, and in turn, leading to increased risk of unintentional overdose deaths.
Rates are per 100,000 NC residents

Illicit opioids, like heroin or fentanyl, are the largest contributors to unintentional overdose death, and increased in 2019. Overdose deaths involving cocaine, alcohol, psychostimulants or multiple substances also increased.

Please note: If a death involved multiple substances it can be included on more than one line.

Largest Increases and Decreases in Unintentional Overdose Death Rate by County, 2018-2019

Robeson (+112.7%)
Wilson (+108.2%)
Burke (+92.6%)
Harnett (+73.7%)
Edgecombe (+51.6%)

Jackson (-29.6%)
Orange (-31.6%)
Surry (-33.2%)
Nash (-42.5%)
Lincoln (-48.8%)

In red counties, the 2019 rate of overdose death was higher than the 2018 rate.
In purple counties, the 2019 rate of overdose death was lower than the 2018 rate.

Additional Resources for Addressing Drug Overdose in North Carolina

North Carolina’s Opioid Action Plan 2.0
The OAP was developed with community partners to combat the opioid crisis and will be continuously updated as we make progress on the epidemic.

North Carolina Opioid Action Plan Dashboard 2.0
Track and monitor the NC Opioid Action Plan data metrics; includes data for the state as well as local counties.

Syringe Service Programs in North Carolina
List of where to find your local syringe service program, including hours of operation and counties served.

Naloxone in North Carolina
Provides general information and where to locate naloxone in your community

Injury Epidemiology & Surveillance Unit/ 919-707-5425 / www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov
State of North Carolina / Department of Health and Human Services / www.ncdhhs.gov
NC DHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. FINAL 2019

The NC Injury and Violence Prevention Branch is supported by Cooperative Agreement NU17CE925024-01-01 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).