

The Drug Overdose Epidemic

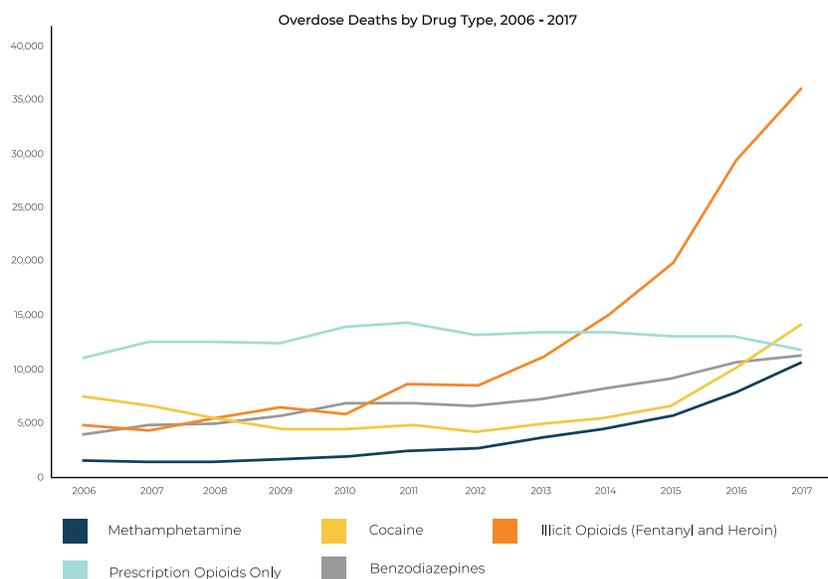
“[F]amilies, communities, and citizens across our country are currently dealing with the worst drug crisis in American history.”

- President Donald Trump (October 26, 2017)

Drug Overdose

In 2017, 70,237 Americans died from drug-related overdoses, a near two-fold increase from 2007.

- There were 47,600 overdose deaths involving an opioid, with 17,029 involving a prescription opioid.
- Opioid-related deaths were attributable largely to black-market fentanyl and heroin, which were involved in 28,400 and 15,482 deaths, respectively.
- Cocaine was involved in 13,942 deaths, up from 6,512 in 2007.
- Benzodiazepines were involved in 11,537 overdose deaths, up from 4,500 in 2007.
- Stimulants (e.g., methamphetamine) were involved in 10,333 deaths, up from 1,378 in 2007.



Substance Abuse Rates on the Rise

While national policymaking efforts have focused largely on stemming opioid addiction and overdose, some experts forecast that abuse of stimulants, including cocaine, methamphetamine, and prescription medications, will be that nation's next drug crisis.

In 2018, an estimated 2 million people aged 12 or older started using prescription pain relievers for nonmedical purposes for the first time while 2.1 million people started using stimulant drugs for nonmedical purposes. An estimated 3.2 million people reported using opioids for nonmedical reasons within the last month, while 4.6 million said the same about stimulants.

Misuse and abuse of benzodiazepines also continues to increase. In 2018, an estimated 1.8 million Americans aged 12 or older engaged in nonmedical use of prescription tranquilizers or sedatives, including benzodiazepines, during the prior month.

Treatment for Substance Use Disorders

Access to quality treatment for substance use disorders must keep pace with the magnitude of the current drug overdose crisis to stem the tide of death and disease.

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the evidence-based approach of combining behavioral therapies and counseling with FDA-approved medications for the treatment of an SUD. MAT is available for opioid use disorder (OUD), alcohol use disorder, and smoking.

There is consensus among experts that MAT is the gold standard for opioid use disorder (OUD).

Stimulant and benzodiazepine use disorders can be co-occurring with opioid use disorder. While there are three FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder, there are no approved medications for stimulant or benzodiazepine use disorder.

The emergency department is often the main point of contact with the medical system for individuals who abuse or overdose on stimulants or benzodiazepines.

The criminal justice system is another point of contact that provides opportunities intervention and referral to SUD treatment.

Practitioners, community leaders, recovery coaches, law enforcement, and government must work together to ensure that patients who need treatment have access to individualized evidence-based care from qualified professionals.

To learn more about SUD interventions and treatment, visit CUSP's Warm Handoff, Finding the "Me" in Treatment and Pre-Arrest Diversion Initiatives.