



Policy Brief

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"Opioid misuse and abuse is a public health crisis that is hurting every community in every corner of the state. By joining together with partners in health care, law enforcement, state, federal and local governments and public health, our action on opioids will be stronger, smarter and save lives. This Executive Order unites and prioritizes our state efforts around proven strategies for success."

— Governor Jay Inslee

October 2016

WASHINGTON STATE IS TAKING ACTION ON THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Opioids are a leading cause of unintentional injury death, even more than motor vehicle accidents or firearm fatalities.

In communities across Washington, the opioid epidemic is devastating families and overwhelming law enforcement and social services.

Washington has already taken important steps to address this epidemic. Our state developed first-in-the-nation guidelines to help healthcare providers treat pain, launched a Statewide Opioid Response Plan, and joined a multi-state compact.

Now Governor Jay Inslee is taking further action with an Executive Order to strengthen collaboration with partners around the state to implement our plan that prioritizes prevention, treatment and support, and improve use of data to make policy decisions that will save lives.

We have improved Rx practice and decreased deaths due to Rx opioids; however, we are now seeing the rate of heroin use and overdose deaths increase, especially among younger individuals, of which many misuse Rx opioids prior to using heroin.

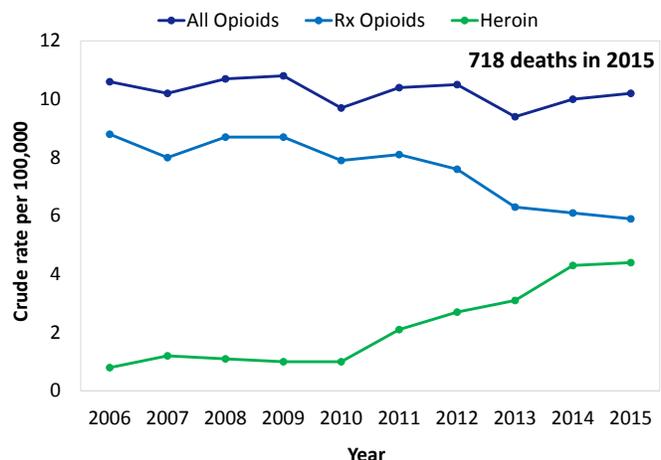
We need to focus on primary prevention to make sure the next generation is not exposed to unnecessary Rx opioids, heroin and other illicit drugs.

And we need to improve access to treatment to help people stop using opioids, including heroin.

Note: 652 unintentional opioid related deaths in Washington compared to 633 motor vehicle deaths and 164 firearm homicides (excludes 545 suicide deaths and 23 other deaths by firearm)

Rx opioid deaths are decreasing while heroin overdoses have risen sharply

Trends in WA state 2006-15, excluding falls



Source: Department of Health death certificates

KEY GOALS

Goal 1: Prevent inappropriate opioid prescriptions and use

- » Prevent the next generation of pain patients from using opioids if they don't need to by amending practice guidelines for prescribing providers with a focus on limiting adolescent prescriptions.
- » Use proven strategies for prevention education. We will develop a communication strategy geared to youth, to patients and to the community, and use our existing safe drug storage and disposal programs (e.g. drug take-back programs) to distribute prevention information.
- » Expand tele-mentoring programs, such as UW TelePain and begin a pharmacy hotline program.
- » Decrease the supply of illegal opioids like heroin and Fentanyl in our state. The Attorney General's Office will convene a summit in partnership with the Washington State Patrol and prosecutors, courts, and local and federal law enforcement agencies to develop strategies.

Goal 2: Treat people with opioid use disorder and link them to support services, including housing

- » Support and implement behavioral health integration strategies and center of excellence models. This includes screening for opioid use disorder in primary care and increasing medication-assisted and other treatments in a culturally appropriate and accessible manner.
- » Ensure availability of rapid, low-barrier access to treatment medications for people with opioid use disorder, especially pregnant women, intravenous drug users and those who are homeless. Explore new and existing funding sources to increase capacity in syringe exchanges and other evidenced-based programs.
- » Ensure recently released offenders with opioid use disorder are connected with care.
- » Reduce insurance and state program coverage barriers for treatment and services related to effective pain management, opioid use disorder and naloxone.

Goal 3: Save lives by intervening in overdoses

- » Educate opioid users and others on how to respond to an overdose and make sure those who are covered by Medicaid receive overdose education and access to naloxone.
- » Consider centralizing naloxone for bulk purchasing for public health use to increase availability.

Goal 4: Use data to focus and improve our work

- » Develop statewide measures to help better detect unsafe prescribing practices and identify patients at high risk of opioid use disorder.
- » Explore ways to improve functionality and use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program among health care providers.
- » Explore methods to notify health care providers when a patient has an opioid overdose event.

Partners in Action

- ◆ Lead state agencies: Department of Health, Health Care Authority, Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Labor and Industries, Department of Corrections, Attorney General's Office, Washington State Patrol, Office of the Insurance Commissioner, University of Washington, UW Medicine, UW Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, Agency Medical Directors Group, The Dr. Robert Bree Collaborative, and prescriber boards and commissions
- ◆ Many elected leaders, and counties, cities and tribal governments and boards of health
- ◆ Federal partners such as the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Drug Enforcement Agency.
- ◆ And important partners including: Washington State Medical Association, Washington State Hospital Association, Washington State Dental Association, Washington State Pharmacy Association, Washington State Nurses Association, The Washington Health Alliance, private practice physicians, clinics, hospitals and many others across the state