



July 12, 2018

Dear Legislator:

Thanks to the efforts of the General Assembly, Governor Kasich and state and local partners, Ohio has developed one of the most aggressive and comprehensive approaches in the nation to combatting drug abuse and addiction. We still have much work to do, but Ohio is seeing some important progress.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) utilizes epidemiological resources including the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM) to identify shifts in substance abuse trends across the state. OSAM produces biannual epidemiological descriptions of local substance abuse trends by conducting focus groups and individual qualitative interviews with active and recovering drug users and community professionals (treatment providers, law enforcement officials, etc.). The July 2018 OSAM report can be found here: <http://mha.ohio.gov/Research/Ohio-Substance-Abuse-Monitoring-OSAM-Network/Drug-Trend-Reports#18712148-2018>.

The July 2018 OSAM report indicates that the drug epidemic continues to evolve: there is a marked increase in the availability and use of both cocaine and methamphetamines.

- There is moderate to high availability of powdered cocaine in all regions of the state. This trend is of particular concern considering that powdered cocaine is increasingly being laced with, or used in combination with, opiates like fentanyl. The combination of these drugs is more lethal than either drug alone, demonstrated by a 38 percent increase in cocaine-related deaths from 2016 to 2017.
- Methamphetamine is highly available in all regions of the state. OSAM reported that heroin users are turning to methamphetamine to alleviate opiate withdrawal symptoms. According to Ohio Department of Health (ODH) overdose death preliminary data, this has led to a 126 percent increase in methamphetamine-related deaths from 2016 to 2017, with 233 methamphetamine related deaths reported in 2016 and 526 in 2017. Additionally, the number of overdose deaths with both methamphetamine and an opioid listed on the death certificate is increasing.

In response to emerging drug trends, OhioMHAS and ODH have recently alerted health care providers, behavioral health professionals, first responders, EMS, and local health departments about these trends, and have provided information on state resources available to support their local response efforts. These resources and additional information about Ohio's comprehensive efforts to combat drug abuse and overdose deaths are available at: www.fightingopiateabuse.ohio.gov.

By pursuing collaborative, data driven strategies and working together at the state and local levels, we will continue to battle the scourge of drug abuse and addiction no matter the type of drugs involved.

If you have any questions, or would like to request information regarding state and federally funded addiction-related initiatives in your area, please contact Jamie Carmichael, OhioMHAS Deputy Director of Public Affairs, at Jamie.Carmichael@mha.ohio.gov.

Sincerely,



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Medical Director

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Clint Koenig, M.D.

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