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Opiate Data Brief



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The United States is facing an epidemic of opiate overdose deaths. From 2000 to 2015 the rate of overdose fatalities due to heroin have quadrupled in the US. The City of St. Louis is experiencing a similar trend. The number of opiate related overdose deaths, including heroin, that have occurred in the City of St. Louis is six times higher than it was ten years ago. In the last year alone, there were 273* opiate overdose deaths that occurred in the City which is a 108% increase from the previous year. (****Data for 2016 is provisional and is subject to change.***)

Heroin is a very powerful and highly addictive drug which is derived from morphine. There are dangerous and harmful effects of heroin such as causing the heart rate and breathing to slow down. Also, those who inject the drug and share equipment are at risk of viral infections such as HIV and Hepatitis C. Many people who use the drug also use alcohol or other combinations of drugs which can exacerbate the effects. Over time users become tolerant to the drug and need higher doses more frequently to achieve the same euphoric high. This puts users at increased risk for overdose or death.

Accessibility contributes to the increase over the past several years as heroin becomes purer and cheaper. Furthermore, an increase in prescription opiate medication contributes to the epidemic. Those who are addicted to prescription opiate medication are forty times more likely to become addicted to heroin.

Fentanyl overdose fatalities have sharply increased in the last year. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid fifty times more potent than morphine. Often heroin is mixed with fentanyl without the user's knowledge. A very small amount of this drug can be lethal.

Unintentional Drug Poisoning (Overdose) Deaths Involving Opiates in the City of St. Louis, 2016

- In 2016, there were 273 drug overdose deaths involving opiates in the City of St. Louis compared to 131 2015.
- The number of opiate overdose death has been trending upwards for the past ten years with a six-fold increase during that time period.
- In 2016, the number of overdose deaths involving opiates were highest in the southern portion of the City, specifically ZIP Codes 63111, 63118, and 63116, making up 36% of total cases.
- One-third of all opiate overdose deaths involved more than one substance in 2016.
- One-fifth of all opiate overdose deaths involved alcohol.

In 2016, the majority of opiate mortality cases involved heroin and/or fentanyl. For this reason the data in Table 1 is broken down by deaths that involved heroin, deaths that involved fentanyl, deaths that involved both heroin and fentanyl, and deaths that related to other opiates not including heroin and/or fentanyl. The breakdown is mutually exclusive so cases are not included in multiple categories. Ninety-seven cases (36%) involved heroin, 100 cases (37%) involved fentanyl, 53 cases (19%) involved both heroin and fentanyl, and 23 cases (8%) involved opiates other than heroin or fentanyl.

Table 1: Number and percent of opiate overdose deaths, City of St. Louis, 2016

	Total (All Opiates)		Heroin		Fentanyl		Heroin & Fentanyl		Other Opiate	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Number of Cases	273		97		100		53		23	
Gender										
Male	197	72%	72	74%	69	6%	39	73%	17	74%
Female	76	28%	25	26%	31	31%	14	27%	6	26%
Average Age	41		41		41		41		38	
< 18 years	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	9%
18 to 25	22	8%	7	7%	10	10%	2	4%	3	13%
26 to 45	155	57%	57	59%	60	60%	29	55%	9	39%
46 to 65	85	31%	31	32%	27	27%	19	35%	9	39%
> 65 years	9	3%	2	2%	3	3%	3	6%	0	0%
Race										
Asian	1	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black	131	48%	41	42%	54	54%	30	57%	6	26%
White	141	52%	55	57%	46	46%	23	43%	17	74%
Using alcohol	53	20%	21	22%	21	21%	6	12%	5	22%
Using another drug*	87	32%	17	18%	9	9%	3	6%	8	35%

*Other drugs include but are not limited to, oxycodone, hydrocodone, cocaine and other opiates or drugs (not listed in any particular order).

City of St. Louis Response to the Opiate Epidemic

The Department of Health is working towards reducing exposure to opioids and preventing abuse through the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Missouri is the only state that does not have a statewide Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). The City of St. Louis will be participating in a Regional Prescription Drug Monitoring Program which will launch in April, 2017. This program will track prescribing and dispensing of controlled prescription drugs to help identify patients who are at risk of developing addiction. The program can help address prescription drug diversion and abuse and serves as an “early warning system” for drug abuse.

The Department of Health is advocating for increase access to Narcan to prevent death.

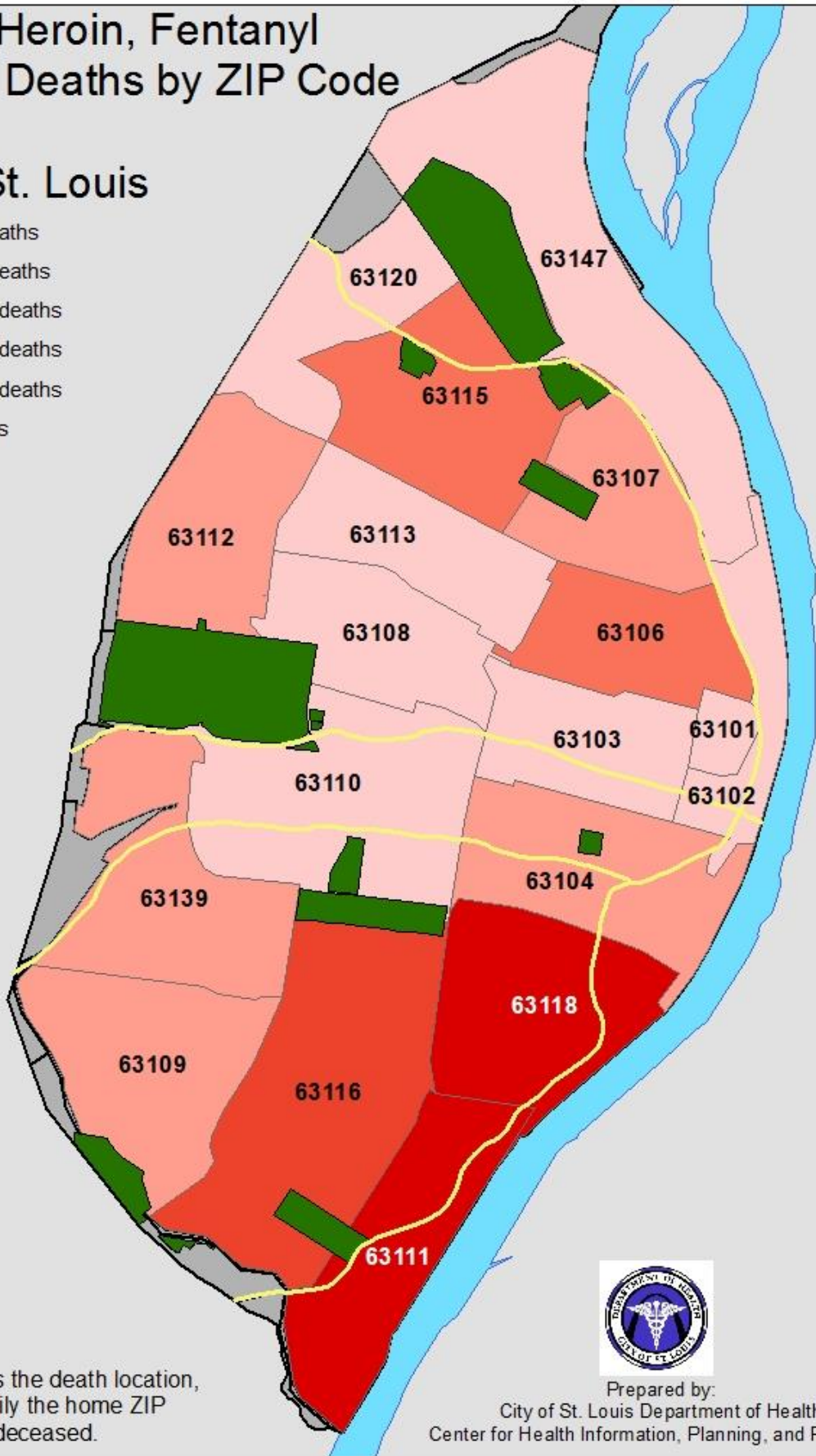
Naloxone Hydrochloride (Narcan) can be used to treat opioid overdoses and help prevent death. The City has expanded access and use of Narcan to EMS, ambulances, and firetrucks. Additionally, licensed pharmacists are now allowed to dispense Narcan under the supervision of a physician. Accessibility to this life saving drug can help prevent death from opioid overdose.

The Department of Health is also:

- Partnering with the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (NCADA) to educate residents on the health risks and possible signs of heroin use.
- Developing maps to identify “hot spots” for heroin overdose deaths.
- Including the reduction of substance abuse in its Community Health Improvement Plan and building partnerships with engaged stakeholders.

Opiate, Heroin, Fentanyl Related Deaths by ZIP Code (2016) City of St. Louis

- 1 to 8 deaths
- 9 to 14 deaths
- 15 to 20 deaths
- 21 to 26 deaths
- 27 to 32 deaths
- Highways
- Park



**ZIP Code is the death location, not necessarily the home ZIP Code of the deceased.



Prepared by:
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