



ARMOND BUDISH
Cuyahoga County Executive

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Medical Examiner Releases 2014 Heroin-Related Death Statistics
Decrease as a percentage of all overdose deaths for first time since 2009; Fentanyl deaths rising dramatically

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner Thomas P. Gilson reports that 198 heroin related overdose deaths occurred in Cuyahoga County in 2014, a slight increase from 2013 when 194 died. However, of the approximately 350 overdose deaths in 2014, heroin as a percentage fell for the first time since 2009. Fentanyl increased nearly 8-fold from 5 deaths in 2013 to 39 in 2014.

“Fentanyl is a serious concern because it can kill so quickly. And we are still at epidemic levels of deaths by heroin; it appears that we have plateaued in some ways. From data we have been able to obtain, I expect deaths in many areas of southern Ohio and the rest of the U.S. to continue to dramatically increase.” said Dr. Gilson.

An additional positive statistical trend is that heroin fatalities are falling for female users, holding just below 21%, the lowest rate since 2010.

Combined efforts have all contributed to the slowing trend including: the placement of prescription drug boxes at police stations throughout the County; increased arrests and seizures by local and federal law enforcement; more aggressive prosecutions by the County Prosecutor and the U.S. Attorney’s Office; the creation of the heroin death review committee and the heroin community taskforce; and many other on-going, cooperative, inter-agency and communitywide efforts. Naloxone distribution centers, at the Free Clinic and Cuyahoga County Board of Health, reported reversals of 120 overdoses since March 2013.

The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner’s Office hereby releases the 2014* statistical report for Medical Examiner-ruled heroin-related deaths** in Cuyahoga County, with the following notations:

*NOTE 1: Cases ruled as of April 10, 2015 for 2014 cases.

**NOTE 2: “Heroin-related deaths” means that heroin or the proper combination of metabolites were present and were a direct or supporting cause of the ruled death.

Medical Examiner-ruled heroin-related deaths for 2014**

- 198 ruled cases in Cuyahoga County. 41 ruled cases were female, 157 male.
- 18.89% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are female, would be the lowest percentage recorded since 2010.
- 86.36% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are white.
- 99 heroin-related deaths were residents of the City of Cleveland, or 50%, 99 resided in suburban communities or are from out of county but whose deaths were recorded here in Cuyahoga County, totaling 50%.

- 48 of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County were aged 18-29 or 24.25%.

Heroin-Related Deaths

YEAR	DEATHS	FEMALE DEATHS	% FEMALE DEATHS	% SUBURBAN DEATHS	AGE 19-29
2013	194	51	26.29%	38.14%	24.23%
2012	161	39	24.22%	42.86%	25.47%
2011	107	25	23.36%	48.60%	25.23%
2010	90	17	18.89%	45.56%	28.89%
2009	64	16	25.0%	40.63%	26.56%
2008	64	17	26.52%	43.75%	18.75%
2007	40	6	15.0%	42.5%	7.50%

Heroin data and resource links are posted at: <http://medicalexaminer.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/CC-HeroinInitiative.aspx> with regular updates.

Annual statistical data reports from the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner’s Office are available on-line at: <http://medicalexaminer.cuyahogacounty.us/>.