



EDWARD FITZGERALD
Cuyahoga County Executive



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROWTH TREND OF HEROIN-RELATED DEATHS IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY SLOWS, BUT STILL A RECORD IN 2013

CUYAHOGA COUNTY – Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner Thomas P. Gilson reports that 195 heroin related overdose deaths occurred in the County in 2013. However, citing research data and anecdotal reports, Dr. Gilson, further reported that the steep growth trend of accelerating heroin-related deaths slowed some in 2013. “Like so many partners working in the field, it was my hope that 2013 would see the number of heroin fatalities decrease, but that was not the case,” said Dr. Gilson. “It is encouraging to see that the rate of rise of heroin deaths did drop compared to the previous year but measuring mortality that did not happen is not possible.”

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald echoes similar sentiments regarding the trend of heroin-related deaths. “While the acceleration of heroin growth has slowed, we still have a lot of work ahead to fight this epidemic. Heroin is affecting our entire community, and I will continue to pledge the County’s available resources toward prevention, protection, and prosecution,” said FitzGerald.

At mid-year, 97 deaths had been ruled as heroin-related overdoses and trends placed estimates for 2013 at 200 deaths. In contrast, New York City reported 382 heroin deaths for 2012. Were it not for the County supported institution of Naloxone distribution centers, at the Free Clinic and Cuyahoga County Board of Health, with reported reversals of 31 overdoses, it certainly would have pushed the 2013 total well above the 200 mark. “Perhaps the most telling fact that things are changing comes from Project DAWN, the Naloxone distribution program started by the MetroHealth Medical Center, with support from County Executive Ed FitzGerald,” said Dr. Gilson. “There were at least 31 reversals of heroin overdose with Naloxone in 2013, and that represents 31 individuals who did not have to come to the Medical Examiner's Office. That's a great success!”

Additional efforts, have all contributed to the slowing trend including: the placement of prescription drug boxes at police stations throughout Cuyahoga 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; the hosting of the Heroin Summit in November at Cleveland Clinic; and many other on-going, cooperative, inter-agency and communitywide efforts.

The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner’s Office hereby releases the final 2013 end of year* statistical report for Medical Examiner-ruled heroin-related deaths** in Cuyahoga County, with the following notations:

*NOTE 1: Cases ruled as of March 4, 2014 for cases between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013.

**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 2013(through March 4, 2014)**

- 195 ruled cases in Cuyahoga County. 52 ruled cases were female, 143 male.
- 26.67% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are female, the highest percentage recorded thus far.
- 85.64% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are white.
- 97 heroin-related deaths were residents of the City of Cleveland, or 49.74% and 75 resided in suburban communities and 23 are from out of county but whose deaths were recorded here in Cuyahoga County, totaling 50.26%.
- 48 of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County were aged 19-29 or 24.62%, the lowest percentage since 2008.
- Projections for 2013 were for 200 deaths related to heroin.

Heroin-Related Deaths

YEAR	DEATHS	FEMALE DEATHS	% FEMALE DEATHS	% SUBURBAN DEATHS	AGE 19-29
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%

Any questions regarding the final statistical numbers regarding medical examiner-ruled heroin-related deaths to date for 2013 shall be referred directly to Thomas P. Gilson, M.D., Medical Examiner of Cuyahoga County. 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/>.

Members of the media who wish additional medical examiner’s statistical reports, must make such requests pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 313.10 to:

Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner’s Office, 11001 Cedar Ave., Cleveland, OH 44106 or via email: cbharris@cuyahogacounty.us