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Heroin-Related Deaths Continue to Slow

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner Thomas P. Gilson reports that 90 heroin related overdose deaths occurred in Cuyahoga County in the first six months of 2014, a 7% decrease from 2013 Mid-year total of 97. Citing research data from his office, Dr. Gilson, further reported that many of the statistical trends found in 2012 continued to be seen in 2013.

“I continue to be encouraged by the decrease of heroin fatalities but we still see troubling numbers with respect to young people, which account for one-quarter of heroin fatalities annually.” said Dr. Gilson. **“Aside from the reduction in the number of deaths, our partners continue to work to ensure that steady progress is being made on all fronts – education and prevention, treatment, law enforcement and health policy – that I believe is having a measurable effect on community mortality due to heroin.”**

An additional piece of good statistical news is that current trends have heroin fatalities falling for female users, holding just below 19%, the lowest rate since 2010.

“As Cuyahoga County continues to see a decline in the number of heroin-related deaths, it’s imperative we remain committed to using our local resources to fight this epidemic head-on,” said FitzGerald. **“I remain confident and optimistic, not only about the significant progress we’ve made, but also in the direction we’re heading.”**

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, with reported reversals of 61 overdoses since last March

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

*NOTE 1: Cases ruled as of August 4, 2014 for cases between January 1, 2014 and June 30, 2014.

**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(through June 30, 2014)**

- 90 ruled cases in Cuyahoga County. 17 ruled cases were female, 73 male.
- 18.89% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are female, would be the lowest percentage recorded since 2010.
- 81.12% of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County are white.
- 42 heroin-related deaths were residents of the City of Cleveland, or 46.67%, 40 resided in suburban communities (44.44%) and 8 (8.89%) are from out of county but whose deaths were recorded here in Cuyahoga County, totaling 53.33%.
- 23 of heroin-related deaths in Cuyahoga County were aged 19-29 or 25.56%.
- Projections for 2014 are for 177-187 deaths related to heroin.

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/>.