Increase in Suspected Drug Overdose Emergency Department Visits

May 22, 2020

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and local public health agencies utilize Ohio's statewide syndromic surveillance system (EpiCenter) to detect, track, and characterize health events. The system is used to track suspected drug overdose emergency department visits.

When the number of suspected drug overdose emergency department visits within a 24-hour period is higher than the predicted number based on historical data, EpiCenter issues an alert to the local health department for investigation. Based on EpiCenter data, ODH has seen an increase in the number of patients presenting to emergency departments for a suspected drug overdose in multiple counties across the state. Since May 1, there have been 15 suspected drug overdose anomalies detected in nine counties — Allen, Butler, Delaware, Franklin, Hamilton, Mahoning, Montgomery, Summit, and Trumbull.

The impact of social distancing orders and corresponding isolation may necessitate the need to identify innovative ways to distribute naloxone during COVID-19. Several local health departments have developed mail order sites to continue providing naloxone. A full list of Project DAWN programs can be found at www.odh.ohio.gov/projectdawn. Harm Reduction Ohio mails statewide and could serve as a resource for clients during COVID-19: https://www.harmreductionohio.org/get-naloxone/.

Consider promoting the Crisis Text Line and the COVID CareLine. Anyone coping with a stressful situation can text "4hope" to 741 741 to be connected with a trained crisis counselor through the Crisis Text Line. If someone needs emotional support, the COVID CareLine can be reached by calling 1-800-720-9616. This line is staffed by trained professionals from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. daily and transfers callers to a national call center after 8 p.m. The staff are able to provide personalized consultation, screening, brief intervention, and referral to resources and support, if needed.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is available to support your prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. For assistance or more information, please contact Rick Massatti, chief of substance abuse disorder treatment, at Richard.Massatti@mha.ohio.gov.