



CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Health & Human Services
Division of Public Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Matilde Castiel, MD
Health & Human Services
Commissioner

Karyn E. Clark
Public Health
Director

DATE: October 5, 2020
RE: WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
START TIME: 6:30 PM
LOCATION: WEBEX / CONFERENCE CALL

Welcome & Introductions:

Meeting was called to order at 6:34pm.

Members on call: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Frances Anthes, Chareese Allen and David Fort WPDH Staff: Karyn Clark, Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH, Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS and Patricia Bruchmann, RN, Chief Public Health Nurse

Approval of the September 14, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of September 14, 2020 made by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Seconded by –Chareese Allen – Approved

Review and discuss update on opioids crisis:

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Overdose deaths reached a peak in 2017 and decreased in 2018 by 4.1%. We are the ninth in the United States having the highest overdose rates. From 2000 - 2016 we have seen an increase of 460%. We have slowly had a decrease since 2016. From 2016 – 2019 we have had a decrease of 4.2% in overdose mortality rates. While overall opioid related deaths are trending downward, there was an increase in Black and Latino men. Fentanyl is most commonly present in overdose deaths. Worcester is one of the hot spots for fatal opioid overdoses. So far, in 2020, there have been 51 fatal overdoses. In Worcester, while the overdoses are increasing, the Police and EMS incidents are decreasing. Will continue to work and think about different ways to help the community.

Frances Anthes: You have done a lot of work, in terms of homelessness during the COVID19 crisis. Are the services continuing with the homeless?

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Looking at a “new model of care” of how we work with homelessness, medical care, housing and mental health care. Also looking at what agencies are going to help us. We are developing a woman’s shelter, run by LIFT. Overall looking at a plan of care with hopefully a Day Resource Center that would be the “front door” to be able to decide where they would go, instead of just going into a shelter directly. Also work on mental health and addiction care as part this piece.

25 Meade Street, Worcester, MA 01610-2715 Phone: (508) 799-8531 Fax: (508) 799-8572
health@worchesterma.gov



Discussion of COVID19:

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Worcester is now in the red zone. We have peaked 3 weeks ago at 9.2 per 100,000. We are now 8.3 range. MDPH is going to add a group of contact tracers to the ones we are using to help us identify where the outbreaks are, help with public service announcements, enforcements with locations that are not following COVID guidelines and helping locate where the hotspots are. The biggest outbreaks are coming from family gatherings. We are all in this together and need to take this seriously. Wash your hands, wear a mask and watch your distance. Expanding activities while we are in the red zone is not wise. We are setting up flu shot clinics with Dr. Castiel and the school system. Those clinics will be announced within the next month. Maureen Binienda, Superintendent of WPS Debra McGovern, Director of Nursing in WPS, Beverly Nazarian, MD and myself are working together to make it safe for students to return to school. Looking for a way that the BOH members can help with messages and outreach. There is a COVID vaccine trial in Worcester that is being done by Pfizer. It's based at UMass University and lead by Robert Finberg, MD and John Sullivan, MD. They were hoping to have a volunteer group amongst the community of color and Latinx community. In addition, a COVID plasma trial is going on. If you are diagnosed with COVID positive, you can get a dose of plasma with the antibodies of someone that has already fought through COVID, within 72 hours. If you are a contact of a known COVID positive person, you can also receive a dose of plasma.

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: Residents living in high-risk coronavirus communities will receive phone calls and/or text messages reminding them to be vigilant. The State has Community Ambassadors from Worcester, who will engage in the community and share information on how to be tested, hand out COVID19 education materials, and encourage people to get a flu shot and hand out masks and hand sanitizers.

Review and discuss updates on influenza season:

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: Worcester Senior Center worked with CVS and had a couple of flu clinics. Debra McGovern, Director of Nursing in WPS along with the WDPH and HHS held some events at parks, where children and adults received flu shots.

Patricia Bruchmann, RN, Chief Public Health Nurse: The flu shot is mandated amongst school-aged children this year. They have given 360 doses at four clinics, thus far. COVID19 and influenza have overlapping symptoms.

Communication of the City Manager regarding appointment of the Board Chair and current Public Health issues:

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: Briefed the BOH on the letter from City Manager, Edward Augustas, Jr. There has been conflict within the Board over the last few months. At the last BOH meeting, there was talk about rotating the Chair and Vice Chair. The City Manager has the authority to appoint the Chair. The Chair appoints the Vice Chair. City Manager recognizes the strengths and expertise that you all bring. The creation of the Board was to have diverse views and opinions. The Board does not have jurisdiction over the Police Department policies and procedures. We are in a pandemic and are a high-risk community (red zone) and the City Manager is looking for the Board to find ways to work with us and support us and the community on how to try to get this pandemic turned around and hopefully get to a green zone. Racism and discrimination is a public health issue, we need to find ways to address this through COVID19 and through our Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). COVID19 is a huge factor with communities of color that we know are impacted amongst other diseases. We will see this in our next CHIP.

Chareese Allen made a motion to take a vote of no confidence in the current chair due to the open hostility that we have seen and the lack of support and respect towards other board members. Seconded by David Fort BOH members: 4 yes - 1 no

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Feels that members of the Board continue on attacking, ganging up and bullying her. Asks that they move forward and work together. I will respect any decision made by the City Manager to appoint the next Chair.

David Fort: You have shown open hostility over the last months. COVID19 is not the only thing that is a public health issue. Police brutality, institutionalized racism and discrimination are also public health issues. Feels that Edith sides more with the police and politicians than the community. We want to make sure that every citizen feels safe. Majority of the Board members do not want you to continue as the Chair because you have openly disrespected us. We cannot move forward, the damage has already been done. Not sure why the City Manager has taken the ability to vote for Chair away from us. The Board has voted for Chair for 6 years. I don't support that.

Frances Anthes: We heard from the WPD and there was not an opportunity for us to respond. That felt disrespectful to us Board members. We have not been able to get past that. Maybe we think about what this Board suggested is important as the next step.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Feels a need for change in leadership in able to move forward.

Motion to adjourn; Frances Anthes - seconded by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair

Adjourn: 8:20pm

Next Meeting -- November 2, 2020 at 6:30pm

Potential Future Meeting Topics:

Discussion on police brutality and institutional racism in the last couple of months

Updates on shelters for homelessness this coming winter


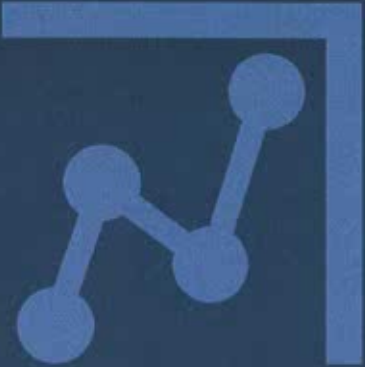
Updates on COVID19

Presentation and discussion on plasma trial

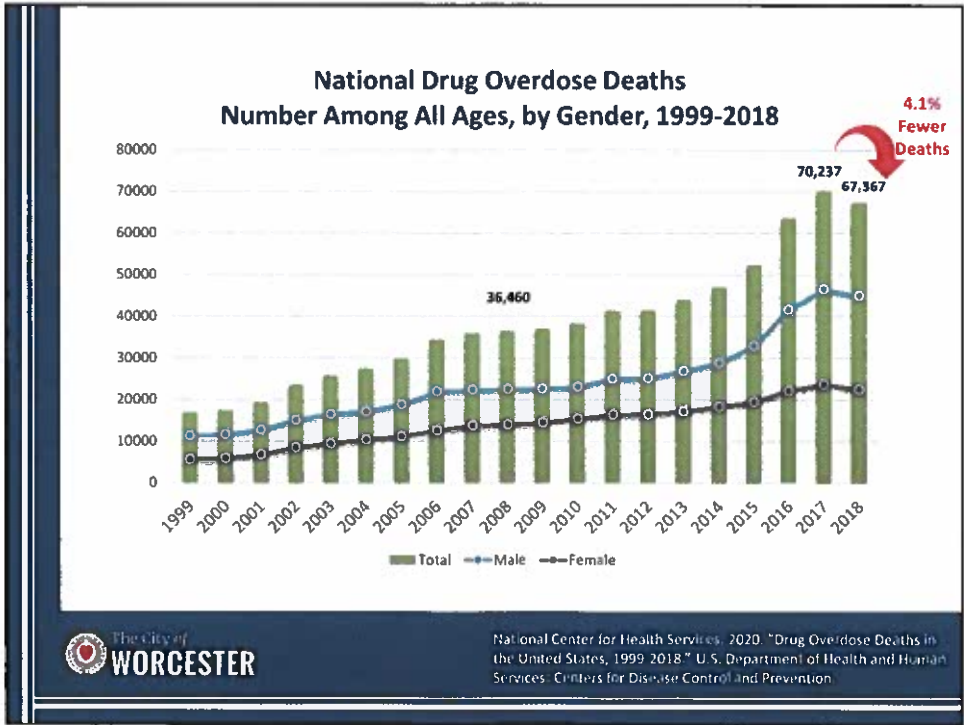
Discussion on percentage of individuals receiving flu shots compared to last year

The City of Worcester
Department of Health and Human Services
Commissioner Dr. Matilde Castiel
Domenica Perrone, Project Manager

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND OVERDOSE TRENDS

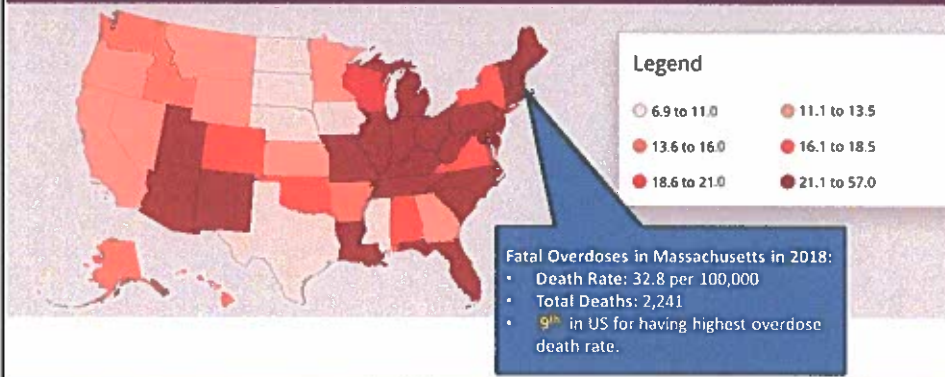


October 5, 2020



Where does Massachusetts fall?

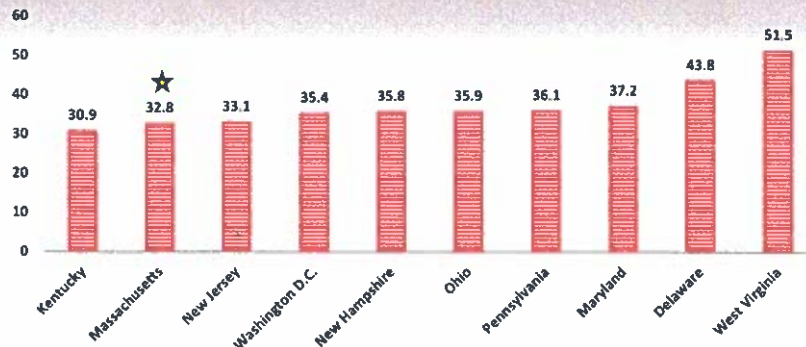
Number and age-adjusted rates of drug overdose deaths by state, US 2018



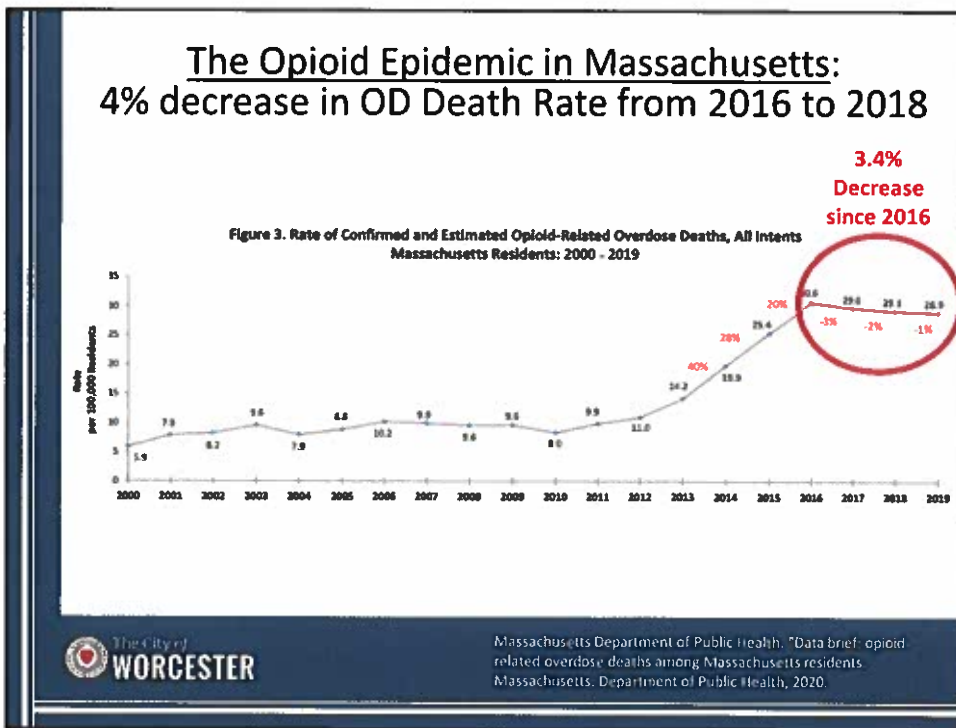
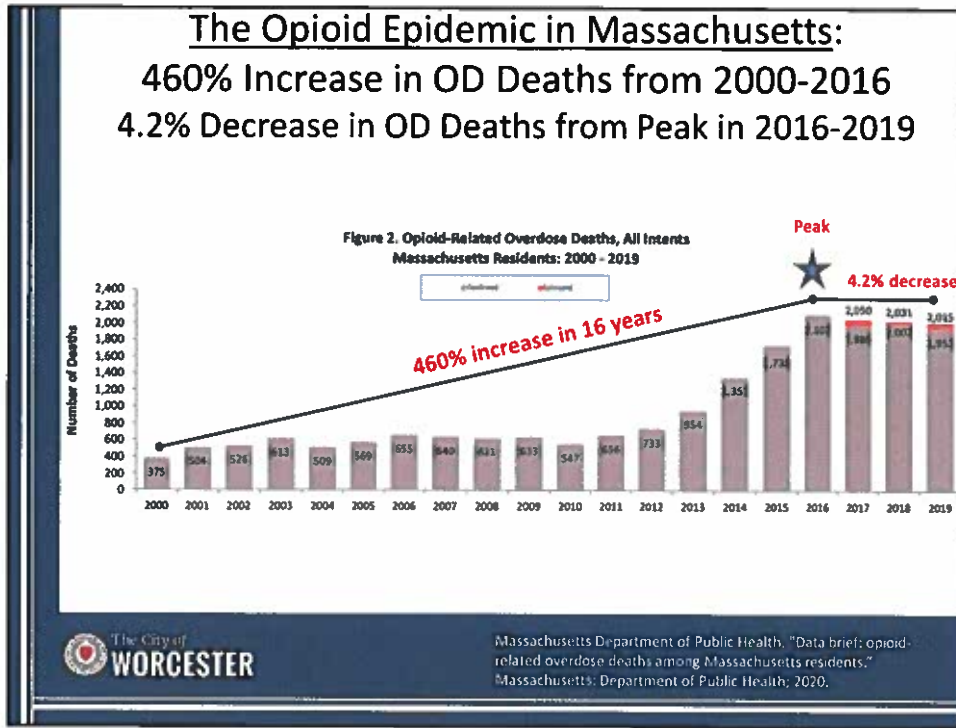
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. 2020. 2018 Drug Overdose Death Rates. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Top 10 States with the highest fatal overdose rates

2018 AGE-ADJUSTED DEATH RATE

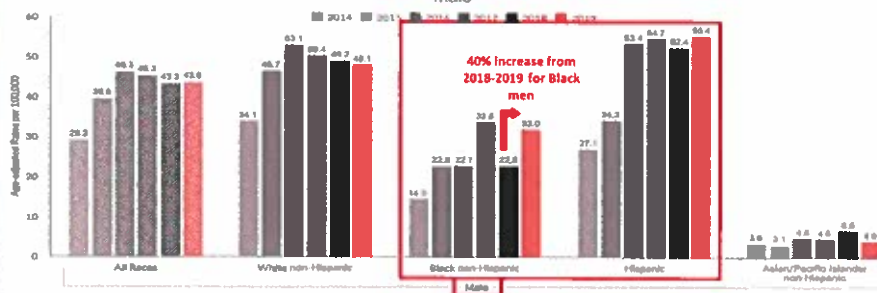


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. 2020. 2018 Drug Overdose Death Rates. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



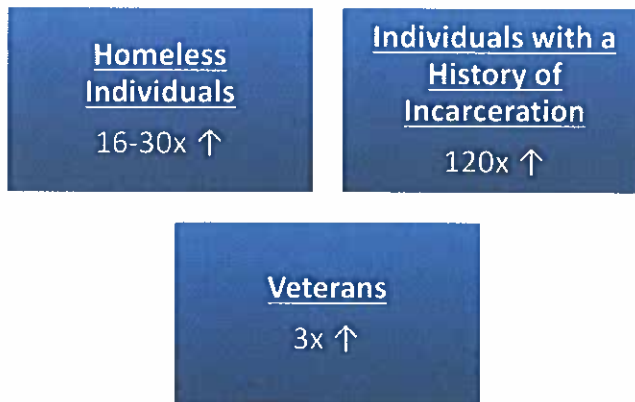
While overall opioid-related deaths are trending downward, racial/ethnic inequities persist

Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates, All Intents, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity Male



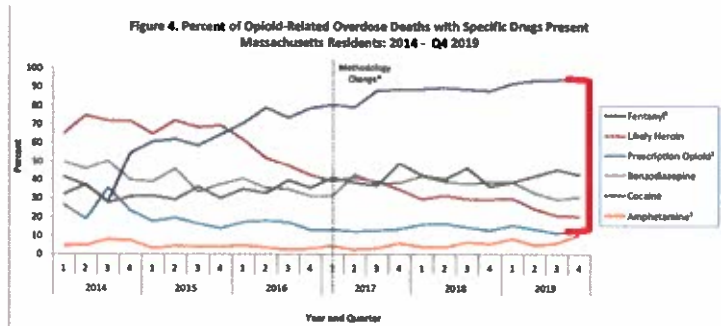
Massachusetts Department of Public Health, "Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths, All Intents, MA Residents – Demographic Data Highlights, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2020.

The Opioid Epidemic in Massachusetts: Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates Among Marginalized Populations



Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health, Data Brief: An Assessment of Opioid-Related Overdoses in Massachusetts 2011-2015, August 2017.
Massachusetts Department of Public Health, An Assessment of Fatal and Nonfatal Opioid Overdoses in Massachusetts (2011-2015), August 2017.

The Opioid Epidemic in Massachusetts: Fentanyl is Most Commonly Present in OD Deaths

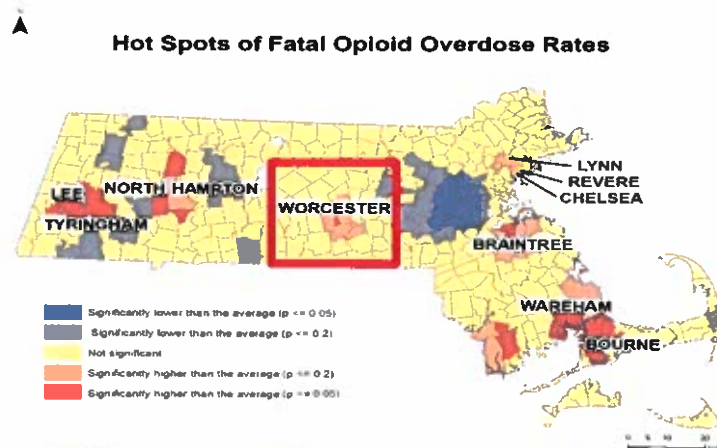


¹ Beginning with the November 2019 report, DPH began to use a new method to identify substances present in the toxicology data, which can only be applied from 2017 onward; this new method cannot be applied to the older data
² This is most likely illicitly produced and sold, not prescription fentanyl
³ Prescription opioids include: hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, and tramadol
⁴ Beginning with the February 2020 report, amphetamine includes both amphetamine and methamphetamine; methamphetamine was previously excluded
 Please note that previous estimates may change slightly as DPH routinely receives updated toxicology data from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Massachusetts State Police.



Massachusetts Department of Public Health. "Data brief: opioid-related overdose deaths among Massachusetts residents." Massachusetts: Department of Public Health; 2020.

Worcester is hotspot of fatal opioid overdoses

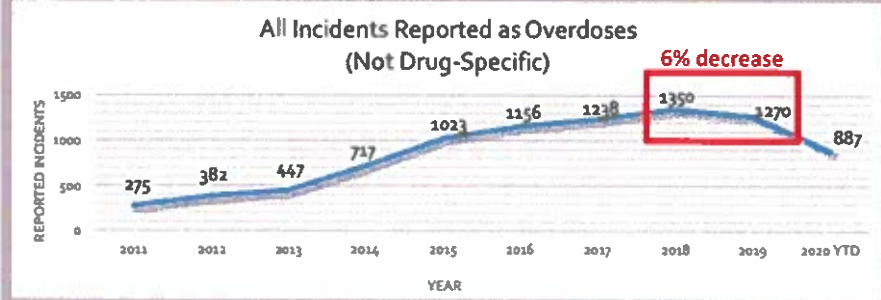


Thomas J. Stopka, Harsha Amarasekari, Anna R. Kaplan, Rachel Itsh, Dana Berason, Kenneth H. Chu, Thomas Lund, Alexander Y. Walley, Marc R. LaRochelle, Adam J. Rose. Opioid overdose deaths and potential inappropriate opioid prescribing practices (PIP): A spatial epidemiological study. International Journal of Drug Policy, Volume 68, 2019, Pages 37-45, ISSN 0955-3959, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.03.024>.

Worcester Police Data Shows Slight Decrease in Overdose Incidents

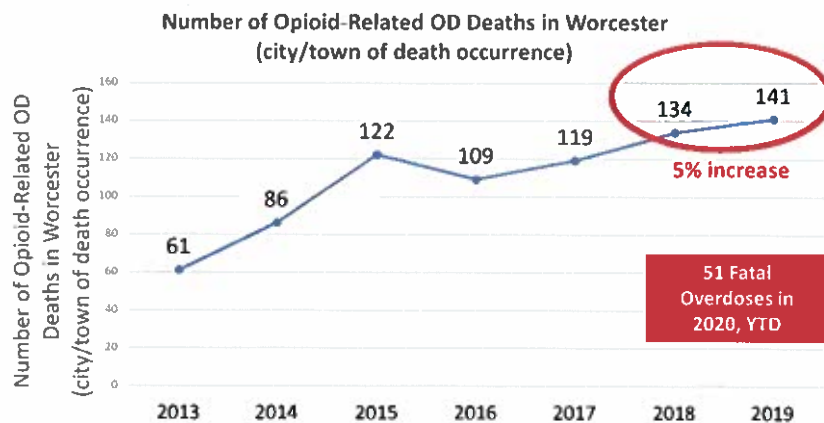
Worcester Police Department - Overdose Report
 Prepared By Crime Analysis on 10/01/20
 September 2020
 Reported Heroin/Opiate ODs in Sep: 67

Long Term Overdose Trends (Previous 10 Years)



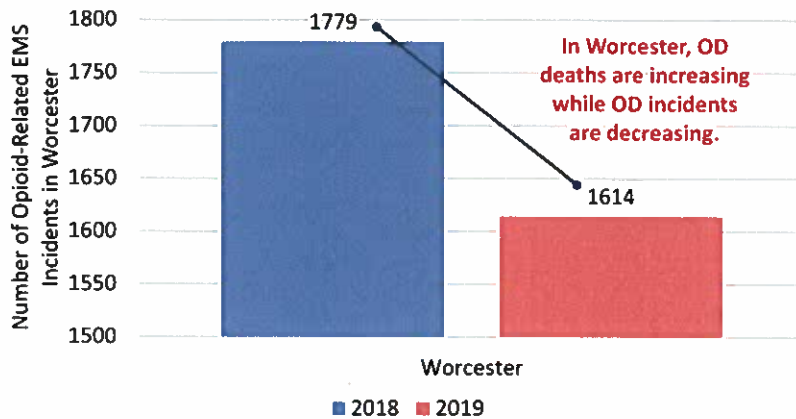
The Opioid Epidemic in Worcester:

5% Increase in the Number of Opioid-Related OD Deaths from 2018-2019

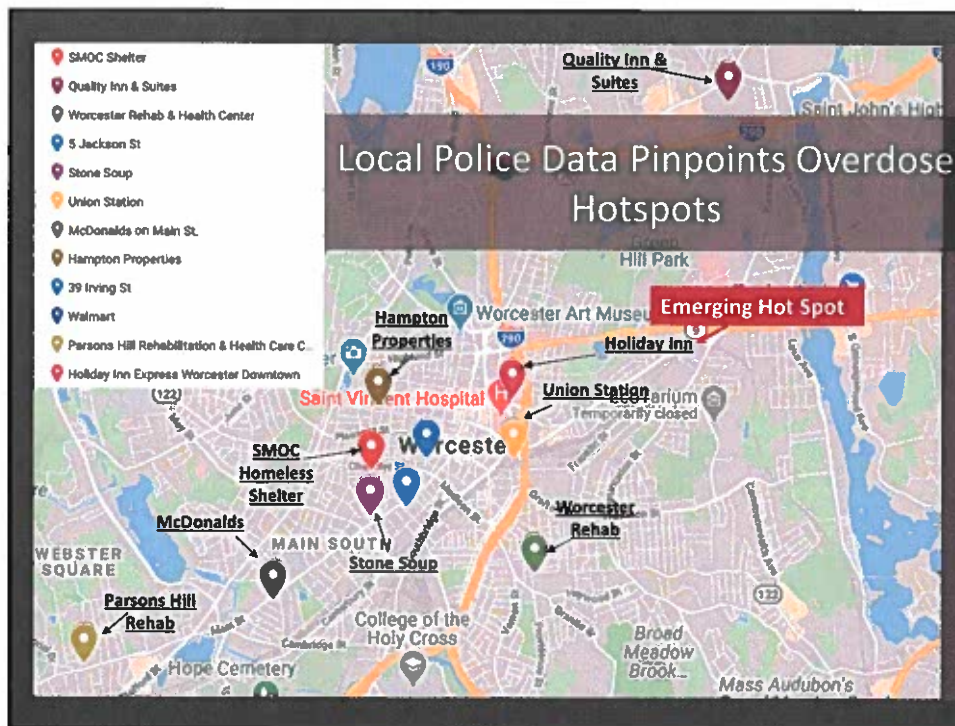


Massachusetts Department of Public Health. "Data brief: opioid-related overdose deaths among Massachusetts residents." Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2020.

The Opioid Epidemic in Worcester: 9% Decrease in the Number of Opioid-Related EMS Incidents from 2018-2019



Massachusetts Department of Public Health, "MA Opioid Related EMS Incidents 2013-2019", Massachusetts, Department of Public Health, 2020.



Emerging Trend in Residency of Overdose Victims

- WPD identified a shift in residency for OD victims from “other-city” residents to Worcester residents.
 - Used to be consistently split 70/30 (City/Outside City)
 - Shift is now 80/20 split (City/Outside the City)
- WPD thinks it is possible that a greater number of long-term City residents are using/overdosing and that users from outside the City are choosing to stay and take up residency in Worcester.

**City of Worcester
Commissioner of Health and Human
Services
Dr. Matilde Castiel
Domenica Perrone, Project Manager**