

The logo features a dark blue silhouette of the state of Pennsylvania. Inside the silhouette, the letters "PA" are written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Below the "PA", the words "OPIOID COMMAND CENTER" are written in a smaller, bold, white sans-serif font, stacked on two lines.

PA

**OPIOID COMMAND
CENTER**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2023

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GOVERNOR TOM WOLF



We have lost far too many Pennsylvanians to the crisis of substance use disorder in the commonwealth. Battling this epidemic requires a collaborative effort not only among state agencies, but also with federal and local partners. By leveraging the diverse strengths and skillsets brought together through the Opioid Command Center, we have been able to make great strides in saving lives and reducing negative outcomes for those suffering with a substance use disorder. I offer my thanks to everyone involved in these crucial efforts.

To date, my administration has implemented policy and regulatory reforms that have saved lives and provided support to those who need it most. Just a few of these accomplishments include:

- Reducing the rate of fatal overdoses by 18% from 2017 to 2018.
- Ensuring the availability of the lifesaving drug, Naloxone, through the standing order and distributing over 13,000 doses throughout multiple naloxone distribution days.
- Expanding access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) through commercial insurer agreements, Medicaid preauthorization, and expanding the MAT program to State Correctional Institutions.
- Eliminating doctor shopping through the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

There is still tremendous work to be done to address the needs of those most impacted by this epidemic. The solution will require sustained determination, focus, and interagency collaboration at all levels. I am confident that the leadership of the Opioid Command Center will continue to drive change and save lives in the commonwealth.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Wolf". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tom Wolf

Governor of Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there were 5,377 fatal drug overdoses in Pennsylvania in 2017; the highest number of fatal overdoses in the United States (see figure 1). In the same year, the CDC estimated there were 303,000 unique individuals in Pennsylvania with a substance use disorder (SUD). The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has leveraged the collective power of numerous state agencies to establish a unified response to the opioid crisis. On January 10, 2018, Governor Tom Wolf issued a first-of-its-kind Disaster Declaration proclaiming heroin and opioid addiction a public health emergency in Pennsylvania and directing specific executive actions to combat the crisis. The 90-day Disaster Declaration has been renewed nine times since the initial Declaration.

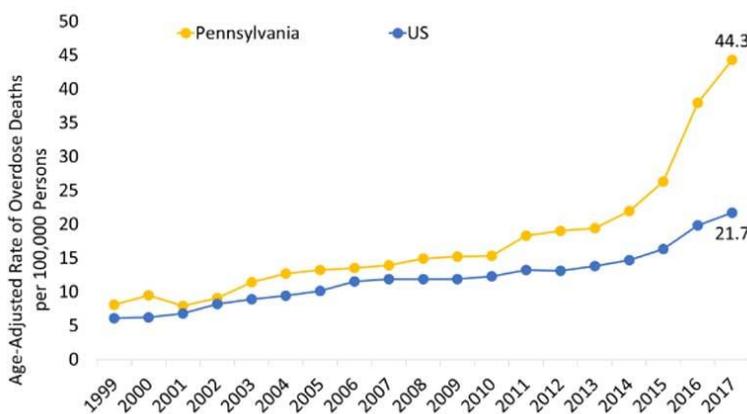


Figure 1. Drug overdose deaths, rate per 100,000 persons, in the U.S. and Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's overdose rate was more than double the national average in 2017. Source: CDC WONDER.

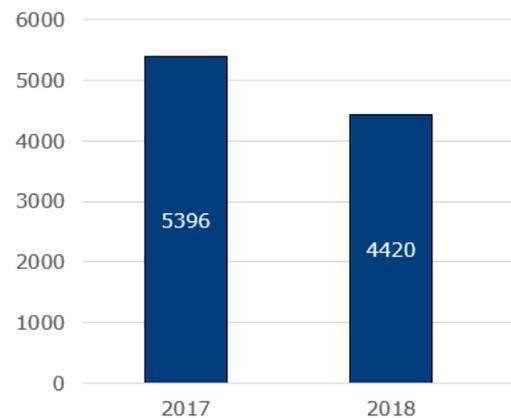


Figure 2. Number of fatal overdose deaths in Pennsylvania from 2017 to 2018. This reflects an 18% decrease in overdose deaths. Source: Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

Through the Disaster Declarations issued by Governor Wolf and the subsequent creation of the Opioid Command Center, the state has created a proven, evidence-informed model for statewide opioid response efforts. This group encompasses 16 state agencies in addition to the Office of Attorney General and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The public health successes derived from the Opioid Command Center include a decrease in certain communicable diseases, an 18% decrease in overdose deaths from 2017 to 2018 (depicted in figure 2), and enhanced support for individuals struggling with addiction.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This multiagency response is a testament to a government that works. The novel initiatives that have been derived from the Opioid Command Center have resulted in thousands of lives saved and deployment of critical resources to communities and individuals.

P R E V E N T I O N	Multiagency Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiagency data sharing• Governor's Disaster Declaration• Regular meetings of the Opioid Command Center• Opioid Data Dashboard
	Opioid Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic detailing• Continuing Medical Education requirements• Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)
	Enhancing Efforts to Prevent Misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and enforcement• Drug take back events
R E S C U E	Distributing Naloxone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Naloxone for First Responders• Public naloxone giveaway days• Standing order
	Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) data reporting• Plans of Safe Care
T R E A T M E N T	Increased Access to Treatment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm Handoff policy to get those who have overdosed into treatment• Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative (LETI)• Centers of Excellence (COE)
	Expanding Access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanding access to MAT in correctional facilities and the community• Pennsylvania Coordinated MAT (PacMAT) program• Medicaid pre-authorization for MAT• Commercial insurer agreement

IMPACT

Preventing Addiction

- The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) has reduced opioid prescriptions by 32 percent as of September 2019, and has virtually eliminated doctor shopping in the Commonwealth.
- Expanded the use of 886 prescription drug take-back boxes to help Pennsylvanians properly dispose of unwanted drugs, including over 178,000 pounds of unwanted drugs collected in 2019.
- Pennsylvania State Police have seized over 250 kilograms of illicit drugs from 2018 to 2019.

Saving Lives

- Between November 2017 and September 2019, more than 55,000 kits of naloxone have been distributed to first responder agencies across Pennsylvania through the Naloxone for First Responders Program, resulting in more than 11,288 reported overdose reversals.
- Made naloxone available to all Pennsylvanians through a standing order, and distributed more than 14,500 kits of naloxone through statewide public distribution events between December 2018 and January 2020.
- Forty seven EpiCenter Alerts have been generated between January 2018 and January 2020. These alerts are initiated when a cluster of overdoses are detected through the statewide surveillance network.

Getting People Into Treatment

- Launched a 24/7 Get Help Now Hotline (1-800-622-HELP), which has received more than 34,000 calls from individuals who need immediate assistance and directly connected more than half of all callers with a treatment provider.
- Waived the fees of over 4,200 birth certificates for individuals with a substance use disorder to expedite treatment initiation.
- In 2018, the Single County Authorities (SCA) have assisted over 28,000 individuals with accessing treatment by eliminating financial barriers.
- The Patient Advocacy Program assists patients who have been affected by arrests of medical providers. Since its inception in September 2019, the program has completed rapid response to five provider arrests, surrender of DEA license, and permanent pain clinic closure. It has also performed individual outreach to 74 patients in need, and has sent over 260,000 educational emails and mailings to healthcare providers.

Increasing Capacity of Treatment Services

- Funded the implementation of 45 Centers of Excellence throughout the Commonwealth that have connected tens of thousands of people with substance use disorder to life-saving treatment.
- The Pennsylvania Coordinated Medication Assisted Treatment (PacMAT) hub and spoke program has helped over 6,000 individuals engage in medication assisted treatment (MAT).

For the most recent data, please visit the Opioid Data Dashboard on Open Data Pennsylvania at <https://data.pa.gov/stories/s/Pennsylvania-Opioids/9q45-nckt/>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mission

To coordinate efforts across all disciplines at all levels of government in Pennsylvania aimed at reducing the rate of overdoses and mitigating harmful health outcomes, and support individuals affected by substance use disorder and the professionals who serve them.

Vision

Protect all Pennsylvanians from substance use disorder and improve the lives of those who have it.

Values

- **Multidisciplinary Collaboration** – Leveraging expertise by including professionals from diverse backgrounds is conducive to robust and far-reaching response.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making** – Using relevant and current data to provide insight into current and potential issues faced by Pennsylvania, ensuring early detection and appropriate action in response to potential emerging trends.
- **Innovation** – Developing and implementing creative approaches to meet the changing needs of Pennsylvania.
- **Leadership** – Helping partners to reach their full potential by providing resources and making responsible decisions that aims to reduce barriers for citizens.
- **Transparent Communication** – Building relationships and trust through accessibility, accountability, and information sharing.
- **Agility** – Adapting responses based on emerging trends and needs of those with a substance use disorder.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Planning Methodology

This strategic plan aims to continue the successes of the Opioid Command Center as well as implement new policies to remove barriers and develop additional initiatives to address the ever-changing need for support and resources. Stakeholders were consulted throughout the process of developing this plan to understand the unique challenges facing communities in Pennsylvania. Data was examined on a regular basis to monitor effectiveness and target areas of need. While opioids remain a large public health and safety threat, much of the feedback indicated a need to include other substances that are commonly misused. Thereby, the scope of the Opioid Command Center has been expanded beyond opioids to encompass other urgent emerging trends, such as stimulants, polysubstance use, and other concerns.

Goal Area 1 – Prevention – Reduce the risk of substance misuse through education, limiting availability of addictive substances, and combatting stigma

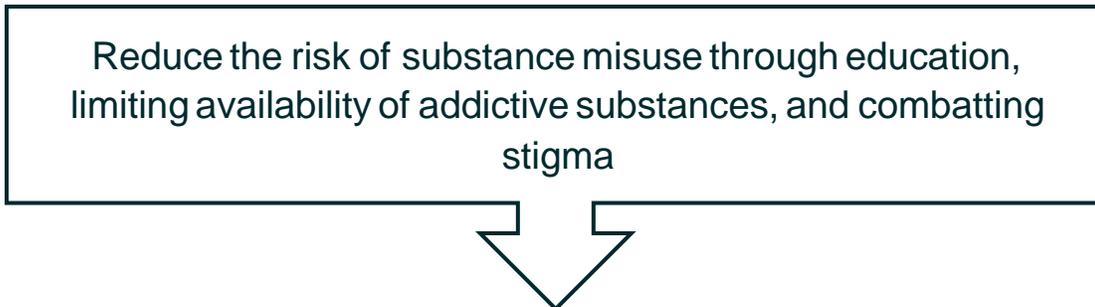
Goal Area 2 – Rescue – Establish sustainable methods to provide life-saving measures and increase access to harm reduction services

Goal Area 3 – Treatment – Promote access to treatment by reducing barriers for individuals and supporting the professionals who treat individuals with a substance use disorder

Goal Area 4 – Recovery – Promote supportive services for individuals in recovery

Sustainability – Implement long-lasting policies and regulations to support prevention, rescue, treatment, and recovery efforts

THE PLAN – PREVENTION



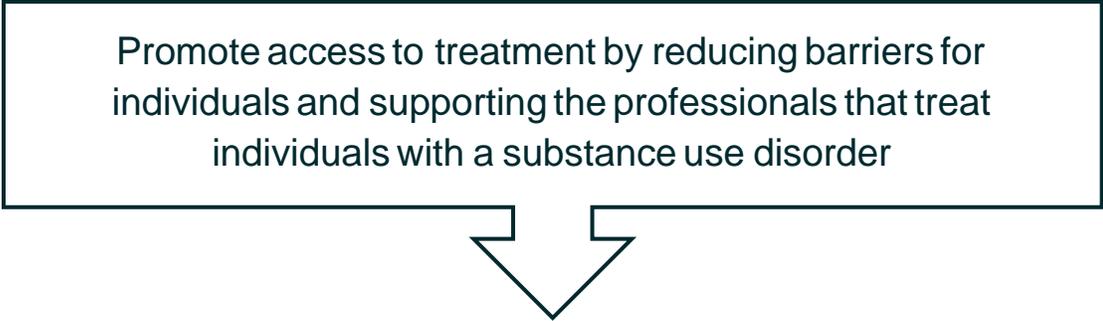
Goal	Strategies	Evaluation
<p>Reduce stigma associated with substance use disorder (SUD)</p>	<p>Increase compliance with existing requirements and expand availability of evidence-informed prevention programs focused on SUD in both school and community settings through partnerships, funding, and technical assistance.</p> <p>Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy targeting specific populations and communities</p> <p>Collect and share stories and examples of evidence-informed treatment programs, including MAT</p>	<p>Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS)</p> <p>Pre/post-test data from PSA campaigns funded by state agencies</p>
<p>Address issues surrounding substance use including mental health and trauma</p>	<p>Support executive and legislative efforts to make Pennsylvania a trauma-informed state</p> <p>Increase the presence of the Opioid Command Center in statewide mental health initiatives</p>	<p>Availability of trauma-informed services statewide</p> <p>Mental health and SUD treatment referrals</p>
<p>Reduce the availability of potentially addictive substances for those without a medical need</p>	<p>Continue to promote opioid stewardship and education</p> <p>Increase accountability for treatment providers</p> <p>Reduce the amount of substances available through illegal markets</p>	<p>Number of individuals participating in trainings</p> <p>Law enforcement seizure data</p>

THE PLAN - RESCUE

Establish sustainable methods to provide life-saving measures and increase access to harm reduction services

Goals	Strategies	Evaluation
<p>Ensure the availability, procurement, and deployment of naloxone</p>	<p>Identify sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure that naloxone can continue to be made available to first responders and the public at large</p> <p>Evaluate and implement sustainable delivery options for the provision of naloxone to the general public beyond traditional naloxone days</p> <p>Increase the availability of public access naloxone in high occupancy public spaces</p>	<p>Amount of naloxone kits distributed to the public through various means</p> <p>Effective methods of distributing naloxone examined yearly</p>
<p>Increase awareness and importance of harm reduction philosophy, strategies, and interventions</p>	<p>Educate the public, first responders and members of the General Assembly in what constitutes traditional harm reduction and its importance in treating substance use disorder</p> <p>Advocate for change to permit utilization of harm reduction strategies, including the establishment of syringe service programs</p>	<p>Number of implemented strategies to inform the public about the importance of harm reduction</p> <p>Passage of necessary harm reduction legislation</p>
<p>Facilitate compassionate and effective interactions for individuals with a SUD, while decreasing stigma and compassion fatigue in the first responder community</p>	<p>Facilitate trainings, outreach programs, and resources to first responders related to increasing awareness of SUD</p> <p>Continue to work with counties to implement best practices and Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative policies</p>	<p>Counties participating in the LETI Program</p> <p>Number of first responder training sessions</p>

THE PLAN - TREATMENT



Goals	Strategies	Evaluation
<p>Inform patients and providers about the treatment resources that are available within their communities in a timely fashion</p>	<p>Continue providing face-to-face healthcare provider education and technical assistance.</p> <p>Provide materials and resources to consumers to educate and empower them to talk with their healthcare providers or seek help for treatment</p>	<p>Provider educational trainings held</p> <p>Monitor state collected data pertaining to treatment and resources</p> <p>Get Help Now Hotline data</p>
<p>Provide support for identifying and referring individuals with SUD to community-based resources that support social determinants of health</p>	<p>Promote care coordination and connect individuals with supportive services to achieve overall wellbeing</p> <p>Leverage information from health information exchange organizations and community treatment providers to determine and address current barriers to treatment</p>	<p>Monitor multiagency data that encompasses outcomes ties to social determinants of health</p>
<p>Mitigate policy barriers to obtaining SUD treatment</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance and resources to providers to lessen burdens</p> <p>Enhance availability of drug and alcohol counseling and other health care professionals that serve individuals with SUD</p> <p>Ensure that providers can provide treatment to their fullest potential in addition to addressing barriers regarding Pennsylvania confidentiality regulations</p>	<p>Improved health outcomes through data</p> <p>Improve capacity of counseling services</p> <p>Number of SUD Loan Repayment Grants provided</p> <p>Health Professional Shortage Area scores</p>

THE PLAN - RECOVERY



Goals	Strategies	Evaluation
Encourage employer policies and hiring practices that will support individuals in recovery obtaining and maintaining employment	Educate employers on hiring individuals in recovery, employee benefits, and insurance best practices Identify barriers to hiring and supporting employees	Educational engagements with employers Number of recovery friendly workplaces
Increase access to safe and stable housing in addition to community-based supports	Continue the recovery housing initiative and improve access to housing for vulnerable populations Develop Recovery Community Organizations as a central location for supportive services Coordinate with local governments to bring awareness to the recovery community needs	Number of people served through the housing initiative Number of operating Recovery Community Organizations
Reduce barriers to accessing and using insurance for individuals in recovery	Educate insurance companies, providers, and individuals on insurance coverage pertaining to mental health and substance use parity Facilitate access to medical assistance, veterans' assistance, private insurance, and other resources for at risk individuals	Market conduct exam outcomes Percentage of uninsured individuals in Pennsylvania Parity complaints

SUSTAINABILITY

Implement long-lasting policies and regulations to support strategic plan initiatives and build relationships with organizations impacted by the epidemic



Goals	Strategies	Evaluation
<p>Improve two-way communication and collaboration with community organizations, people in recovery, and stakeholders</p>	<p>Hold a set number of public Opioid Command Center meetings per year</p> <p>Establish a stakeholder committee that meets quarterly</p> <p>Create a newsletter and an annual report</p> <p>Adapt strategies based on feedback from stakeholders and data trends</p>	<p>Number of public and stakeholder meetings held per year</p> <p>Number of newsletters provided to interested organizations and individuals</p>
<p>Continue to invest in innovative initiatives aimed at supporting people with a substance use disorder and their loved ones</p>	<p>Fund community organizations that align with the mission and vision of the Opioid Command Center</p> <p>Expend federal and state funds in a timely manner</p>	<p>State and federal funds allocated for expenditure tied to substance use</p> <p>Number of initiatives funded</p> <p>Progress of spend down for funded initiatives</p>
<p>Ensure the long-term sustainability of our collective efforts</p>	<p>Update and renew the disaster declaration as overdoses remain at a historic high</p> <p>Secure legislative and regulatory reforms that codify existing practices</p>	<p>Initiatives accomplished as set forth in the disaster declarations</p> <p>Quality and quantity of codified initiatives</p>

SWOT ANALYSIS

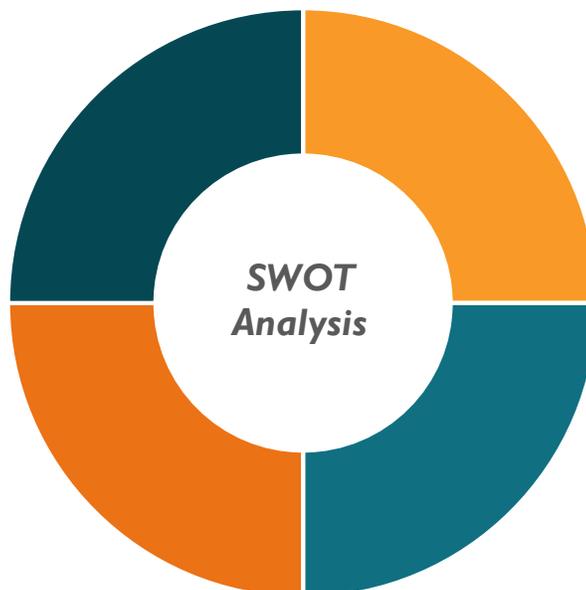
The collaborative efforts of the Opioid Command Center have been successful in reducing the rate of fatal overdoses by 18% from 2017 to 2018. The public health accomplishments derived from the Opioid Command Center include decrease in certain communicable diseases, decrease in overdose deaths, and enhanced supports for individuals struggling with addiction. Governor Wolf took swift action to declare the opioid crisis a “disaster” because the Department of Health does not have the statutory authority to declare a public health emergency. While the Disaster Declarations issued by Governor Wolf have enabled a unique level of inter-agency and community partner collaboration, a continued collective effort is needed to remain proactive and holistic in addressing the substance use crisis and the many public health issues which have ensued. Additionally, there will need to be further planning around future direction of the current incident command structure and the potential for enhanced long-term interagency coordination. Shifting the focus from immediate crisis response to long-term sustainability will allow for long-lasting policy actions to prevent further negative outcomes and the development of a comprehensive infrastructure to help individuals with addiction and their family. Through bridging these gaps, there will be opportunity for enhanced outcomes and further success.

STRENGTHS

- Collaboration
- Data collection and reporting
- Problem solving
- Timely policy implementation
- Medicaid expansion

OPPORTUNITIES

- Integration and collaboration with communities
- Set long lasting policy, legislative, and regulatory change



WEAKNESSES

- Compassion fatigue
- Requirement of a Disaster Declaration to continue some efforts
- No authority to declare a public health emergency

THREATS

- Regulatory waivers are only granted under a Disaster Declaration
- Change of administration in 2023

CONCLUSION



The comprehensive four-pronged approach adopted by the Opioid Command Center to address substance use epidemics has been successful in saving lives and reducing harm for thousands of Pennsylvanians. The guidance provided by the strategic plan will continue the impactful evidence-based initiatives, in addition to reducing barriers and promoting well-being to accomplish our vision of protecting all Pennsylvanians from substance use disorder and improve the lives of those who have it.

If you have questions, please email ra-dh opioidcommand@pa.gov.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following state agencies and partners for their continued efforts and participation in the Opioid Command Center.

- Department of Health
- Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Department of Human Services
- Pennsylvania Insurance Department
- Department of Aging
- Department of Corrections
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- Pennsylvania State Police
- Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole
- Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
- Office of the State Fire Commissioner
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Department of Labor and Industry
- Department of Community and Economic Development
- Office of the Attorney General
- The Office of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf