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Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons in Broward County

The Florida Medical Examiners Commission recently released their 2022 Interim Report. As seen in the chart below, occurrences of drugs among deceased persons in Broward County were generally lower in the first half of 2022, compared to the same period in 2021. There were decreases in occurrences of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (-35%), heroin (-86%), cocaine (-3%), and methamphetamine (-24%). However, the data also show a small increase (14%) in occurrences of prescription opioids, which include hydrocodone, oxycodone, and methadone. The report also noted 9 occurrences of xylazine among deceased individuals in the county. Xylazine is a veterinary sedative, which has become a common adulterant of fentanyl and contributes to overdose and death.

At the state level, compared to the first half of 2021, opioid-related deaths decreased by 7%, opioid-caused deaths decreased by 10%, and total drug-related deaths decreased by 5%. There were some increases in occurrences of fentanyl analogs (35%), xylazine (64%), and methamphetamine (3%) among deceased individuals in the state, however, occurrences decreased for heroin (-58%), fentanyl (-8%), prescription opioids (-6%), cocaine (-6.5%), gabapentin (-9.5%), kratom (-1%), and cathinones (-21.5%). The drugs that caused the most deaths in the state were fentanyl and analogs (2,744), cocaine (1,230), and methamphetamine (1,098).

The overall trend of decreases in fentanyl and analogs among deceased individuals in the county is a positive signal, especially because these substances are linked to the majority of overdoses and deaths. In addition, while the use of stimulants, methamphetamine, and cocaine is a growing concern nationwide and at the state level, data from the medical examiners suggest that use of these substances is slowing in Broward County.

Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons in Broward County: First Halves of 2017-2022						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Fentanyl + Analogs	210	178	207	408	553	390
Heroin	94	59	73	73	55	22
Hydrocodone + Oxycodone + Methadone	77	42	49	49	52	63
Cocaine	165	126	127	212	227	221
Methamphetamine		9	21	29	37	29

Sources: Florida Medical Examiners Commission Interim and Annual Reports, <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MEC/Publications-and-Forms>

Broward Briefings may be copied. Please cite United Way of Broward County Commission on Behavioral Health & Drug Prevention.