

Implementing Overdose Fatality Review Recommendations to Save Lives

Mark Powell, District Attorney

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Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania





Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania

- Lackawanna County, PA
 - Northeast Pennsylvania
 - 465 square miles
 - Population – 215,896
 - Largest city – Scranton
 - Largely rural
 - 82.1% white (non-Hispanic)



<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lackawannacountypennsylvania/PST045221>



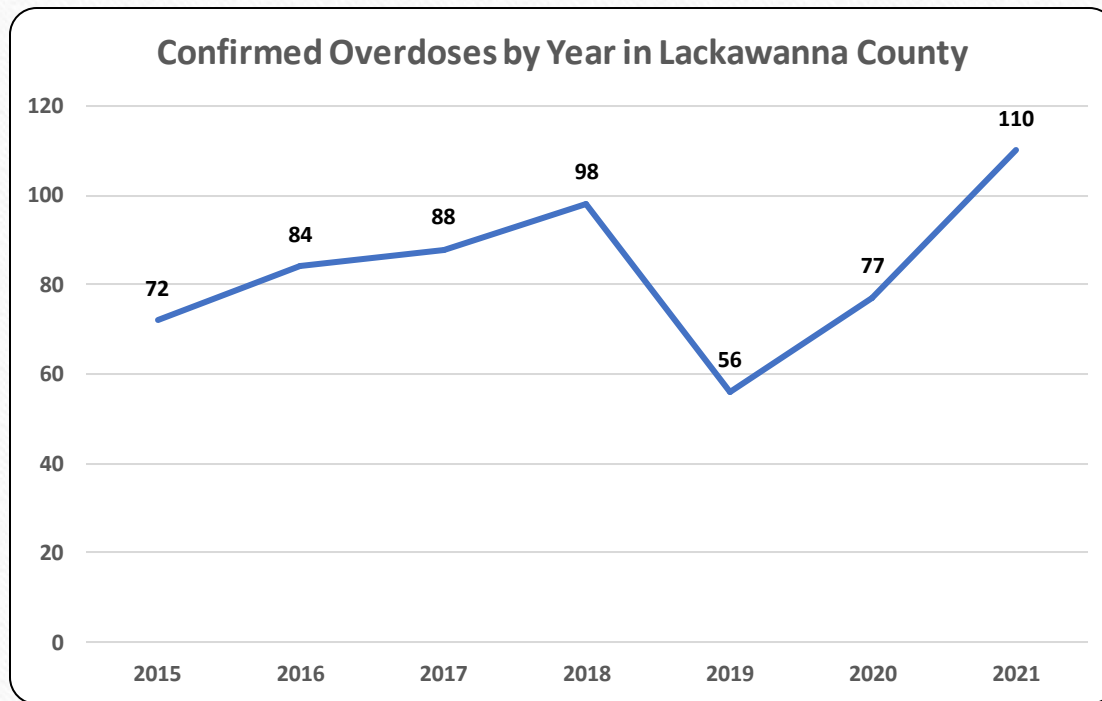
1. Recommendations generated and lessons learned
2. Collaboration among partners

OFR Established

- October 2019 – DOJ awards grant
- COVID-19
- August 2020 – Informational Meeting
- October 2020 – Two Cases per Month Reviewed
- October 2022 – OFR Legislation



Lackawanna County Yearly Overdose Deaths



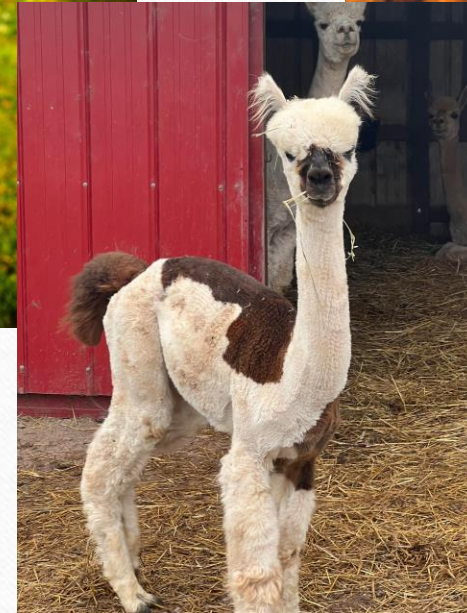
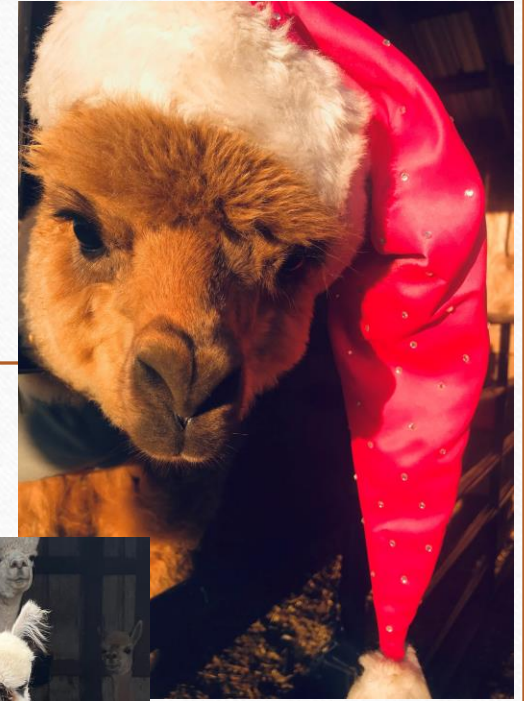
- COVID-19
- Fentanyl
 - 82% of opioid-related overdoses nationally
 - 97% of opioid-related overdoses in Lackawanna County
 - 168% increase in fentanyl-only deaths from 2020 to 2021

DA Leading OFR Team

- Credibility
- Buy-in
- Local networking
- Ability to implement recommendations
- Statewide influence



Fun Fact – Alpacas!





Fentanyl – It isn't just about heroin anymore . . .

- Surprising toxicology trends
- Discussion and need for more information
- Data confirmed our suspicions
 - Fentanyl-ONLY deaths DOUBLED
 - 71% of fentanyl-related deaths DID NOT include heroin
- Need to educate the public

As Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) Circle Widens, Ripple Effects Intersect in Pennsylvania County

Team Recommendation Prompts Action on Fentanyl Testing

Catching Up With COSSAP, October 2021

The evolution of overdose fatality review (OFR) teams—public health and public safety officials who conduct death reviews in order to identify overdose prevention and intervention strategies—as a positive force for change in the nationwide battle against substance use took a quantum leap forward this year, if the new team in Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, is any indication.

Addicted in PA | One team in Lackawanna County actively works to prevent overdose deaths

by FOX56 NEWSROOM | Monday, March 8th 2021



View video at [Addicted in PA | One team in Lackawanna County actively works to prevent overdose deaths | WOLF \(fox56.com\)](#)

By prompting the county's district attorney and the mayor of its largest city to [call for the decriminalization of test strips](#) to counter skyrocketing use of fentanyl, the OFR team showed itself to be the go-to vehicle for real-time, data-driven action in response to drug use trends in Lackawanna County.

In so doing, the OFR team's recommendations not only stood to save lives, but also presented a template for community responses everywhere. By leveraging collaborations with OFR partners nationwide—in this case, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's OFR team and the [Overdose Response Strategy](#) (ORS)—and sharing current data and evidence-based practices with public health and public safety stakeholders in the jurisdiction, the team synthesized Lackawanna County's efforts behind an approach that was proactive instead of reactive, which meant it was more likely to be effective.

Beginnings

When program manager Carina Havenstrite (below) set about establishing Lackawanna County's OFR team in early 2020 [after receiving a COSSAP grant](#), "It was a challenge," she said. "There weren't nearly the resources then that OFR teams have now—no [toolkit](#), no [message exchange](#)."

"So, it was very much about me reaching out to OFR teams that already existed," she said. "I spoke to Indiana's OFR team, where they'd had great results, and [following a request for training and technical assistance through COSSAP] to Philadelphia and the ORS, picking up pieces of this and that, deciding what worked best for us, sharing agreements and policies. The support was pretty amazing."

Ms. Havenstrite's outreach paid great dividends. Lackawanna County served as a mentee under Indiana's OFR team through COSSAP's peer mentorship program, and from COSSAP's new OFR toolkit, she and the data analyst assigned to the Lackawanna team, in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Program Evaluation and Research Unit



Carina Havenstrite, Lackawanna County OFR Team Program Manager

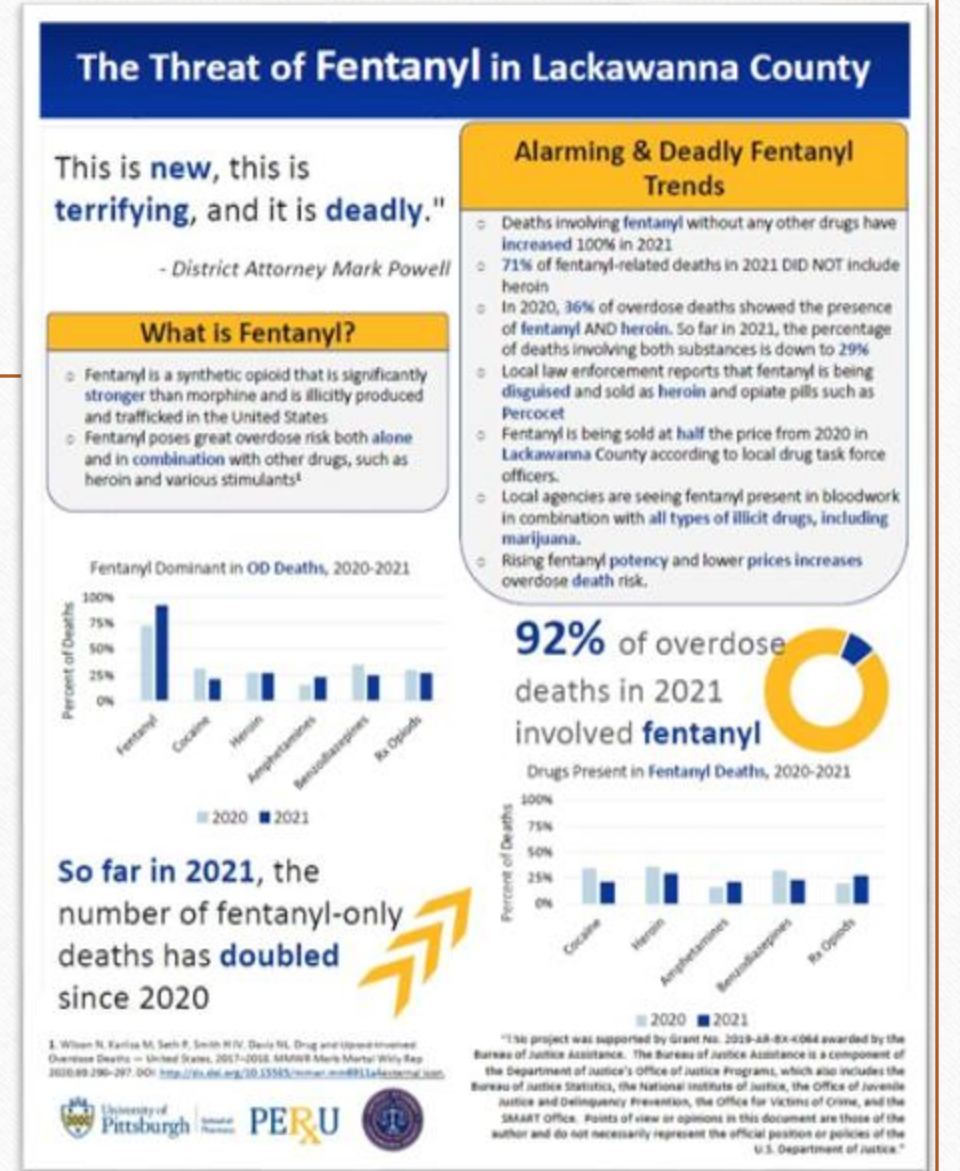


Raising Fentanyl Awareness

- September 7, 2021, Press Conference
 - Fentanyl Is Everywhere
 - Not Just Heroin
 - Pure Fentanyl Being Disguised as Pills
 - Need for Fentanyl Testing Strip Criminalization
- DA, Mayor, Chief of Police, Local Media
- News and Newspaper Coverage
- *Catching Up With COSSAP* – October 2021

Additional Impact

- Fentanyl educational document
- Fentanyl testing strip decriminalization
 - City of Scranton
 - PA District Attorney Association
- Facilitated discussion

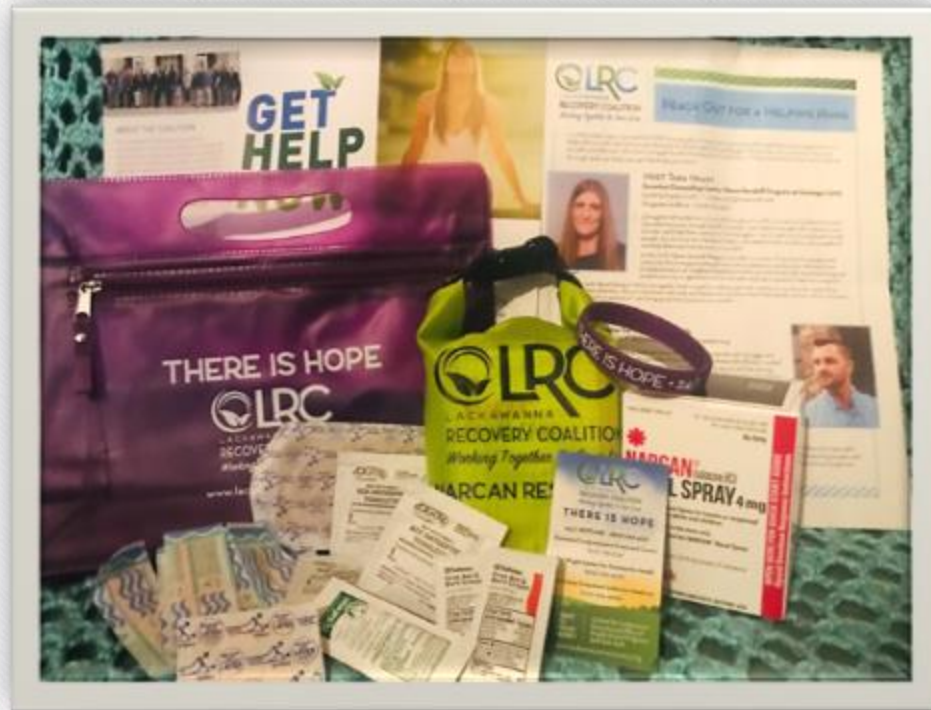


Targeted Naloxone Distribution

- Naloxone by mail
- School nurses
- First drug use in elementary/high school
- Fentanyl disguised as pills
- Schools need naloxone access and training



School Naloxone Outreach



- Collaboration
 - Drug and Alcohol Agency
 - DA Office
 - Pennsylvania Ambulance



Impact

100% of Lackawanna
County school nurses
have naloxone on hand,
and staff is trained
appropriately

Law Enforcement Naloxone

- Responding officer did not have naloxone
- Police department representatives unsure
- DA detectives did not carry naloxone
- Letter sent to all police chiefs by DA's Office
- Naloxone and needed training provided by Pennsylvania Ambulance
- 100% of Lackawanna County police departments now carry naloxone (27 departments)





Success Stories

- Stigma/needed discussions
- Saving a stranger
- Recovery kits found at scene of overdose
- Student revived

My daughter is addicted to heroin. This could save her life if she overdoses at home.

I am in recovery myself and have many people in my life that are in recovery currently and some that still use. This would be great to have on hand in case of emergency.

Too many loved ones are gone because of opiates. Although it is too late for many, maybe I could help one. I would like to keep this on hand in memory of a loved one lost. That maybe others won't share the same loss. Thank you all for your service to our community.

Thank you for caring about the “forgotten” ones.

I am a survivor because of Narcan!

I've been off of opiates for 6 years; however, all my friends that are still alive fight their battle daily. I can't turn my back on them.

My brother is a drug user and I worry about him constantly.

Thank you for providing this free kit! My husband has been in recovery for over a year and the fear still sits with me. This will ease that fear and hope I never have to use it. Thank you!!

My 25-year-old son is a heroin addict. This is good for me to have on hand, god forbid I needed to use it. Thank you!!

My boyfriend is a recovering addict and we have had several friends overdose. This is a great thing to have on hand to save the lives of those important to you.

My son is clean & sober for 3 yrs now but know others who are still struggling with addiction & I pray I will never have to use this but at the same time feeling hopeful that I can maybe save someone's life if needed.

As a social worker in the community, I feel more equipped now that I will have a dose of Narcan present if I should ever encounter someone in need.

I often look around at my AA meetings to think what if someone comes in with an overdose, what shall we do.

Every life matters!



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QUESTIONS