



*Working to Reduce the Number  
of Opioid Prescriptions in Kentucky  
by One-Third by 2025*

March 2021

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KENTUCKY  
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HealthCare



## Kentucky Statewide Opioid Stewardship (KY SOS) March Newsletter

### KHA Quality Conference – March 18 – 19, 2021

The Kentucky Hospital Association 2021 Quality Conference is designed to bring together all health care stakeholders to provide a better understanding of the patient's needs. With better care and the closure of communication gaps, patient outcomes will continue to improve in Kentucky. Please invite your CEOs, CNOs, CMOs, management teams, quality directors, infection preventionist, case managers, pharmacists, and other health care providers to attend.

Registration link: <https://kyha.memberclicks.net/2021-quality-conference>

### Courier Journal Article on Overdose Deaths

#### *Overdose deaths at record levels*

DEA says fentanyl pills remain biggest danger.

More Americans are dying from overdoses during the coronavirus pandemic than ever before, and one of the biggest threats is disguised as a safe tiny blue pill, according to a new Drug Enforcement Administration report released Tuesday.

More than 83,000 people died from an overdose in the 12-month period ending in July of 2020 — the highest amount of overdose fatalities ever recorded, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That's more than an 18% increase from the overdose death toll during the 12-month period ending July 2019.

Fentanyl, a manmade opioid, remains a top killer, according to the DEA's annual National Drug Threat Assessment, and is sometimes dyed blue and stamped to look like the prescription pain pill oxycodone or Oxy-Contin.

On the streets, the pills are known as "Mexican Oxy" or "M30s" because the cartels stamp one side with "30" and the other with an "M."

Many users don't know if, or how much, fentanyl is in the pill — or that they could be taking a fatal dose.

Fentanyl also can be used as a powder and sprinkled into other drugs, with an amount as small as Abraham Lincoln's cheek on a penny being potentially fatal. "While the COVID-19 pandemic plagues this nation, so too do transnational criminal organizations and violent street gangs, adjusting to pandemic restrictions to flood our communities with dangerous drugs," DEA Acting Administrator Chris Evans said in a news release warning of the dangers.

Synthetic opioids, primarily illicit fentanyl, appear to be the primary driver of the increases in overdose deaths, increasing more than 38% in the 12-month period ending in May 2020, compared with the previous 12 months, according to the CDC.

Overdose deaths involving psychostimulants, such as methamphetamine, increased by nearly 35%, according to the CDC, surpassing cocaine-involved deaths.

DEA agents say cartels or local drug traffickers sometimes mix fentanyl with meth and cocaine.

The bulk of deadly fentanyl and other drugs are coming from Mexican cartels, mainly the Sinaloa Cartel and the *Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación*, known as CJNG.

These two cartel powerhouses appear to be increasing the production of wholesale quantities of fentanyl in both powder and pill forms, according to the DEA report.

COVID travel restrictions briefly slowed the flow of drugs for the first half of 2020, according to the report. But cartels found new ways to get their shipments across the border.

"Mexican transnational criminal organizations continue to supply most of the cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and fentanyl smuggled into the country," Evans noted in the report. "While violent street gangs dominate the retail sale and distribution of these illicit drugs at the local level."

Cartels send drug shipments into the U.S. on airlines and even attached to drones, but their top method continues to center on sneaking them across the border in cars or semis, according to the DEA's report.

CDC Director Robert Redfield cautioned about the acceleration in overdoses in December: "The disruption to daily life due to the COVID-19 pandemic has hit those with substance use disorder hard.

"We need to take care of people suffering from unintended consequences." The CDC urged residents to get loved ones help for addiction and to be prepared with the opioid antidote naloxone, now

available at many area pharmacies.

**Link to article:** <https://louisvillecourierjournal-ky-app.newsmemory.com/?publink=50a177730>

## **DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is Saturday, April 24, 2021**

Please see link to access the DEA Take Back website.

<https://takebackday.dea.gov/>

Feel free to use educational pamphlets, posters and PSA videos from this website to promote this important event in your community. I encourage you to include proper prescription drug disposal in your discharge paperwork and in your discharge counseling to patients. Be sure to tell them about this DEA Take Back Day on April 24. You will be able to find a collection site near you by using the above link. (The website says “Coming Soon”. I just wanted to get this information/reminder out, so you can start planning now.) Once the website is updated, you will be able to scroll down to “Collection Site Locator” and type in your zip code to find a local collection site.

It is imperative that our patients dispose of their unwanted, unused and outdated medications. Getting rid of these medications can reduce the risk of duplicate therapies, reduce potential drug-drug interactions, while reducing confusion about therapy changes for our patients. Plus, disposing of unused narcotic medications can help reduce the diversion we are seeing across the state.

Don't forget that the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) website provides prescription drug disposal locations available throughout the year. You can access the ODCP website by the following link. Just search by your county name and find the location(s) in your community.

<https://odcp.ky.gov/Pages/Prescription-Drug-Disposal-Locations.aspx>

Do your part, Kentucky, to promote this national DEA event and proper prescription drug disposal in your community!

### **Additional Resources on KY SOS Website**

To start and/or further conversations around non-pharmacologic pain treatments, like using a Comfort Menu, use this checklist:

<http://www.kentuckysos.com/portals/2/documents/ComfortMenuAlliantQuality.pdf>

Informational resource to explain risks of opioids and benzodiazepines combination, please visit <http://www.kentuckysos.com/portals/2/documents/Medication-Risk-Alert-Opioids-and-Benzodiazepines.pdf>

All other KY SOS resources can be found at <http://www.kentuckysos.com/Resources>

### **Data Update**

KY SOS continues to encourage all facilities to submit their monthly data into KY Quality Counts (KQC). As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, KY SOS

understands resources are stretched and data entry might be delayed. Please continue to report **monthly** data on both the process and outcomes measures. Education and the future of the program are based in part on the data reported. Areas of improvement and areas of success will be highlighted and emphasized as KY SOS continues. If you need assistance with data input or navigation of the KQC data collection system, please contact **Emily Henderson** ([ehenderson@kyha.com](mailto:ehenderson@kyha.com)) or **Melanie Moch** ([mmoch@kyha.com](mailto:mmoch@kyha.com)).

## The Happenings

### *Upcoming Events/Webinars*

**KHA Quality Conference** is March 18 – 19, with KY SOS presentation on the agenda March 19<sup>th</sup>. Registration link can be found above. KY SOS presentation is on Friday, March 19, by Brittney Allen, PhD. Dr. Allen will be presenting on substance use disorder and COVID-19 pandemic: special focus on disparities impacting communities of color. CE is approved for nursing, pharmacy and CPHQ.

**KY SOS April Webinar – April 14, 1-2p ET:** KY SOS Metric 8: Organization Collaborates with Community Partners to Promote Appropriate Use of Opioids within the Community.

Presented by Clark Regional Medical Center, CE pending for this event. Calendar invites will be sent closer to date.

**Webinar link:** <https://join.onstreammedia.com/live/41054104/kysos5>

**Password:** KYSOS

**Conference line:** 1-877-594-8353

**Participant Code:** 56350822 #

**For more information, please visit [www.kentuckysos.com](http://www.kentuckysos.com) or contact a KHA staff member to assist.**

Emily Henderson for program and pharmacy-related questions–  
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Melanie Moch for data-related questions – [mmoch@kyha.com](mailto:mmoch@kyha.com)

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Claire Arant for administrative assistance – [carant@kyha.com](mailto:carant@kyha.com)

*Missed a webinar? All presentations are recorded and can be found under the events & education link.*