Kentucky Substance Use Research & Enforcement

Using data to drive public safety and public health efforts against substance use across the Commonwealth

**Brief:** Five Major Overdose Related Substances in Kentucky, January 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018

Possession and Trafficking Citations, Drug Overdose Related Deaths, Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and State Police Lab Submissions
Produced by the Kentucky State Police Intelligence Branch; and, the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC), as bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

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Suggested Citation:

Data are provisional and subject to change. Possession Citations are comprised of KRS: 35120; 35121; 42195; 42196; and 42206. Trafficking Citations are comprised of KRS: 35100; 35101; 42105; 42106; 42376; 42377; 42378; 42466; 42468; 42470; 42480; 42483; and 42486. The number of citations could be greater than the number of individuals cited; citations are with over 90 percent law enforcement agencies reporting. Deaths are based on drug overdose related deaths among Kentucky residents. Drug overdose related hospitalizations represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated in acute care facilities. Drug overdose related emergency department visits represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated. To avoid duplicate counts, emergency department visits excluded visits resulting in hospitalizations. Tested Lab Submission data represents those substances submitted to the lab for identification purposes; quantity is not reflected. Lab Data represents submissions tested within the corresponding timeframe; submission date is not reflected.

Data sources: Kentucky Open Portal System; Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Office of Vital Statistics; Kentucky Outpatient Claim Files, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Office of Health and Data Analytics; Kentucky Inpatient Hospitalization Claims Files, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Kentucky Office of Health and Data Analytics; Kentucky State Police Crime Laboratory.

Key Findings:

- Heroin possession citations decreased by 8.0% statewide when comparing the first three quarters of 2017 to the first three quarters of 2018. Heroin trafficking citations continue to follow the trend of increasing from the first to third quarter for both 2017 and 2018.
- Statewide decrease of 32.0% in heroin related emergency department visits from the first three quarters of 2017 to the first three quarters of 2018.
- Heroin related deaths decreased by 44.9% in the first three quarters of 2018 when compared to the first three quarters of 2017, and hospitalizations decreased by 41.8% among Kentucky residents.
- Statewide decrease in heroin related events in regards to heroin related deaths, emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and tested lab submissions from January 2017 through September 2018, while possession and trafficking citations increased by 6.3% and 16.3%, respectively, which suggest law enforcement aided removal is affecting the available supply from the end user.
Data are provisional and subject to change. Possession Citations are comprised of KRS: 35220; 35221; 42197; 42198; 42209; 42210; 42237; 42238; and 42246. Trafficking Citations are comprised of KRS: 35200; 35201; 42109; 42110; 42372; 42373; 42374; 42375; 42435; 42436; 42437; and 42438. The number of citations could be greater than the number of individuals cited; citations are with over 90 percent law enforcement agencies reporting. Deaths are based on drug overdose related deaths among Kentucky residents. Opioid related emergency department visits and hospitalizations do not include heroin. Drug overdose related hospitalizations represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated in acute care facilities. Drug overdose related emergency department visits represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated. To avoid duplicate counts, emergency department visits excluded visits resulting in hospitalizations. Tested Lab Submission data represents those substances submitted to the lab for identification purposes; quantity is not reflected. Lab Data represents submissions tested within the corresponding timeframe; submission date is not reflected. Tested Lab Submission Opioid data represents Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, Buprenorphine and Codeine numbers only.

Data sources: Kentucky Open Portal System; Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Office of Vital Statistics; Kentucky Outpatient Claim Files, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Office of Health and Data Analytics; Kentucky Inpatient Hospitalization Claims Files, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Kentucky Office of Health and Data Analytics; Kentucky State Police Crime Laboratory.

Key Findings:

- Statewide opioid possession citations decreased by 7.7% from January 2017 through September 2018, while related trafficking citations have decreased by 22.9%.
- Opioid related hospitalizations decreased by 11.3%, opioid related deaths decreased by 13.0%, and emergency department visits decreased by 16.1% among Kentucky residents when comparing the first three quarters of 2017 to the first three quarters of 2018.
- In the first three quarters of 2018, opioids accounted for 9% of the total tested lab submissions to Kentucky State Police (KSP) Laboratories. This is similar to the first three quarters of 2017, when opioids accounted for 9.5% of the total tested lab submissions.
- Overall, a 16.7% reduction in opioid related events was observed from January 2017 through September 2018; however, opioids still remain a continual problem plaguing the Commonwealth.
Key Findings:

- Statewide methamphetamine possession citations increased by 45.2% from January 2017 through September 2018, meanwhile trafficking citations increased by 24.9%.
- Methamphetamine related drug overdose deaths have increased 17.5% when comparing the sum of first three quarters of 2017 to the first three quarters of 2018; all methamphetamine related overdose deaths involved polysubstance use among Kentucky residents.
- Methamphetamine continues to be the most commonly submitted drug to KSP Laboratories accounting for 42% of tested lab submissions in the first three quarters of 2018.
- In 2018, the KSP Laboratories identified a few polysubstance mixtures including but not limited to methamphetamine/gabapentin mixtures as well as methamphetamine/tramadol mixtures.
- Methamphetamine related events increased by an average of 27.9% from January 2017 through September 2018. The alarming increase of methamphetamine use, misuse, and distribution further signify that methamphetamines is a highly prevalent threat to the Commonwealth’s public health and safety.
Key Findings:

- Statewide cocaine possession citations increased by 12.0% from January 2017 through September 2018, while trafficking citations decreased by 16.1% during this same timeframe.
- No change was observed in the number of cocaine related emergency department visits from January 2017 through September 2018; however reductions in the number of cocaine related deaths, and hospitalizations were observed, 42.1%, and 49.3%, respectively.
- In 2017, cocaine accounted for 10% of the total tested lab submissions to KSP Laboratories; a percentage similar to the 9% of total tested lab submissions during the first three quarters of 2018.
- The use, misuse, and distribution of cocaine have remained prevalent in Kentucky.
Data are provisional and subject to change. Trafficking Citations are comprised of KRS: 42465; 42472; 42474; 42476; 42478; 42590; 42593; 42596; and 42599. The number of citations could be greater than the number of individuals cited; citations are with over 90 percent law enforcement agencies reporting. Deaths are based on drug overdose related deaths among Kentucky residents. Drug overdose related hospitalizations represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated in acute care facilities Drug overdose related emergency department visits represent encounters of care among Kentucky residents and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated. To avoid duplicate counts, emergency department visits excluded visits resulting in hospitalizations. Tested Lab Submission data represents those substances submitted to the lab for identification purposes; quantity is not reflected. Lab Data represents submissions tested within the corresponding timeframe; submission date is not reflected.

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Key Findings:

- Statewide fentanyl and fentanyl analog trafficking citations increased 82.6% from January 2017 through September 2018.
- The number of fentanyl and fentanyl analog related deaths remained constant when examining the sum of first three quarter of 2017 to the first three quarters of 2018.
- Tested lab submissions increased 67% from January 2017 through September 2018. KSP Laboratories continue to see several different fentanyl derivatives in casework along with polydrug mixtures, including heroin/fentanyl mixtures, as well as cocaine/fentanyl mixtures and methamphetamine/fentanyl mixtures. Fentanyl mixed with other fentanyl analogs was prevalent in tested lab submissions in 2018.