

# Health Departments

## What Do I Need to Know?

Prescription misuse/abuse/diversion/overdose is a costly problem, creating significant morbidity and mortality in your community.

Prescription drug use is the fastest growing cause of accidental death in North Carolina and the United States, now surpassing automobile accidents.

Individuals and the general public may feel that if a drug is prescribed by a trained medical professional that it is safe.

There is general unawareness about the potential dangers of prescription opioids related to dosage of opioid, underlying medical conditions, and other prescribed or over the counter medications.

There is also a general unawareness of the proper storage and disposal of opioid medications.

## Why Am I Needed?

Prescription drug misuse/abuse is an important issue affecting the health of clients seen in Health Departments for primary care and other public health programs.

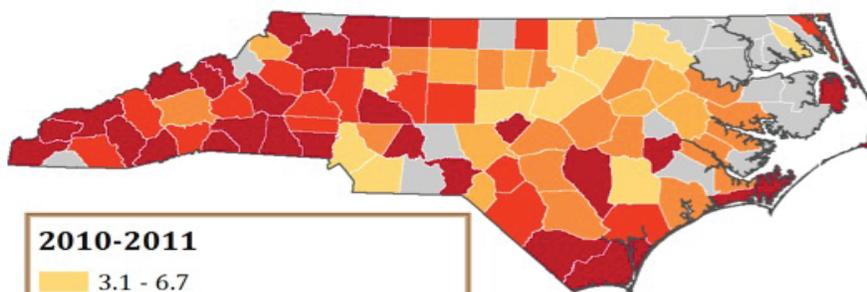
Prescription drug overdose has met definition criteria of an epidemic and, as such, is an important public health and safety issue.

Health Departments are poised (through already established partnerships with local hospitals, medical community, government, social services, schools, etc.) to bring together a collaborative effort between multiple sectors to address this issue that affects individual and community health.

Health Departments are responsible for collecting and dispersing information on issues affecting the health of their communities.

Health Departments are charged with improving health of their communities by addressing and developing plans to alleviate causes of significant morbidity and mortality.

## Unintentional Poisoning Mortality Rates: North Carolina, 2010-2011



### 2010-2011

3.1 - 6.7

6.8 - 8.4

8.5 - 11.8

11.9 - 15.0

15.1 - 50.0

<5 deaths; data are suppressed

**Crude Rates per 100,000  
person-year**



## What Needs To Be Done?



*It will take a community effort to address this problem by raising public awareness, decreasing demand for and supply of opioid medications, and providing harm reduction for those who experience symptoms of an overdose.*

- Recognize prescription drug overdose as a public health concern.
- Organize interested parties from as many sectors as possible to create a community response to the issue of prescription drug overdose.
- Promote education among the medical community with respect to safe opioid prescribing practices.
- Promote education among the public regarding potential danger and proper use, storage, and disposal of prescription opioids.
- Promote and support programs that supply naloxone, the antidote to opioid medications.
- Be part of or facilitate a community-wide task force/coalition that addresses substance abuse.
- Support increases in addicted treatment services availability.
- Collect real time data pertaining to prescription drug overdose mortality, emergency department and hospitalizations pertaining to substance use, school based incidences, and local crime dates surrounding diversion and addiction.
- Take Correctly, Store Securely, Dispose Properly, Never Share.™***

For more information  
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