

New Bedford sees 25% decline in fatal drug overdoses in 2017

Initial reports show that New Bedford saw an 18% drop in drug overdoses and a 25% drop in fatal overdoses in 2017 compared to 2016.

It's important to note that the death numbers can rise in the future as cases can be confirmed by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner at a later date. It's also important to note the following changes by the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health** can increase the total number compared to previous years:

"Death data that were previously reported as "Unintentional/Undetermined" has been updated to include deaths of "All Intentions", which means that opioid-related deaths that have been determined by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as the result of suicide will now be included in the totals."

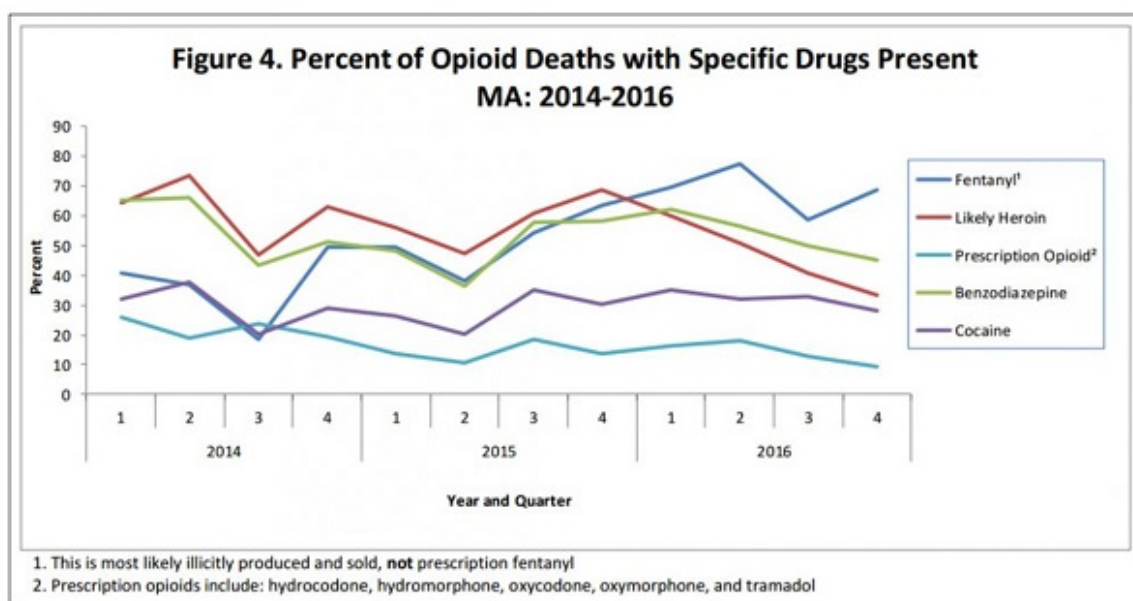
This means that suicides using opioids are now included in the total death count.

According to the New Bedford Police Department, they recorded 553 total accidental drug overdoses in 2017. That's a stark contrast to 2016 when the numbers of overdoses doubled from 389 in 2015 to 679 in 2016.

According to the **Massachusetts Department of Health's records on fatal overdoses**, the number of fatal overdoses have gone from 26 in 2012, to 29 in 2013, to 28 in 2014, to 49 in 2015, to 55 in 2016. The New Bedford Police Department reports 42 for 2017. If the numbers hold true, that would be 25.6% decrease over 2016.

The decrease in the total number of fatal overdoses can likely be contributed to the widespread use of Narcan. Narcan is the life-saving drug that has a high rate of success of saving overdosing persons.

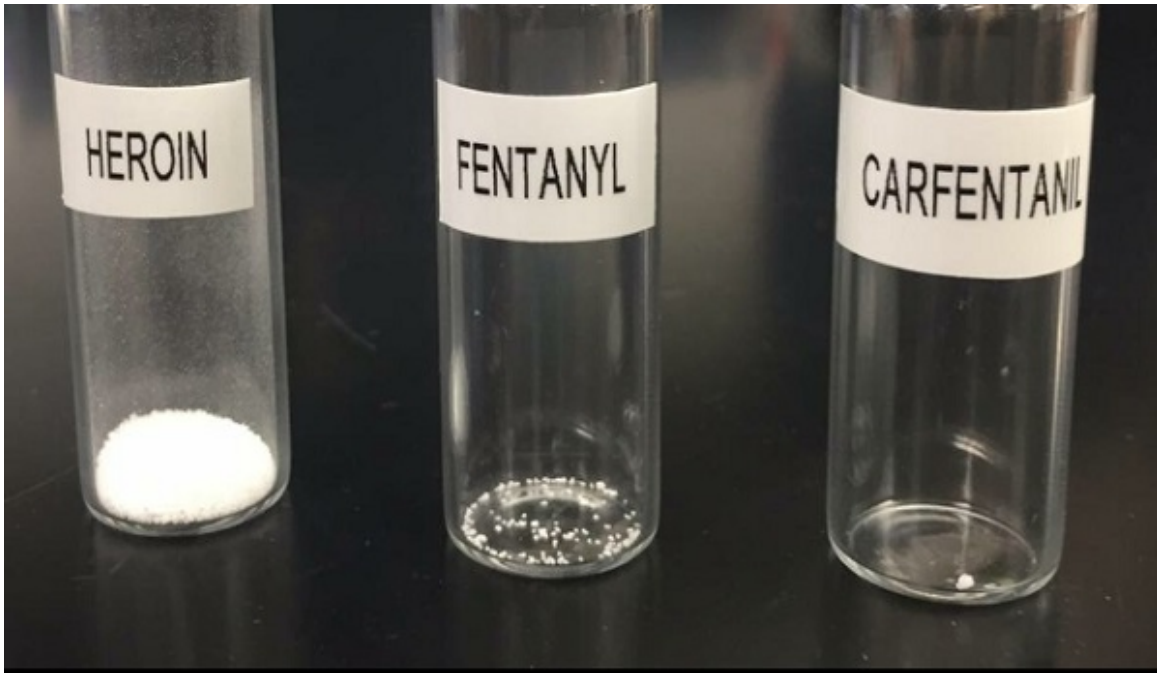
If these numbers hold up, it will be interesting considering the increased use of **fentanyl and carfentanil by drug dealers** – drugs far more powerful than heroin. Just a few grains of these drugs can cause an overdose and they have become readily available to drug users across the country and causing most of the overdose deaths.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Fentanyl was found in 75 percent of the 1,374 opioid deaths in Massachusetts in 2016 and **carfentanil, a drug 10,000 times more potent than morphine and used on elephants, has found its way into Massachusetts**. Carfentanil is approximately 100 times more potent than Fentanyl, which can be lethal in the 2-milligram range. These two drugs are likely to be the main cause of most drug overdoses going forward and even causing overdoses in first-responders.

Here's a look at a fatal amount of each drug:



This image shows the lethal (deadly) amount of each drug shown

Again, the two factors to consider when reviewing these number is the possible increase in deaths based on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health now include suicides and that the 2017 fatal overdose number can be revised upwards the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner conclude further opioid deaths. Additionally, it's too early to tell if government programs are having a real impact on these lower numbers, or we've simply hit a natural peak.