



**PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY ON FENTANYL**

***Fentanyl Contributing to Increase in Fatal Drug Overdoses in Davidson County, Tennessee***

**August 21, 2020** – The following joint statement represents a collaborative, cross-sectorial effort to mitigate the drug overdose epidemic and is supported by the agencies listed below:

- Appalachia High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
- Davidson County Medical Examiner
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Metro Nashville Police Department
- Nashville Fire Department
- Nashville Metro Public Health Department
- Office of the District Attorney–Nashville
- Office of the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee
- Tennessee Bureau of Investigation

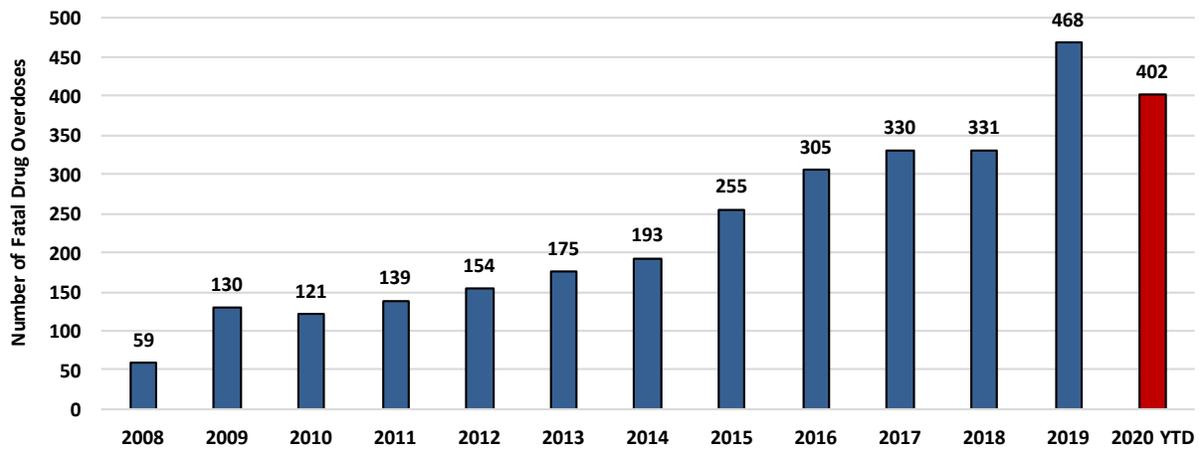
The purpose of this public health and safety advisory is to provide an interagency statement from public officials regarding the local drug overdose epidemic where fentanyl is driving fatal drug overdoses in the community. The agencies listed above urge residents to remain alert about the misuse of fentanyl and the increased risk of death by drug overdose associated with improper use.

Fentanyl is a synthetic, short-acting opioid analgesic and is 50-100 times more potent than morphine. The presence of fentanyl in any illicit drug increases the risk of overdose. It is also sold via illicit drug markets for its heroin-like effect and often mixed with heroin and/or cocaine—*with or without the user’s knowledge*—to increase its euphoric effects. While fentanyl-related overdoses can be reversed with naloxone, a higher dose or multiple doses per overdose event may be required to revive a patient due to the high potency of fentanyl.

The Nashville Metro Public Health Department (MPHD) continues to monitor an increase in fatal drug overdoses involving fentanyl that has been occurring in the county. In 2019, Davidson County reported 468 fatal drug overdoses, the highest number on record. At the time of this communication, there have been 402 drug overdose deaths with an average age at death of 40 years. In terms of years of life lost, which is a measure of the average years a person would have lived if he/she had not died prematurely, the deaths reported so far this year average over 35 years of life lost per person.

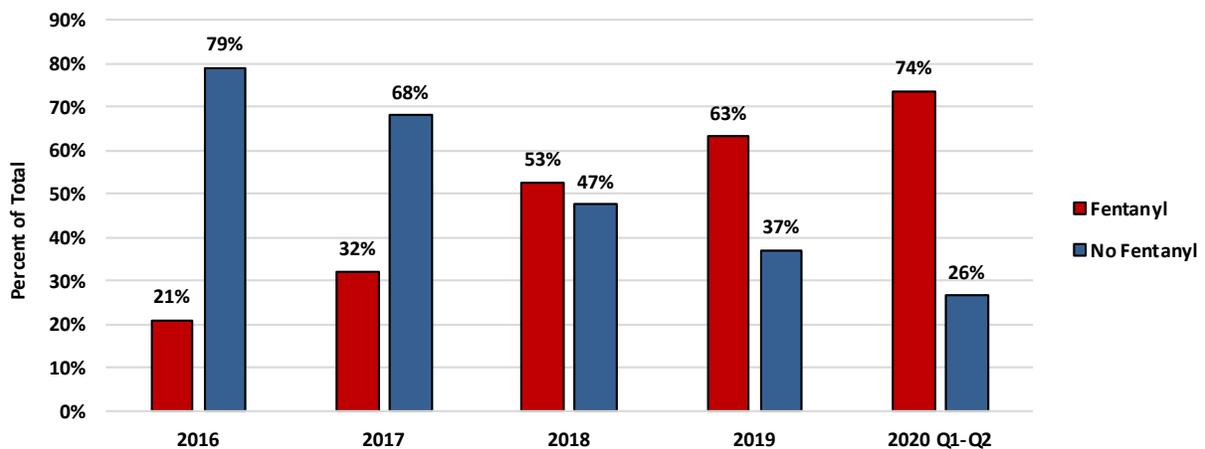
Compared to the same time last year, fatal drug overdoses have increased by more than 40% and are on pace to eclipse 600 deaths this year and could reach upwards of 650 deaths.

### Fatal Drug Overdoses, 2008-2020 – Davidson County, TN



The principal factor driving this unprecedented number of fatal drug overdoses is fentanyl, which has been present in over seventy percent of toxicology reports in 2020. Since 2016, fentanyl has become increasingly identified in drug overdose deaths in Davidson County.

### Fatal Drug Overdoses by Presence of Fentanyl, 2016-2020 – Davidson County, TN



## Resources for the Public

### **Tennessee REDLINE**

- The purpose of the Tennessee REDLINE is to provide accurate, up-to-date alcohol, drug, problem gambling, and other addiction information and referrals to all citizens of Tennessee at their request.
- Phone: 1.800.889.9789 (toll free 24 hours/7 days)
- Website: <https://www.taadas.org/our-programs-and-services/redline>

### **Naloxone Training**

- Information regarding Naloxone training and free Naloxone kits (when available) can be found on the Nashville Prevention Partnership website: <http://nashvilleprevention.org/what-we-do/>
- In Tennessee, the Good Samaritan Law grants civil immunity for individuals administering Naloxone to someone they reasonably believe is overdosing on an opioid.

## Overdose Signs

- Person is not responsive
- Fingertips or lips turn blue or grey
- Breathing is slow, shallow, or has stopped
- Person is gurgling or making snoring noises

### **What can you do if you see an opioid overdose?**

- Call 911
- If you have naloxone, give the person naloxone and perform rescue breathing
- If no response after 2-3 minutes, give a second dose of naloxone
- Do not leave the person alone (help will arrive)
- If the person starts to breathe or becomes more alert, lay the person in the recovery position: put the person slightly on the left side so that their body is supported by a bent knee with their face turned to the side and bottom arm reaching out to stabilize the position

## Drug Overdose Information and Reports (MPHD website)

- <https://www.nashville.gov/Health-Department/Drug-Overdose-Information.aspx>

### **For additional information, please contact:**

#### **Opioid/Overdose Response and Reduction Program**

Division of Behavioral Health and Wellness

Nashville Metro Public Health Department

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The agencies listed in this communication want to ensure that partner agencies, community stakeholders, and the public are aware of this increase and provided with community resources. MPHD

will continue to monitor, investigate, and respond to emerging trends regarding the drug overdose epidemic in Davidson County.

Thank you for your attention to this crisis. With your help, we can save lives in our community.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director  
Appalachia High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

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