



Implications of Coronavirus on Overdoses & Treatment/Prevention Resources

Intelligence Dissemination Report

Regional Operations and Intelligence Center (ROIC)

Office of Drug Monitoring & Analysis ~ ROIC202003-04594D

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Key Findings:

Coronavirus (COVID-19 or 2019-nCoV) is likely to impact the ability of individuals to recover from a drug-related overdose, and may further impact those with substance use disorders by limiting access to treatment and prevention resources.

Details:

Individuals that suffer from substance use disorder are potentially at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, due to their predisposed issues (e.g. comorbid disorders, associated health complications, and residing in densely populated areas).

- These individuals are also likely to have a greater risk of complications associated with the virus.
- Substances such as opioids, methamphetamine, and alcohol in large quantities, can suppress respiratory function, restrict blood vessels, and aggravate respiratory distress respectively.
 - Smoking and/or vaping illicit substances can further increase the risk of respiratory distress.

Individuals suffering from substance use disorders, who have contracted COVID-19, are also at a greater risk of overdose.

- Due to the respiratory complications caused by the virus, life-saving measures such as CPR or the administration of naloxone may not be as effective if not done in a timely manner.

Implications for New Jersey:

- New Jersey is expected to experience an increase in drug-related incidents.
 - Suspected drug-related deaths are projected to increase 1.5% from February (267 deaths) to March of 2020 (271 projected deaths); they are projected to increase 26% when compared to March of 2019 (215 deaths).
 - Naloxone administrations are projected to increase 0.4% from February (1,122 administrations) to March of 2020 (1,127 projected administrations); they are projected to decrease 1% when compared to March of 2019 (1,143 administrations).
- The demand for treatment services is also expected to increase, despite a predicted decrease in staffing due to social distancing and self-isolation.
 - Hospital space is likely to be limited, and services for substance use disorders may be suspended or temporarily shifted online.
- Due to closures in non-essential businesses or services, such as liquor stores, gyms, and/or outpatient mental health centers, there may be an influx of individuals who are unable to cope with their substance use disorders.
 - Individuals who are dependent on alcohol may experience alcohol withdrawal, which can be fatal.

- Individuals who visit the gym or rely on outpatient mental health centers may be unable to manage their substance use disorders due to these closures.

Recommendations for First Responders¹:

To minimize the spread of COVID-19, it is recommended that first responders adhere to the following guidelines:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available and illicit drugs are **NOT** suspected to be present, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Do not touch the face with unwashed hands.
- Have a trained EMS/EMT assess and transport any arrestee who might have COVID-19 to a healthcare facility.
- Ensure only trained personnel wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) have contact with individuals who have or may have COVID-19. The minimum PPE recommended is:
 - A single pair of disposable examination gloves,
 - Disposable isolation gown or single-use/disposable coveralls*,
 - ANY NIOSH-approved particulate respirator (i.e., N-95 or higher),
 - And eye protection (i.e., goggles or disposable face shield).
- For officers who come into close contact with another individual during an arrest, clean and disinfect duty belt and gear prior to reuse using a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow the standard operation procedures for containment and disposal of used PPE, and for containing and laundering clothes; avoid shaking the clothes.
- **If possible, for those without proper PPE, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet.**

Source: NJSP; Drug Monitoring Initiative (DMI) Health & Prevention Sharing Network (HPSN) Public Health Partners

Source Reliability: Completely Reliable

Contributing Agencies: NJSP

Dissemination: Public Safety and Public Health Partners

Request for Information and Contact Information: Any agency with additional information regarding this topic, or with any questions about this product, should contact the Drug Monitoring Initiative (DMI), Office of Drug Monitoring & Analysis at DMI@gw.njsp.org.

¹ Center for Disease Control. Retrieved 17 March, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html>.