

# Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council 2023 Annual Report

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To the Governor,  
the President of the Senate,  
and the Speaker of the  
House of Representatives

December 1, 2023



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# Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council Members and Designees

## Department of Health

- Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD  
*State Surgeon General*

## Florida Attorney General

- The Honorable Ashley Moody
- Joe Spataro, Designee  
*Associate Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Justice Programs*

## Office of Policy and Budget

- Doug Simon  
*Director, Office of Drug Control*

## Florida Department of Law Enforcement

- Mark Glass  
*Commissioner*
- John McClellan, Designee  
*Special Agent Supervisor  
Office of Statewide Intelligence*

## Department of Children and Families

- Shevaun Harris  
*Secretary*
- Jeffrey Cece, MS, CPM, Designee  
*Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health*

## Department of Corrections

- Ricky Dixon  
*Secretary*
- Maggie Agerton, Designee  
*Bureau Chief  
Substance Use Treatment Services*

## Department of Education

- Manny Diaz, Jr.  
*Commissioner*
- Tim Hay, Designee  
*Executive Director, Office of Safe Schools*

## Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

- Dave Kerner  
*Executive Director*
- Colonel Gary L. Howze II, Designee  
*Director*

## Department of Juvenile Justice

- Eric Hall, EdD  
*Secretary*
- Tracy Shelby, PhD, Designee  
*Director of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

## Department of Military Affairs

- Adjutant General John D. Haas
- Captain David Rodriguez, Designee  
*Florida Counterdrug Operations Officer*

## Florida Senate

- The Honorable Darryl Rouson

## Florida House of Representatives

- The Honorable Spencer Roach

## Supreme Court Appointee

- Judge Steve Leifman  
*Judiciary Member*
- Aaron Gerson, Designee  
*Office of the State Courts Administrator*

## Gubernatorial Appointees

- Melanie Brown-Woofter  
*Florida Behavioral Health Association*
- Sheriff Chad Chronister  
*Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office*
- Sheriff Peyton Grinnell  
*Lake County Sheriff's Office*
- Dean Inserra  
*City Church Tallahassee*
- Rabbi Meir Kessler  
*Jewish Recovery Center and Caron Renaissance*
- Sheriff Chris Nocco  
*Lake County Sheriff's Office*
- Peggy Sapp  
*Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership*

## Staff Liaison

- Jon Conley
- Maggie Dilger

## Acronyms Used in this Report

AHCA	Agency for Health Care Administration
CHD	County Health Department
CORE	Coordinated Opioid Recovery Network
CRPS	Certified Recovery Peer Specialists
DCF	Florida Department of Children and Families
DDRO	Drug Demand Reduction Outreach Program
DJJ	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
DPAC	Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council
DTO	Drug Trafficking Organizations
ED	Emergency Department
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
FDA	U.S. Food and Drug Administration
FDLE	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
FDOH	Florida Department of Health
FLHealthCHARTS	Florida Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set
HEROS	Helping Emergency Responders Obtain Support
MAT	Medication-Assisted Treatment
OD2A	Overdose Data to Action
OUD	Opioid Use Disorder
RCO	Recovery Community Organization
ROSC	Recovery Oriented System of Care
ROQIS	Recovery Oriented Quality Improvement Specialist
S.A.F.E.	State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication
SUD	Substance Use Disorder

## Message from the State Surgeon General Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD

Dear Colleagues,

Florida continues to grapple with persistent overdose concerns, and the dedicated members of the Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council (DPAC) have been unwavering in their commitment to addressing these pressing matters. Provisional data from the National Center for Health Statistics indicated that nationally, drug overdose deaths increased by .05% from December 2021 through December 2022. In Florida, overdose deaths decreased by 3% during the same time period.<sup>1</sup>

The Florida Department of Health, in collaboration with state and local agencies, both within DPAC and statewide, remains resolute in its efforts to intensify prevention initiatives, enhance the identification of individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) through screening, and expand coordinated services to combat overdose deaths.

DPAC is pleased to report substantial progress on the recommendations made in 2023 and has put forth a series of recommendations for consideration in the upcoming year.

In accordance with section 397.333, Florida Statutes, DPAC is honored to present the DPAC 2023 Annual Report to key stakeholders, including Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, and House Speaker Paul Renner. The Florida Department of Health is privileged to serve as the coordinating entity for DPAC, and this annual report provides an update on the ongoing efforts of this council.

It is important to note that the recommendations contained within this report represent the majority consensus among DPAC members and may not necessarily align with the official position of the Florida Department of Health on all matters.

DPAC acknowledges the steadfast support and collaboration of our state legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis. Together, we remain dedicated to mitigating the impact of substance use on the well-being of the people of Florida in 2023 and beyond.

Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD  
State Surgeon General

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad FB, Cisewski JA, Rossen LM, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

## Summary of 2023 Meetings

As required by section 397.333(4)(b), Florida Statutes, Florida's Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council's (DPAC) 2023 Annual Report analyzes the problem of substance abuse in the state and provides updates on recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for consideration. As required by statute, meetings during 2023 occurred in February, April, August, and October. The topics covered are outlined below.

### February 2, 2023

- University of Florida study on the science of Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*), including the study of the plant and its chemistry.

### April 18, 2023

- Legislation related to controlled substances.
- Overview and status of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline that offers 24-hour access to trained crisis counselors to assist individuals experiencing emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and feelings, or substance use crises.
- Shatterproof's Addiction Treatment Locator, Assessment, and Standards Platform in Florida is a collaborative care model that relies on measurement-based care to track patient progress through validated clinical rating scales in an effort to reverse the addiction crisis in the United States.

### August 24, 2023

- Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners 2022 Interim Report.
- The non-profit Fentanyl Fathers works to educate students and warn communities about the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills through the lens of bereaved parents.

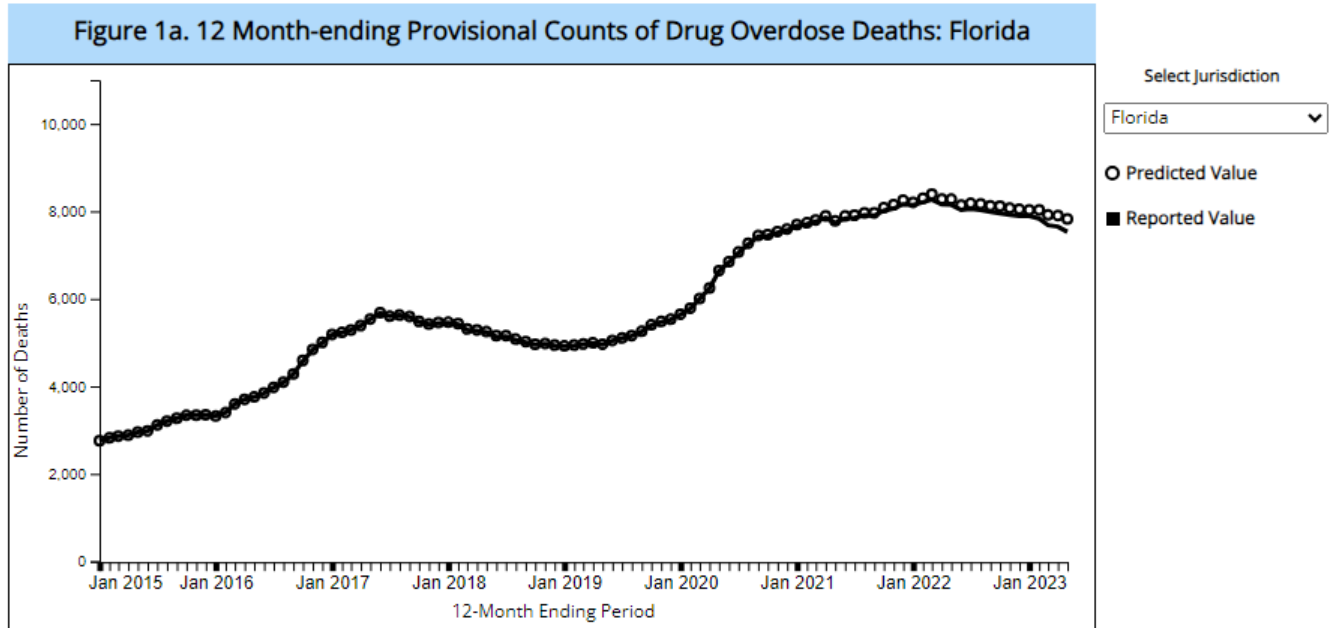
### October 25, 2023

- Overview and progress report of the State Health Improvement Plan Priority Mental Well-being and Substance Abuse Prevention Priority Area Workgroup.
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement presentation on the Dangers of Social Media Use in Promoting Access to Illicit Drugs.

## Introduction

Florida and the entire nation face ongoing drug-related threats like the opioid epidemic. However, preliminary information over the past year is promising. Provisional data reported from the National Center for Health Statistics indicated that nationally drug overdose deaths decreased nearly 1% from May 2022 through May 2023. In Florida, overdose deaths decreased by nearly 7.6% from May 2022 to May 2023.<sup>2</sup> Reports from the *Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners 2022 Interim Report showed total drug-related deaths decreased by 5% (373 less) when compared with the first six months of 2021.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure A: Monthly-Ending Provisional Counts of Fatal Drug Overdoses in the Florida.\***



\*Reported provisional counts are the number of deaths received and processed for the 12-month period ending in the month indicated. Provisional counts are subject to change as more drug overdoses are accounted for after adjusting for incomplete reporting. Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Data from FLHealthCHARTS<sup>4</sup> shows a 9.6% decrease in drug-involved Emergency Department (ED) visits and a 1.3% decrease in emergency medical services (EMS) responses to suspected drug overdoses in 2022 compared to 2021.

Naloxone (Narcan) is widely used by emergency medical personnel and other first responders to prevent opioid overdose deaths. Narcan rapidly reverses an opioid overdose by attaching to opioid receptors, reversing and blocking the effects of the drug. Naloxone is a lifesaving medication and is becoming more readily available. In 2022, Naloxone was administered 51,752 times in Florida.<sup>5</sup> Fentanyl overdose was the number one cause of death in Americans ages 18-45.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad FB, Cisewski JA, Rossen LM, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners 2022 Interim Report. Retrieved from 2022-Interim-Drug-Report-FINAL.aspx (state.fl.us)

<sup>4</sup> Florida Health Charts, Substance Use Dashboard: Overview <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=SubstanceUse.Overview&isCounty=69>

<sup>5</sup> Florida Health Charts, Substance Use Dashboard: Overview <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=SubstanceUse.Overview>

<sup>6</sup> Florida Department of Health. May 10, 2023. <https://www.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2023/05/20230509-national-fentanyl-awareness-day-pr.html>

Opioid-related deaths decreased in 2022, according to the *Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by the Florida Medical Examiners (2022 Interim Report). Opioid-related deaths decreased by 7% when compared with the first six months of 2021; opioid-caused deaths also decreased by 10%. Deaths involving fentanyl and cocaine decreased. The most significant increases were deaths involving fentanyl analogs which increased by 35% and deaths caused by fentanyl analogs increased by 38%. Changes were also seen within the prescription opioid category: deaths caused by hydrocodone decreased by 29%, deaths caused by oxycodone decreased by 10%, and deaths caused by heroin decreased by 58%.<sup>7</sup>

Although the majority of overdose deaths are related to opioids, stimulants are also responsible for a number of deaths. According to the *Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by the Florida Medical Examiners (2022 Interim Report), deaths from cocaine decreased by 9% over the same period in 2021. Methamphetamine deaths increased by 8%. Deaths from amphetamines decreased by 5%. Many of the amphetamine deaths likely represent methamphetamines that have been metabolized to amphetamine, rather than pharmaceutical amphetamine use.

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<sup>7</sup> Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners 2022 Interim Report. Retrieved from 2022-Interim-Drug-Report-FINAL.aspx (state.fl.us)



## Accomplishments

The DPAC has achieved many goals to combat overdoses and SUD since its inception. Over the past year, the DPAC has continued to collaborate with leaders across the state to ensure a safer Florida. The DPAC's accomplishments are listed below.

### **Expanded Access to Medication-Assisted Treatment**

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, which is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD). In past years, the DPAC recommended state health agencies, health plans, and commercial insurers remove prior authorization requirements for evidence-based MAT to allow for use of medications such as buprenorphine, naltrexone, naloxone, and methadone.

The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has expanded access to MAT. AHCA has made available buprenorphine tablets, Suboxone film, and Zubsolv tablets through an automated process which looks for a diagnosis of opioid use disorder. If the diagnosis is found, the claim pays at the pharmacy. If the diagnosis is not found, the pharmacy or physician can call the Florida Medicaid help desk and an override will be entered.

Other MAT that is covered through Medicaid includes:

- Naltrexone tablets which are covered without prior authorization through the pharmacy benefit.
- Vivitrol (naltrexone) injectable can be received at the pharmacy through an automated prior authorization. The pharmacy computer system verifies that the recipient is 18 years of age or older and has a diagnosis of alcohol and/or OUD on file. If both are confirmed, the claim will pay. This automation eliminates the need for prior authorization paperwork submission through the pharmacy benefit. Vivitrol is also available through the medical benefit under J2315 if administered in a medical office setting.
- Sublocade (buprenorphine) injectable can be received at the pharmacy through an automated prior authorization. When the claim information is entered, the pharmacy computer system verifies that the recipient has received a minimum of seven days of treatment with a buprenorphine-containing oral product. If confirmed, the claim will pay for Sublocade through the pharmacy. Sublocade is also available through the medical benefit under Q9991 and Q9992 if administered in a medical office setting.
- Methadone tablets are available through methadone clinics.

For overdoses:

- Narcan (naloxone) nasal spray, Kloxxado (naloxone) nasal spray and naloxone vials are covered to treat overdose through the pharmacy benefit. Under the pharmacy benefit, Medicaid allows a maximum of two Narcan and Kloxxado kits (four nasal sprays) per year. Additional kits within the same year require prior authorization.
- Narcan (naloxone) nasal spray is covered under J2310 through the medical setting.
- Narcan (naloxone) is also available as an over-the-counter medication.

### **Safe Medication Storage and Disposal**

The DPAC engaged with pharmacies to educate consumers on safe medication storage and disposal procedures when filling prescriptions for controlled substances. Media campaigns were established that incorporate appropriate technology to educate consumers on reasons for safe use, safe storage, and safe disposal as well as the location of safe disposal boxes in each community. Notable campaigns and partnerships include Lock Your Meds which encourages people to secure and take regular inventory of their medication to prevent drug misuse, drug disposal programs with pharmacies across the state, and participation in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Drug Take Back Day.

**Medical Marijuana Advertisement Standards**

Medical marijuana advertisement standards were established that restrict the advertising methods of medical marijuana/cannabis evaluation clinics, conveyance shops and other services or businesses not currently governed by Amendment 2 (section 381.986, Florida Statutes.) Restrictions were expanded to prohibit any products or messages that promote recreational cannabis use. Cannabis manufacturers and retailers cannot produce or advertise products that are appealing to children or promote recreational use. This means the use of any image or words designed or likely to appeal to people younger than 18, including cartoons, toys, animals, food, or depictions of people younger than 18.

## 2023 Recommendations

The Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council recommends the following to Florida's Governor and Legislature.

1. To effectively address the opioid crisis, the anticipated growth in mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) service need, it is critical that a vibrant, stable, and well-trained workforce be available to provide prevention, treatment, and recovery services. Initiatives and strategies should:
  - Support mental health and SUD providers to competitively recruit and retain staff.
  - Allow licensed and credentialed individuals to practice to the full extent of education and training.
  - Strengthen the workforce pipeline through loan reimbursement and scholarships that incentivize and support individuals pursuing educational and licensure/credentials.
  - Support providers that train and supervise students completing educational requirements and individuals obtaining required experience for licensure and credentialing.
2. Develop and implement a substance-use prevention strategy designed to reduce drug use among youth 12–17 years of age. The strategy should focus on: (1) deployment of a unified anti-drug messaging campaign developed around evidence-based practices to ensure good outcomes, (2) increasing/maintaining substance use prevention efforts by securing/sustaining front-end prevention funding that increases screenings and addressing trauma-related issues among youth, and (3) expanding state partnerships with anti-drug coalitions, educational institutions, law enforcement, and other members of the 12 Community Sectors.
3. Engage in an evidence-based substance use prevention program designed to reduce drug use among youth 12–17 years of age. The curriculum should focus on evidence-based and/or evidence-informed prevention strategies proven to reduce substance use, while also increasing youth resiliency, coping strategies, positive mental health, and responsible decision-making. The end goal is to better link existing prevention education programs with Florida's educators and to reduce substance use and abuse among Florida's youth.
4. Establish legislation to (1) regulate preparation, distribution, and sale of kratom-based products (*Myragyna Speciosa*) that contain the alkaloids myragynine and/or 7-hydroxymyragynine (2) establish a standard serving size and limit of total myragynine in each package (3) establish warning labels (4) prohibit products that are attractive to children; prohibit marketing of kratom to minors, (5) prohibit health claims, and (6) establish corrective actions/penalties for actors/agencies that would violate such legislation, (7) require an annual review of deaths associated with kratom in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Florida Medical Examiners Drugs in Deceased Persons report as well as kratom exposures reported by the Florida Poison Control Centers.
5. Encourage the continued establishment of warm handoff programs, such as the Coordinated Opioid Recovery Network (CORE) from hospital EDs to community OUD treatment providers to address opioid overdose; issue naloxone to overdose patients before they leave the ED.
6. The Council recommends legislative and regulatory changes that enforce mental health parity laws and ensure mental health and substance use disorder benefits are covered at the same level as physical health benefits. This includes equal copays, deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums, and an expanded service array.
7. To increase physicians with an addiction medicine specialty, ensure graduate medical education positions are allocated to fellowship and residency programs for addiction medicine.
8. Promote legislation that adds the Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration and the

Commissioner of the Office of Insurance Regulation as members of the Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council.

9. Continue the statewide Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC) initiative designed to promote and enhance recovery efforts in Florida and support the continued development of the Recovery Community Organization (RCO) and a statewide RCO that helps link community initiatives.
10. The Council recommends that efforts and initiatives to modify Baker and Marchman Act laws, regulation, and funding ensure that Floridians have access to emergency crisis services and maintain the safety of individuals, families, and communities.

## Program and Resource Updates

The DPAC, its members, and partners work on coordinated, integrated, and multidisciplinary responses to address the substance abuse problem in Florida. The following are a highlight of programs and activities currently in action to prevent and treat SUD.

### **The Facts. Your Future.**

The Facts. Your Future. is a partnership program with the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Department of Education, spearheaded by First Lady Casey DeSantis, that focuses on supporting students statewide to ensure they receive prevention instruction and encouragement to protect and maintain their health, avoid substance misuse, and discourage risky behaviors. The campaign provides an interactive space for schools to educate their students on the consequential impacts of substance abuse.

In 2022, TheFactsYourFuture.org website launched that contains content for schools, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to download and use for education. The website includes fact sheets and a planning guide for interactive school-based assemblies, shareable ads and videos, a science-based video explaining the harmful effects of substance use on the developing teen brain, and resource links to the Florida crisis line and the National Suicide Prevention hotline.

The website will continue to expand with new resources.

### **The Red Ribbon Campaign®**

The Red Ribbon Campaign® is now the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation reaching millions of young people during Red Ribbon Week®, October 23–October 31 each year. For every dollar invested in prevention, \$7 are saved in drug-addiction treatment.<sup>8</sup>

The year 2023 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of First Lady Nancy Reagan's Red Ribbon Week. Landmarks across the country were lit red, and approximately 90,000 schools participated in the event. In observance of the event, the 60-story Paramount Miami Worldcenter skyscraper became the World's tallest digital Red Ribbon with an electric portrait of Nancy Reagan and her anti-drug slogan, "Say No." Media coverage of the landmark alone reached nearly 209 million viewers.

### **Naloxone Expansion**

To support emergency responder needs related to increasing numbers of overdoses, the Florida Department of Health HEROS program (Helping Emergency Responders Obtain Support) helps to provide free naloxone to emergency response agencies. Almost 600,000 doses have been provided through the HEROS program to emergency response agencies in Florida since 2018. Between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2023, the HEROS program has provided 594,219 doses of naloxone to agencies that employ emergency responders. This includes 451 agencies that employ emergency responders in 64 of 67 Florida counties that are participating in the HEROS program, furthermore 19 agencies are currently completing qualifying HEROS program requirements. In addition, the HEROS program is currently calling all Florida law enforcement and emergency medical services agencies that are not participating with the program to ensure they are aware of their access to naloxone at no cost to their organization.

DCF continues to successfully prioritize naloxone expansion through hospital EDs and inpatient units. Since October 2022, the Overdose Prevention Program has distributed 7,870 kits to 59 enrolled hospitals. Presently, the Overdose Prevention Program has completed projected orders for the enrolled hospitals throughout the state. The Overdose Prevention Program is currently represented on the

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<sup>8</sup> Red Ribbon Campaign. <https://www.redribbon.org/>

weekly CORE calls to ensure the expansion of enrollment to key CORE partners, including hospitals.

### **Warm Handoff Programs**

DCF's Hospital and Jail Bridge Programs provide low barrier access to treatment for opioid use disorders providing a peer-led warm handoff from emergency departments to local medication-assisted treatment providers. Hospital locations have expanded bringing the total to 48 hospitals participating in a bridge program. During the 22-23 FY, there were 9,659 individuals screened in an ED with 71% referred to a local provider. Peer Prescriber Mentors provide training and consultation for establishing or expanding a bridge program. Peer Prescriber Mentors are specially-trained physicians in OUD stimulant use disorders, and medication-assisted treatment who serve as peer mentors for other physicians and professionals. There are currently seven mentors throughout the state. DCF collaborated with the Florida Hospital Association to provide free webinars in an effort to expand Hospital Bridge Programs.

The CORE program recently celebrated one year of helping Floridians break the cycle of addiction. CORE is the first comprehensive solution to addiction care in the nation. During this year, the initial 12 CORE Network counties have provided nearly 550,000 services that support the patient's overall sustainable long-term recovery, including disease treatment, dental care, primary care, psychiatric evaluation, and maternal care. Typical overdose response only focuses on stabilizing the patient, fueling the cycle of addiction. Within CORE counties, emergency medical provider connected 25,000 overdose patients to long-term recovery.

### **Recovery Oriented System of Care**

DCF continues to lead recovery-oriented initiatives designed to enhance recovery in Florida. DCF partners with multiple stakeholders including but not limited to, communities of recovery, network treatment service providers, Managing Entities, and Floridians for Recovery. DCF also works with the national Faces & Voices of Recovery to provide support to Managing Entities and local communities to develop RCOs through ongoing training, technical assistance, and mentorship. There are 16 operational RCOs in the state, contracted with Managing Entities and funded through State Opioid Response allocations, providing outreach, education, and peer-based recovery support services. DCF will continue to work with existing and emerging RCOs to develop a strong network of recovery communities that work closely with providers and other stakeholders through a statewide infrastructure.

In addition to implementing RCOs, DCF continues its efforts to increase workforce capacity of Certified Recovery Peer Specialists and access to peer to peer-based recovery support services. From 2017 to 2023, Florida's CRPS capacity has grown from 418 to 914, a 118% increase. In FY 22-23, Florida added 39 CRPS included in the total capacity, with 210 individuals pending certification as of June 2023. There are 123 DCF-funded community network service providers subcontracted by its Managing Entity partners providing peer-based recovery supports, employing more than 380 CRPS. DCF also has six Recovery Oriented Quality Improvement Specialist positions that conduct quality assurance visits with providers to document recovery-oriented principles and practices, promote opportunities for all levels of lived experience to have meaningful inclusion in the evaluation of ROSC practices, and enhance the role of peers in the workforce through training and technical assistance. ROQISs also provide technical assistance for the expansion of medication-assisted treatment. During the FY 22-23, ROQISs completed 48 trainings on prevention, ROSC, Whole Health, and other peer related trainings. They also provided technical assistance on 1,263 instances to peers, Managing Entities, and other network service providers.

### **Overdose Data to Action Grant**

In August 2023, the FDOH state health office and the Broward, Duval, and Palm Beach county health departments completed the first iteration of the OD2A grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This four-year grant provided \$58.8 million for surveillance strategies to improve the collection and timely dissemination of actionable overdose data and prevention strategies implemented

at the local level that are informed by more timely data streams. During year four of the grant, the state health office-maintained allocations of \$2.2 million in mini-grants to 14 counties, as well as allocated \$1.2 million to six additional counties to assist local communities experiencing high impacts from the overdose epidemic. All 20 counties received funding to accomplish core surveillance and prevention activities of OD2A. These activities included support for awareness campaigns to highlight the risks of SUD and enhancements to surveillance systems and data collection efforts to assist with monitoring overdose trends, understanding which populations are most at risk to prioritize resources, and evaluating ways to distribute resources. Five counties also received continuous funding to implement evidence-based curriculums in public schools (Brevard, Manatee, Nassau, Pasco, and Sarasota) and efforts increased to three counties receiving funding to support community paramedicine projects to improve patient follow-up among individuals most at risk of overdosing: Clay, Marion, and now Escambia. The FDOH state health office and Broward, Duval, and Palm Beach CHDs were awarded funding for the new iteration of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant, OD2A-States and OD2A-LOCAL in September 2023. This new iteration, initially funded for \$76 million (expected over 5 years), has a greater focus on surveillance, allowing for continued evidenced-based prevention efforts at the local levels throughout Florida.

### **Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program**

Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, the Electronic-Florida Online Reporting of Controlled Substance Evaluation Program, provides data related to controlled substance prescriptions in the state. From July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, there were 28,844,775 controlled substance prescriptions dispensed to Florida patients, a 4.2% decrease from the previous year. In addition, 4.97 million people in Florida have been prescribed one or more controlled substances, a decrease of 1.9%. Oxycodone short-acting (SA), alprazolam SA, and hydrocodone SA were ranked the top three most commonly dispensed controlled substances for the seventh year in a row, together representing 34.4% of the total controlled substances dispensed from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. Drugs with the largest year-to-year decreases in dispensing were Dextroamphetamine SA (-5.6%), hydrocodone SA (-4.9%), and zolpidem SA (-2.2%).

### **Baker Act**

Baker Act data trends over the past 3 fiscal years show a decline in involuntary Baker Act examinations. The statewide decrease from FY 2020-2021 to FY 2021-2022 can be accounted for by a decrease in involuntary examinations across age groups. More specifically, there was an 11.2% decrease for individuals under 18, an 11.6% decrease for adults aged 18-24, a 12.8% decrease for adults 25-64, and a 12.6% decrease for adults 65 and older. DCF associates the downward trend in involuntary Baker Act examinations with improved access to community-based services and supports such as Care Coordination and Mobile Response Teams.

DCF is actively collaborating with various partners to assess the current state of the Baker Act and identify opportunities for improvement. Namely, DCF is working with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to address challenges and design resources that are responsive to the needs of individuals with co-occurring mental health and intellectual conditions. Through these collaborations, DCF intends to strengthen discharge planning, training, and resources for special populations. Additionally, to promote effective implementation of the Baker Act, DCF has published the 2023 Baker Act User Reference Guide as a resource for law enforcement officers, qualified professionals, and service providers.

### **Law Enforcement Efforts**

Florida law enforcement remains engaged in the current effort to reduce the availability of heroin, fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and other substances contributing to opioid-involved overdose and overdose deaths. The threats posed by fentanyl have increased in recent years as drug trafficking organizations have been mass-producing illicit fentanyl, mixing fentanyl with other drugs, and manufacturing fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills.

The State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication in Florida program is funded through a grant provided by the Florida Legislature in 2023. Through S.A.F.E., state and local law enforcement can request reimbursement for overtime-related benefits, travel costs, and purchase of investigative supplies for any fentanyl-related law enforcement investigations.

The amount of methamphetamine seized along the U.S. Southwest border increased significantly between 2018 and 2021 as transnational criminal organizations continued to smuggle methamphetamine over land routes. These criminal organizations are able to manufacture high-quality, low-cost methamphetamine in large quantities. Once inside the U.S., the methamphetamine is typically sold to U.S.-based gangs and DTOs for distribution (Drug Enforcement Administration Drug Seizure Statistics).<sup>9</sup>

The Florida Highway Patrol, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Florida National Guard, and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection have been participating on a strike force at the direction of Governor DeSantis named Operation Safe Highways. In June of 2023 in Columbia County alone, there were 286 traffic stops. During these stops approximately 1,500 grams of fentanyl, 41 grams of cocaine, 1,000 grams of heroin, 4,000 grams of marijuana, and over 150 grams of methamphetamine were seized. A total of 42 arrests were made, consisting of both felony and misdemeanor charges.

### **Potential Future Partnerships**

The DPAC plans to investigate if any state universities are conducting research to identify receptors that cause pain and how to better treat people who could be predisposed to substance use disorder with alternate care options.

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<sup>9</sup> DEA Drug Seizure Statistics, [https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics?language_content_entity=en)



## Conclusion

During the past year, the DPAC evaluated the many programs, strategies, and campaigns (both public and private) aiding in the fight against SUD. The DPAC and its members are proud of the work accomplished to help Floridians live safer, healthier lives and look forward to more success in the coming year. The DPAC thanks the Governor and Legislature for their consideration of its 2023 Recommendations.