

Harm Reduction in New Mexico: An integrated Public Health Response 1998-2021

Josh Swatek
Hepatitis and Harm Reduction Program Manager
New Mexico Department of Health
Public Health Division
Infectious Disease Bureau
Joshua.Swatek@state.nm.us



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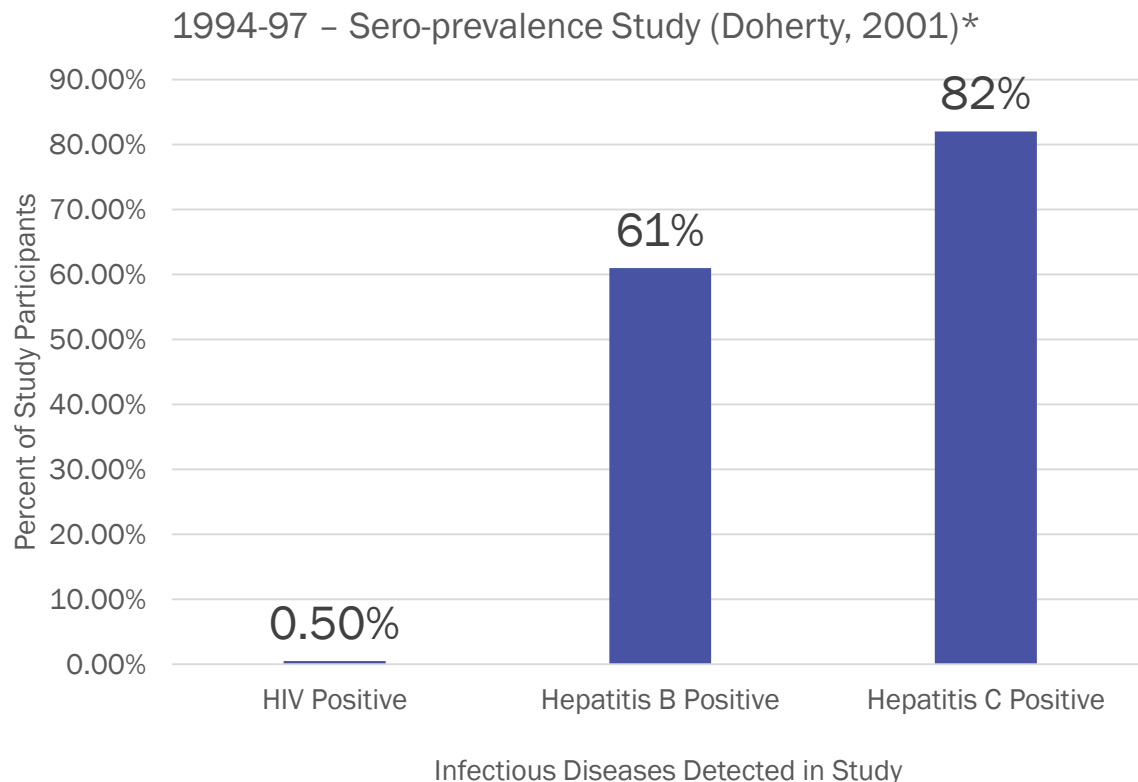
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Harm Reduction:

- Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.
- Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.
- In New Mexico, we reduce harm by providing:
 - Prevention services
 - Intervention services
 - Overdose reversal medication and education

Origins of the Need for Harm Reduction Programs in Public Health

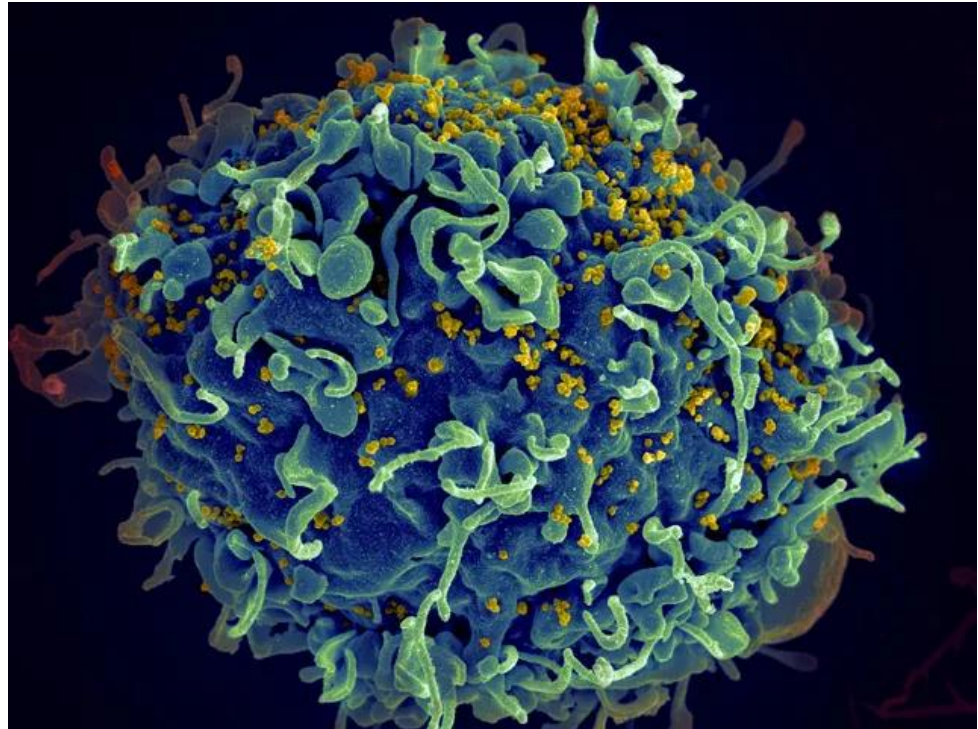
- 2001 Doherty Study found greatest increase in Hepatitis C (HCV) among individuals injecting substances under age 40
- Harm reduction strategies arose from the need to address transmission of these diseases as a public health issue



*Samuel, M.C., Doherty, P.M., et. al, 2001. *Association between heroin use, needle sharing and tattoos received in prison with hepatitis B and C positivity among street-recruited injecting drug users in New Mexico, USA.* Epidemiological Infections, 127, 475-484.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

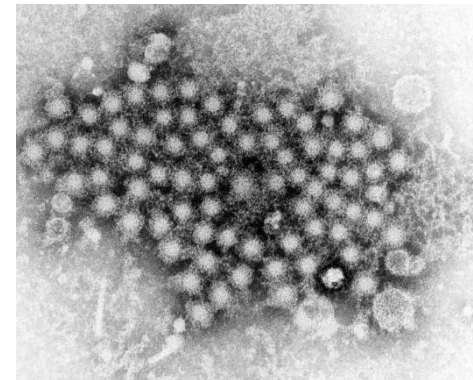
- HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system that can lead to stage 3 HIV infection, previously known as AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), if left untreated
- Many advancements in treatment have extended the lives of those effects, but treatment is very costly



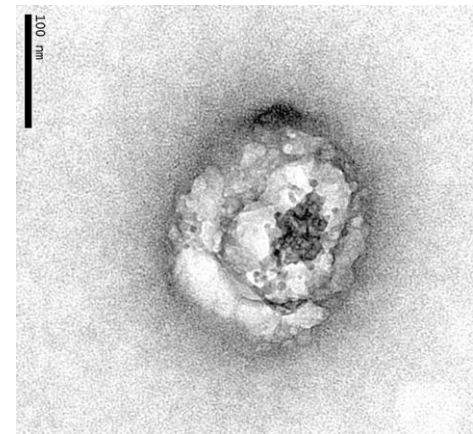
National Institutes of Health (NIH): <https://www.verywellhealth.com/hiv-microscopy-in-pictures-48651>

Hepatitis B and C

- Both hepatitis B and C are blood-borne pathogens, which means that their primary mode of transmission is through direct blood-to-blood contact with an infected person
- Hepatitis B and C can cause chronic, lifelong infections leading to serious liver disease and death
- Many infected people don't experience symptoms of the disease until late phase progression
- HCV is the leading cause of liver related cancer
- Hepatitis treatments have advanced in recent years, most significantly treatments for HCV, which is now curable
- Due to the cost of treatment, prevention is as important as ever



Hepatitis B Virus



Hepatitis C Virus

Hepatitis B image: <https://phil.cdc.gov/details.aspx?pid=8153>

Hepatitis C image: <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/hepatitis-c-virus-observed-under-a-microscope-for-the-first-time/25440/>

Treating Hepatitis C in New Mexico

- Testing and treating high-risk individuals in the New Mexico prison system
- Ongoing planning to reduce the impact of HCV on New Mexicans and working towards ending HCV as a public health threat
- HCV is a condition for the high-risk medical insurance pool

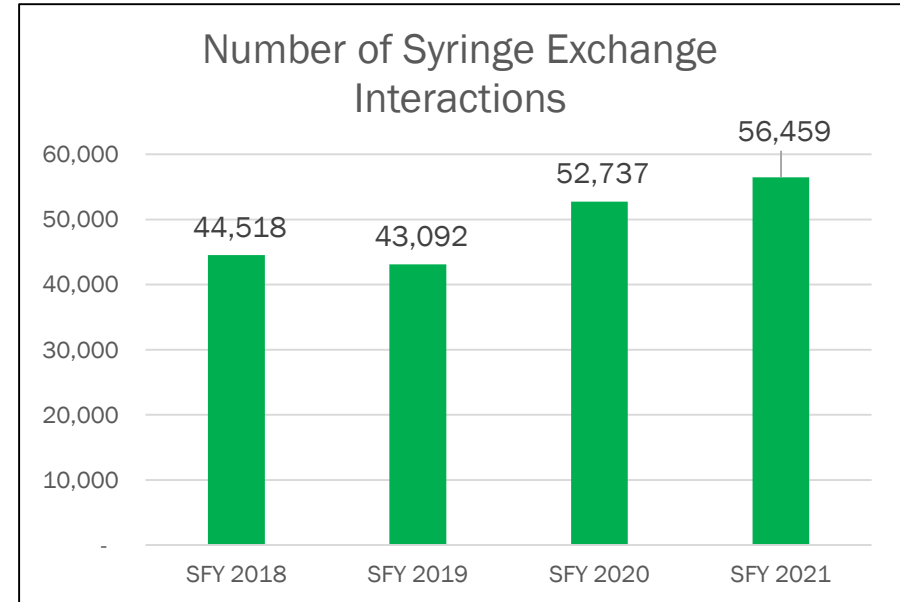
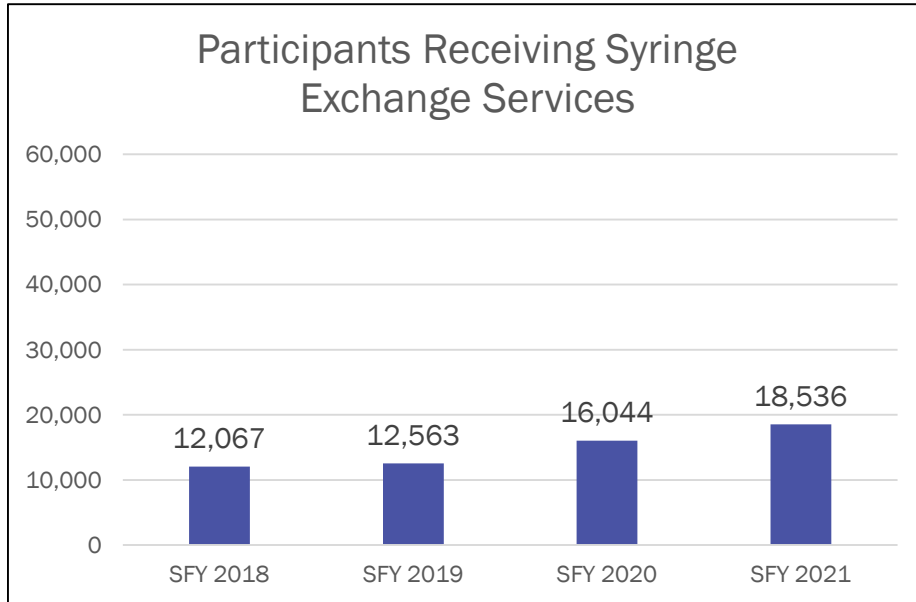
Harm Reduction: Prevention Services

- Supporting syringe services (including syringe exchange)
- Providing overdose prevention training
- Providing syringes to people who use insulin if they cannot otherwise afford or obtain syringes
- Providing counseling and testing for HIV, HCV and other STDs
- Providing vaccination and testing for Adult Viral Hepatitis
- Conducting surveillance of Adult Viral Hepatitis
- Supporting wound and abscess care



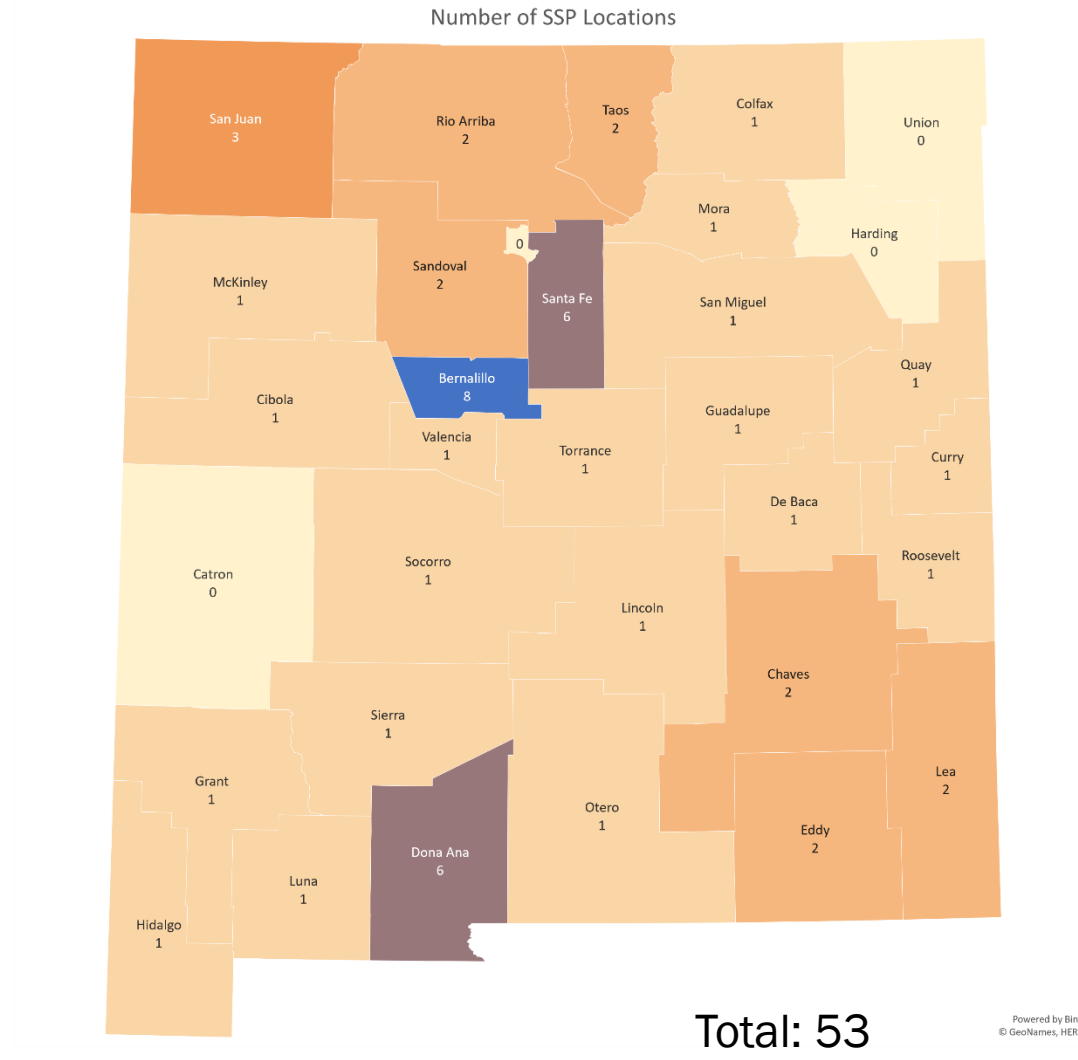
Syringe drop box at the Las Cruces Public Health Office

SFY 2018-2021 Syringe Service Program



- Program has grown significantly, in SFY 2018 there were 12,067 participants, with 44,518 total interactions
- In SFY 2021, there were 18,536 participants enrolled in the program with 56,459 total interactions – an increase of 35% in participants and an increase of 21% in interactions in SFY 2018
- Increase likely due to increased reach and program accessibility

Syringe Service Providers by County



Harm Reduction: Intervention Services

Harm reduction programs offer many opportunities for participants to enter treatment services:

- Community health and social service referrals
- Primary medical care referrals and direct service
- Active navigation into substance use treatment and HCV curative treatment
- Buprenorphine medication assisted treatment referrals
- Assistance in food support, substance use treatment, medical services, clothing, and housing

Harm Reduction: Overdose Reversal Services

Harm reduction also focuses on reducing the likelihood of overdose:

- Naloxone distribution and training
- Overdose prevention training for program participants
- Overdose prevention training for law enforcement
- NMDOH is considering new items aimed at preventing drug-related overdose and death, such as fentanyl test strips

Harm Reduction: Partnering with Law Enforcement

Successful harm reduction is made possible by strong partnerships with law enforcement:

- New Mexico was the first US state to require officers to carry naloxone
 - [HB 370](#) was passed in 2017 by Rep. Sarah Maestas Barnes, Rep. Rebecca Dow, and Rep. Derrick J. Lente
- [Naloxone statewide standing orders for law enforcement](#) were implemented by NMDOH
- Ongoing training is offered to law enforcement regarding the New Mexico Harm Reduction Act, including the public health benefits of syringe services, overdose prevention education, and harm reduction programs

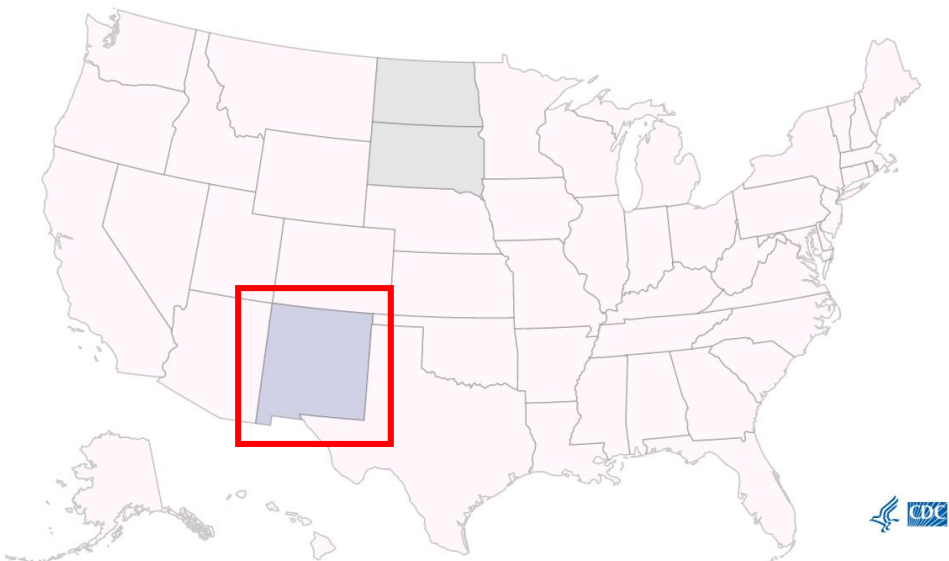


Photo by: KOAT News

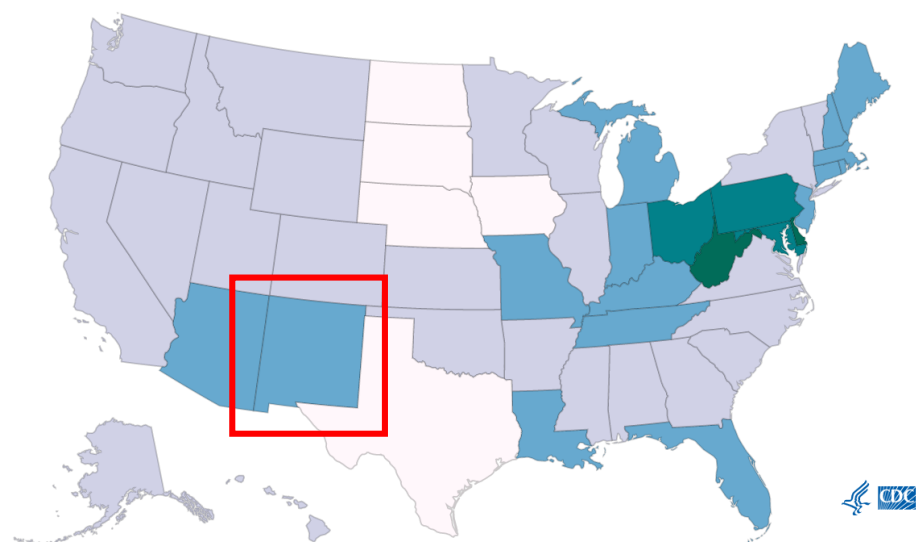
NM Overdose Trends Update

New Mexico Continuously Ranks High in Drug Overdose Mortality

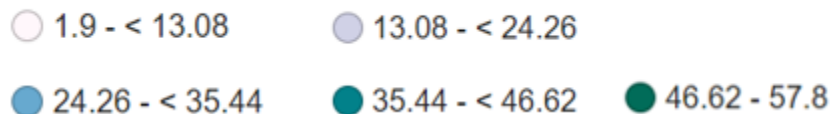
Drug Overdose Mortality by State 1999



Drug Overdose Mortality by State 2019



Age-Adjusted Death Rates per 100,000 population

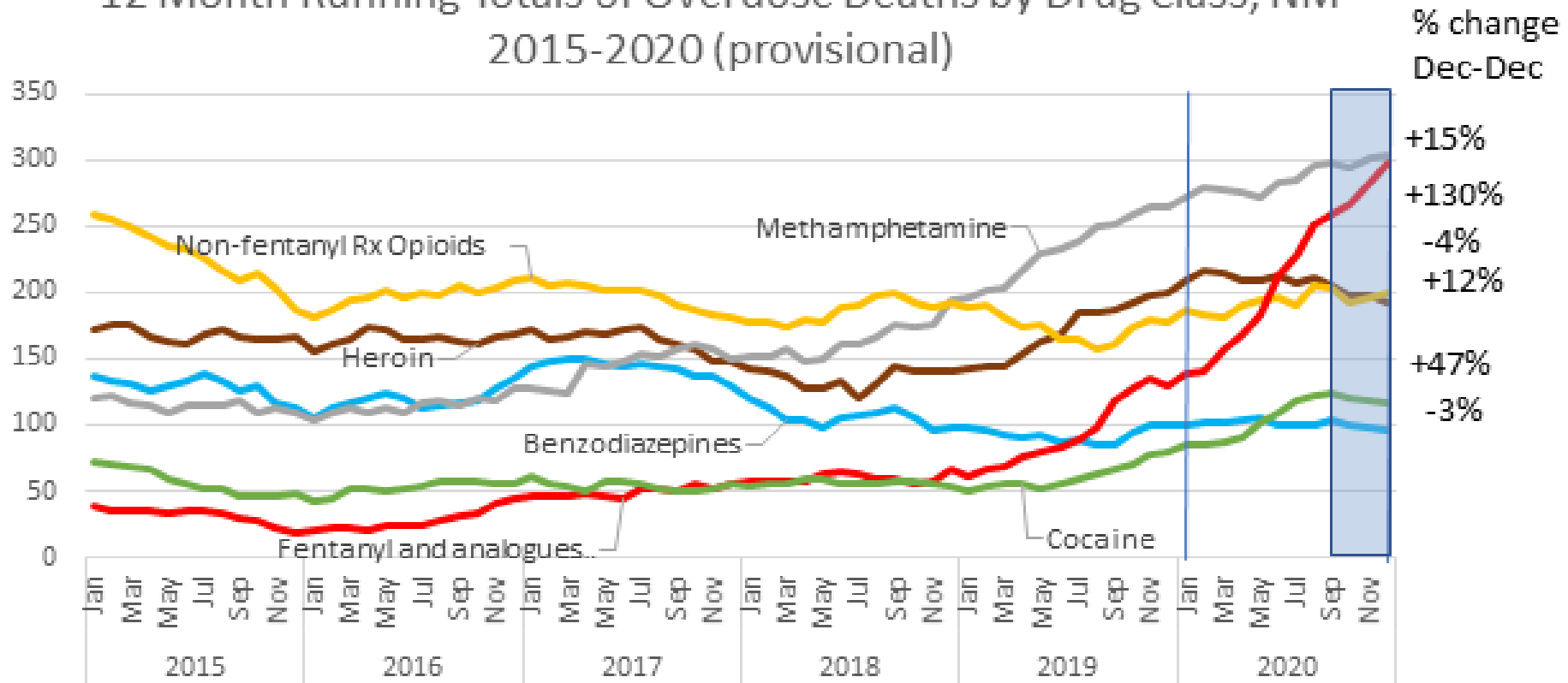


https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug_poisoning_mortality/drug_poisoning.htm

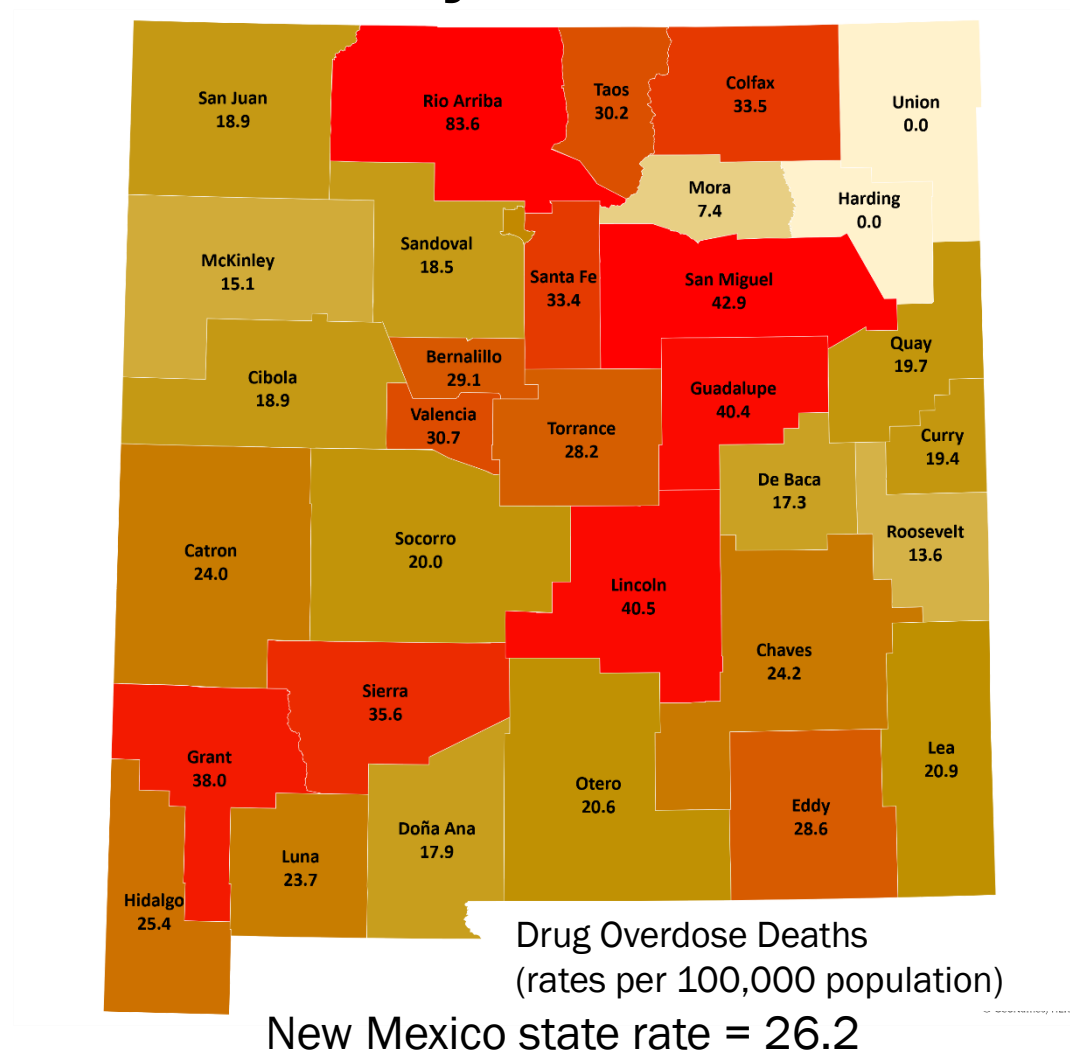
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Overdose Trends

12 Month Running Totals of Overdose Deaths by Drug Class, NM
2015-2020 (provisional)



Drug Overdose Death Rates by NM County, SFY21



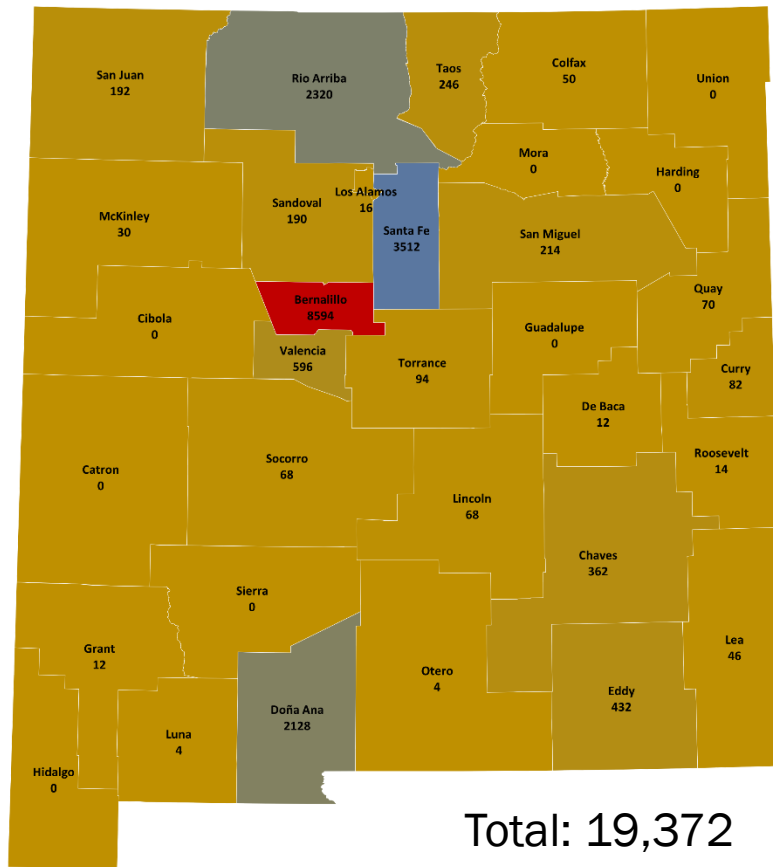
Naloxone Distribution in SFY21

- 19,372 doses of naloxone distributed by NMDOH
- Over 2,700 individuals reported “OK” after a suspected opioid overdose with naloxone administered
- Over 8,000 education sessions on naloxone distribution
- Ongoing and updated training to naloxone participants over time

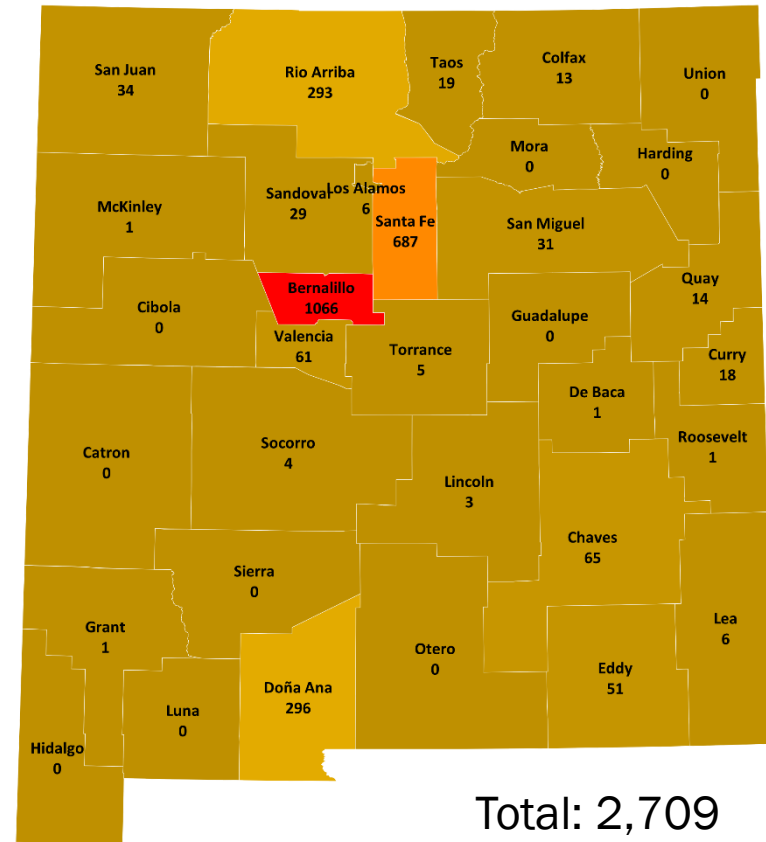


Photo by: John Minchillo, AP

NMDOH Naloxone Distributions by NM County, SFY21



Naloxone Reversals by NM County, SFY21



Responding to Fentanyl and poly-substance use

- Fentanyl is increasingly being detected in black tar and counterfeit pills
- Fentanyl produces a strong high that is short in duration; program clients often report use of methamphetamine to be able to stay awake after fentanyl use
- How we are responding:
 - Naloxone and overdose prevention offered to all clients
 - Education on fentanyl potency
 - Focus on planning what to do in the event of an overdose
 - Providing resources to community members on not using alone

Reducing Barriers: Teaching Points for Stigma and Awareness

- Meet people where they are
- Treat people as people
- Ask people what they need
- Use affirming language
- Mistakes happen – learn and move forward
- Active navigation/Linkage-to-Services

Thank you & Contact Information

Joshua Swatek
Hepatitis and Harm Reduction Program Manager
New Mexico Department of Health
Public Health Division
Infectious Disease Bureau
505-629-9142
Joshua.Swatek@state.nm.us

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<https://nmhealth.org/about/erd/> and <http://nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/hrp/> and
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