



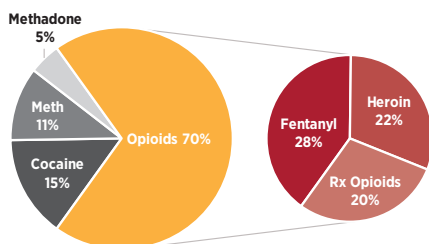
A Dangerous Intersection:

Drug Overdose Fatalities Surpass Motor Vehicle Deaths

Highway safety provides road map for successful public health policy

Throughout the past 16 years, the list of states with more deaths caused by drug overdoses than motor vehicles has grown from [four to 39](#). In 2010, motor vehicle- and drug-induced deaths in Missouri crossed a deadly intersection — drug deaths exceeded traffic fatalities. Opioid-related deaths account for nearly 70 percent of drug overdose deaths in Missouri.

Distribution of Drug-Induced Deaths by Type in the U.S.



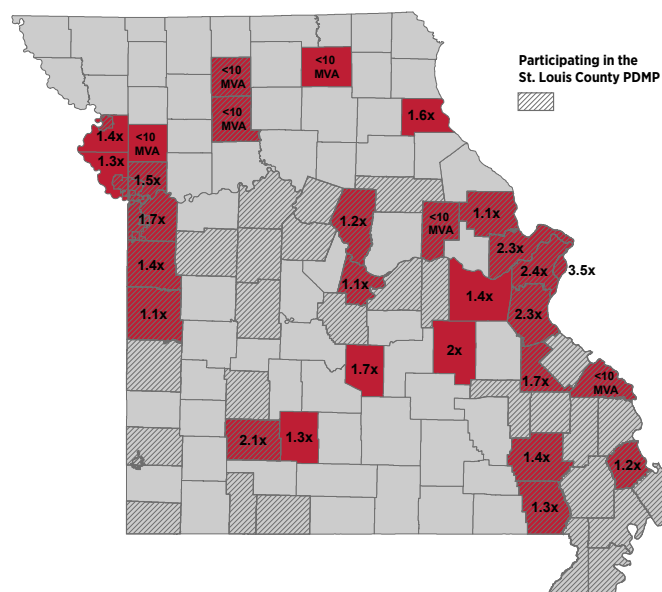
On Sept. 9, 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law two pieces of landmark legislation to address the nation's dramatic year-over-year growth in the rate of motor vehicle accidents.ⁱ Before signing the legislation, Johnson said, "In this century more than 1,500,000 of our fellow citizens have died on our streets and highways; nearly three times as many Americans as we have lost in all our wars." After a decade of continuous growth, the result was an immediate decline in motor vehicle accident deaths — a trend that continues.

"I'm not prone to dramatic statements, but I think we should be really alarmed. The drug overdose problem is a public health problem, and it needs to be addressed. We need to get a handle on it."

The drug overdose crisis, driven by the ongoing opioid epidemic, is creating a similar public health and safety emergency — drug-induced deaths are driving reduced average life expectancy nationally.ⁱⁱ In 2016, average life expectancy in the U.S. decreased for the second consecutive yearⁱⁱⁱ — an unprecedented occurrence for a developed nation. At 77.6 years, life expectancy in Missouri is the 12th lowest in the nation.^{iv} Drug overdoses killed 63,600 Americans in 2016, a 21 percent increase over the previous year and a 300 percent increase since 1999. With nearly 1,400 drug overdose deaths in 2016, Missouri was

Robert Anderson, Chief of Mortality Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics [Radio broadcast episode, Morning Edition of National Public Radio, Dec. 21, 2017]

Missouri Counties With More Drug-Induced Than Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths, 2014-2016



Counties with more drug-induced deaths include Adair, Bates, Boone, Buchanan, Butler, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Cole, Crawford, Franklin, Greene, Grundy, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Livingston, Marion, Montgomery, Perry, Platte, Pulaski, Scott, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis, St. Louis city, Wayne and Webster.

among the states with a statistically higher overdose death rate than the rest of the country.^v

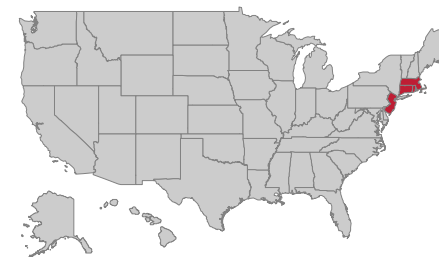
Between 2014 and 2016, there were 29 counties in Missouri with more drug overdose deaths than those caused by motor vehicles. These counties account for 70 percent of Missouri's population, include nine out of the 10 most populous counties, and include Pulaski County, home to many veterans and active service members.

Efforts in the 1960s to reduce the number of motor vehicle fatalities can be instructive in the drug- and opioid-induced death rates. Investments in systemwide safety, product design and delivery, public awareness, prevention and emergency response systems are necessary. Inexpensive tools like a prescription drug monitoring system can act as a signal at an intersection.

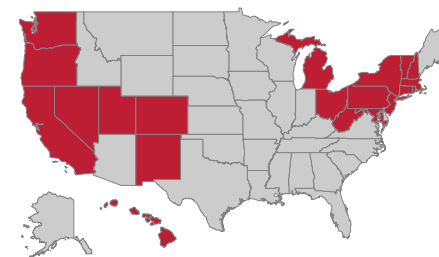
- i Achievements in Public Health, 1900-1999 Motor-Vehicle Safety: A 20th Century Public Health Achievement. (1999, May 14). U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4818a1.htm>
- ii Stein, R. (2017, December 21). Life expectancy drops again as opioid deaths surge in U.S. National Public Radio. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/12/21/572080314/life-expectancy-drops-again-as-opioid-deaths-surge-in-u-s>
- iii Kochanek, K.D., Murphy, S.L., Xu, J.Q. & Arias, E. (2017, December). Mortality in the United States, 2016. *NCHS Data Brief*, no 293. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db293.htm>
- iv Peters, S. (2017, March 16). States with the longest (and shortest) life expectancy. *24/7 Wall Street*. Retrieved from <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2017/03/16/states-with-the-longest-and-shortest-life-expectancy/9/>
- v Hedegaard, H., Warner, M. & Miniño, A.M. (2017, December). Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 1999-2016. *NCHS Data Brief*, no 294. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db294.htm>

States With More Drug-Induced Than Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths

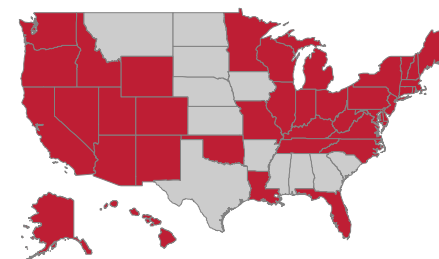
2001



2007



2016



Map Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2016 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2017. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2016.

Suggested Citation:

Reidhead, M. & Porth, L. (2018) *A Dangerous Intersection: Drug Overdose Fatalities Surpass Motor Vehicle Deaths*. Missouri Hospital Association.



Research available at
mhanet.com/opioid-initiative