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## Overdose Crisis in North Carolina

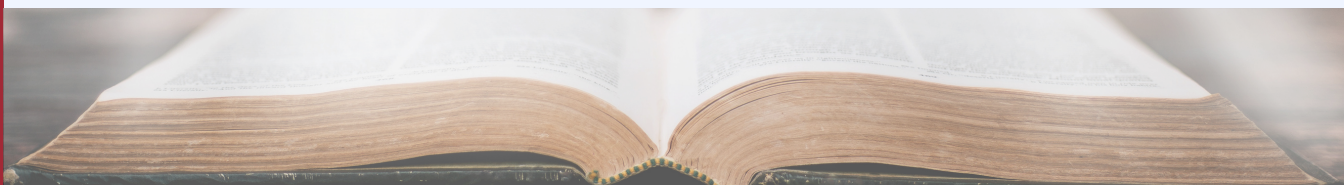




# Christ's Story is a Healing Story

In the story of the paralytic, we witness the power of faith and the importance of taking action. As followers of Jesus, we find ourselves called to respond to the illness of substance use disorder with compassion and understanding, just as the crowd around Jesus witnessed the paralytic's suffering. We are called to be witnesses to healing and to share the good news of restoration and dignity.

Some among us are even called to take a more direct role in healing, leading by the example of faith. Just as the four men in the story cut through the roof to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus, we are called to remove the structural and systemic barriers that prevent people from accessing the healing they need. It is our duty to care for our neighbors and take initiative in the face of the opioid and overdose crisis. Seeking justice-centered healing requires urgency and collective action, where each one of us plays a crucial role in ending this crisis and creating a community where all people are recognized and can flourish.



## What Scripture Says

- But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord.  
*Jeremiah 30:17*
- You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.  
*Ezekiel 34:4*
- Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.  
*Romans 12:2*

## The Council's View

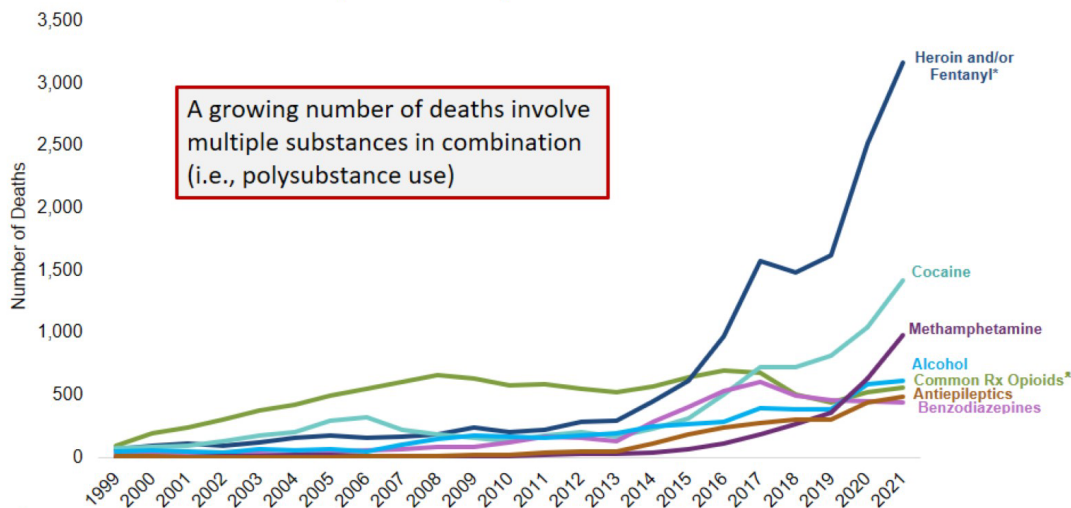
The overdose crisis requires vigilant effort and adequate resources. The Council affirms the importance of legislative action that provides unrestricted access to evidence-based treatments and recovery services. People with lived experience must be brought into the conversation because those closest to the problem are often closest to the solution.

We urge people of faith everywhere to become advocates for people who use drugs and to be a voice for those who have become victims of overdoses. We are called to love and steward all of Creation, including the most vulnerable among us. We have a moral imperative to advocate on behalf of the silenced and the hurting.

# Overdose in North Carolina

In **North Carolina**, the number of drug overdoses increased by nearly 1,000 deaths from 2019 to 2020. Then by another 737 deaths from 2020 to 2021, which is nearly a **72% increase** from 2019 to 2021. That is approximately **11 deaths a day** in 2021 due to drug overdose from illicit substances or medications.

Overdose deaths involving illicit opioids\* and stimulants, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, continue to increase

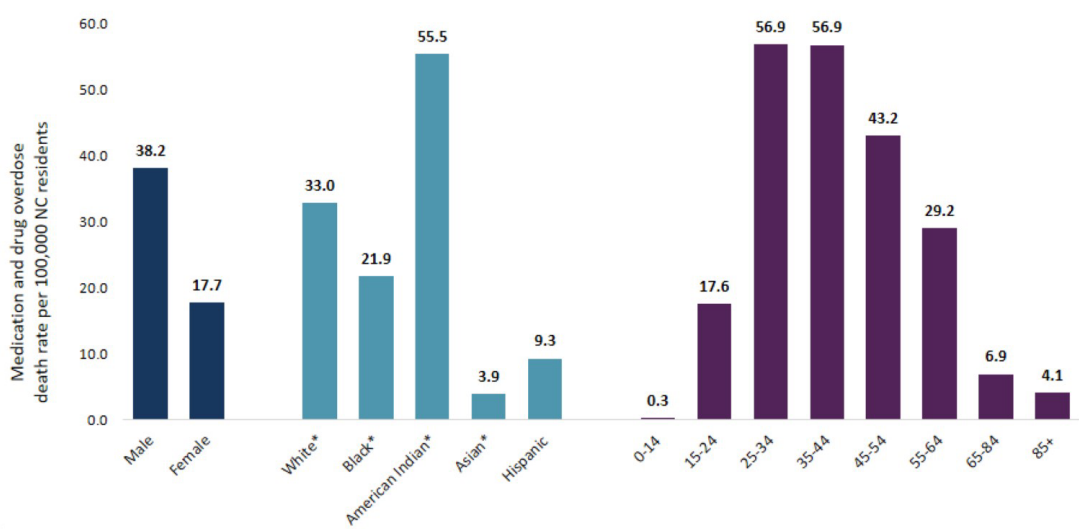


\*Heroin and/or Other Synthetic Narcotics (mainly illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogues); \*Commonly Prescribed Opioid Medications  
**Technical Notes:** These counts are not mutually exclusive; if the death involved multiple substances, it can be counted on multiple lines; Toxicology data is unable to distinguish whether the presence of multiple substances indicate intentional polysubstance use or if one substance was tainted with other drugs (e.g. cocaine laced with fentanyl); All intent medication, drug, alcohol poisoning: X40-X45, X60-64, Y10-Y14, X85 with any mention of specific T-codes by drug type; limited to NC residents See <https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/poisoning/SummaryTableforPoisoningDefinitions-13Nov18-FINAL.pdf> for additional case definition details  
 Source: Deaths-NC State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics, 1999-2021  
 Analysis by Injury Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit

Figure A

In 2021, **96%** of all overdoses were unintentional

Overdose death rates are highest among males, American Indians\* and NH whites\*, and those 25-54 years old (2017-2021)



\*NH = Non-Hispanic

**Technical Notes:** Rates are per 100,000 NC residents; All intent medication and drug overdose: X40-X44, X60-X64, Y10-Y14, X85  
 Source: Deaths-NC State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics, 2017-2021; Population-NCHS, 2017-2020 (2020 as proxy for 2021)  
 Analysis by Injury Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit

Figure B

OPIOID OVERDOSE STATISTICS

# Solutions to End the Overdose Crisis

## What Legislators Can Do:

### Support the Opioid Settlement Funds

- Fund existing evidence-based syringe service programs and distribute overdose-reversing medicine naloxone in communities.
- Ensure people who use drugs have a seat at the decision-making table of how the funds will be spent.
- Expand access to the gold standard of medication-assisted treatment methadone and buprenorphine treatments, which help reduce overdose deaths.

### Update the N.C. Good Samaritan Law

- Streamline the Good Samaritan law and adopt common-sense protections that many other states have already adopted to save lives. By streamlining the process, all types of drugs that people may possess would be protected. Ensuring that possession charges cannot be made while saving someone from an overdose would have a positive effect on the drug-prison cycle.

### Ways to improve our Good Samaritan Law

- Amend the existing law to safeguard individuals from arrest and charges, as opposed to solely protecting them from prosecution.
- Apply immunity to drug possession charges universally, instead of the current law that only provides immunity for specific types of drugs or amounts.
- Update the law to provide clear protection for individuals who call 911 during an overdose situation.
- Extend immunity to all individuals present at the scene, not just the person who made the 911 call.
- Add protections for calling campus security to incentivize scared students to call for help.

## End the Overdose Crisis

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