
Current Drug Trends Affecting Luzerne County and What's Being Done to Address the Problems

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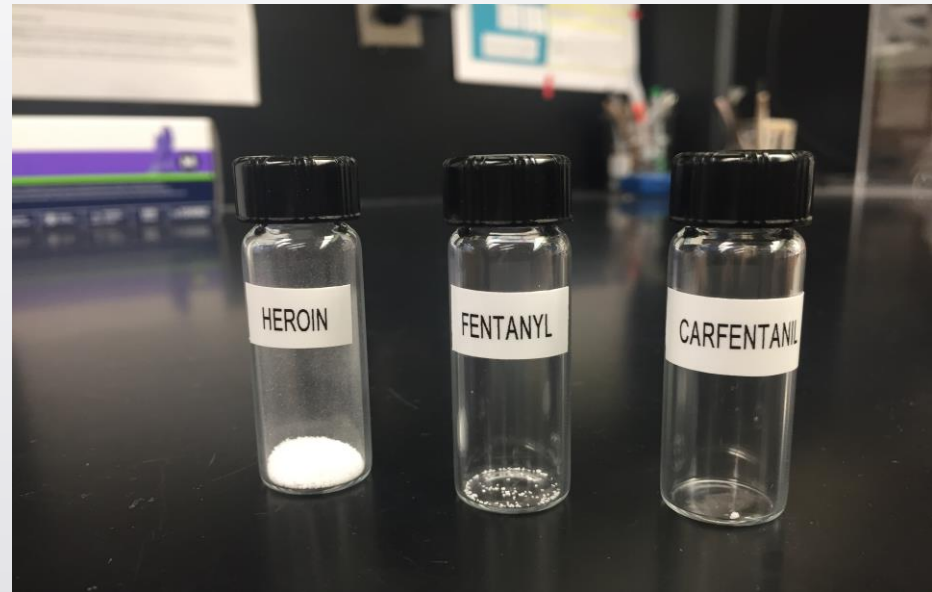




What Do We Want To Cover Today??

- What are the current drug trends in Luzerne County?
- Who is impacted by these drug trends?
- What is being done to address these trends?
- Who is doing the work?
- What can I do to help?
- What can be done to prevent these trends from happening?

Fentanyl





Most Notable Drug Trends in Luzerne County

Fentanyl

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50-100 times stronger than morphine.
- Pharmaceutical fentanyl was developed for pain management treatment of cancer patients, applied in a patch on the skin.
- Because of its powerful opioid properties, Fentanyl is also diverted for abuse. Fentanyl is added to heroin to increase its potency, or be disguised as highly potent heroin.

Fentanyl Overdose

- Overdose may result in stupor, changes in pupillary size, cold and clammy skin, cyanosis, coma, and respiratory failure leading to death.
- The presence of triad of symptoms such as coma, pinpoint pupils, and respiratory depression are strongly suggestive of opioid poisoning.

-Source: United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)



Fentanyl Overdoses By Year

Luzerne/Wyoming Table A: Emerging Substance Use for Luzerne/Wyoming SCA, 2017-2020

Year	# of Overdose Deaths	# of Overdose Deaths with Fentanyl in System	Percent of all Deaths with Fentanyl in System
2017	155	98	63.2%
2018	180	131	72.7%
2019	128	88	68.8%
2020	180	135	75.0%
TOTAL	643	452	70.3%



Most Notable Drug Trends in Luzerne County

Rainbow Fentanyl – DEA Viewpoints

- The Drug Enforcement Administration is advising the public of an alarming emerging trend of colorful fentanyl available across the United States.
- In August 2022, DEA and our law enforcement partners seized brightly-colored fentanyl and fentanyl pills in 18 states. Dubbed “rainbow fentanyl” in the media, this trend appears to be a new method used by drug cartels to sell highly addictive and potentially deadly fentanyl made to look like candy to children and young people.

Rainbow Fentanyl – Drug Experts Viewpoints

- Dr. Sheila Vakharia, head of research for an addiction think-tank called the Drug Policy Alliance, said dealers use colors, stamps and other markers “to distinguish their product from other products on the street.”
-“Is 'rainbow fentanyl' a threat to your kids this Halloween? Experts say no.” – Brian Mann, NPR News
- “I’ve always found this concern to be exaggerated. I’m sure this does happen sometimes, but it is unlikely. Even if fentanyl pills were only a few dollars each, most people would likely find them too expensive to give to kids on Halloween as a sick joke,” Joseph Palamar, Associate Professor in the Department of Population Health at New York University Langone Medical Center.
-Fox News Digital



Fentanyl & Counterfeit Pills

- Counterfeit pills are fake pills made to look like real prescription medications that you get from a pharmacy.
 - While they may look like real medications in terms of their size, coloring, stamps and packaging, they have different ingredients.
 - They may contain more or less of the active ingredient, harmful ingredients, or the wrong medication altogether.
- Partnership to End Drug Addiction*
- Counterfeit pills are on the rise for many reasons, one especially being the amount of money that can be made selling these pills in a world-wide market.
 - It doesn't matter to the sellers if it's at the expense of the buyer's health or life. Many sellers are trying to "cash in" on the opioid epidemic knowing that many people in our country are misusing or dependent on opioid pain relievers.
 - In addition, the high cost of prescription medications, the rise of online pharmacies, the ease of online sales through social media and delivery of products through the mail are contributing factors. And, there is a sense that the risks of getting caught are low.



Fentanyl & Counterfeit Pills

- “There has been a large influx of blue, counterfeit Percocet tablets (30 mgs) made from fentanyl (fent.) throughout the W-B/Scranton Area. In addition, law enforcement has also purchased crystal methamphetamine (meth) and found it field-testing positive for fent. and meth. It is unknown if the fent. was added to the meth on purpose or if it resulted from cross-contamination during packaging.”

– Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, Wilkes-Barre Regional Office

Real



Fake



Fake



Fake





Xylazine AKA “Tranq”

- Xylazine is a non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer.
- Central Nervous Systems Depressant causing slowed breathing, decreased blood pressure, slowed heart rate, amnesia, and drowsiness.
- Xylazine is added to heroin and fentanyl to lengthen or extend the euphoric feelings or “high”.
- “Research shows overdose deaths linked to Xylazine have spread westward across the United States, with the largest impact in the Northeast. From 2015 to 2020, the percentage of all drug overdose deaths involving Xylazine increased from 2% to 26% in Pennsylvania.” –National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- Xylazine can be inject, snorted, swallowed, or inhaled alone or with other substances of abuse.

know what's in your drugs
TRANQ | XYLAZINE

Xylazine is a veterinary tranquilizer that is cut in dope to give fentanyl longer legs. It's known as "anestesia de caballo" in Puerto Rico and "tranq" in Philly.

Tranq was found in over
90%
of dope samples tested in
Philly in 2021



When tranq is mixed with another drug (like fentanyl, heroin, or a benzo), the chance of overdose increases. If someone is overdosing administer naloxone like you normally would. If the person starts breathing again but is still sedated, they don't need more naloxone. Put them in rescue position and keep an eye on them.

Dope with tranq was first seen in Puerto Rico. Today, it is being found in more and more places across the US.



Tranq has been associated with severe wounds, which spread and worsen very quickly.



These wounds are seen regardless of how people use: smoking, snorting, or injecting. It's very difficult for these wounds to heal on their own so it is important to get medical attention if you have one.

What can you do if you think there is tranq in your dope?

First, try to ask around and see how the drug is making other people feel before you buy or use it. Since tranq can cause a really heavy nod, try to use somewhere that you will be safe and won't fall and hurt yourself. Finally, if you think there is tranq in your dope let others know--including someone at your local exchange program--so folks know to be careful.



carry narcan
(naloxone)



start low and
go slow



tell someone
you're using

Never Use Alone

English hotline: 800-484-3731
Spanish hotline: 800-928-5330

The Brave App

download in the app store

-Substance Use
Philadelphia
Department of
Public Health
City of Philadelphia

-Created by the
Substance Abuse and
Harm Reduction
(SUPHR) Division



Gabapentin (Neurontin)

Gabapentin Alone

- Treats seizures, restless leg syndrome, nerve pain, etc.
- Not an Opioid or Painkiller.
- Side Effects: Slows Breathing, difficulty swallowing, drowsiness, weakness, bluish tinge to finger tips and lips.
- Sounds familiar?

Gabapentin + Opioids

- For heroin users, the combination of opioids with gabapentin or pregabalin potentially increases the risk of acute overdose death through either reversal of tolerance or an additive effect of the drugs to depress respiration. –National Library of Medicine; Lyndon, Audrey, et al.
- Gabapentin is also commonly misused by ingesting it in combination with other substances, such as benzodiazepines, opioids, marijuana, stimulants, or alcohol.
- Someone may use these substances together in an attempt to enhance a subjective high, self-medicate, or manage the [withdrawal](#) symptoms associated with other substances.



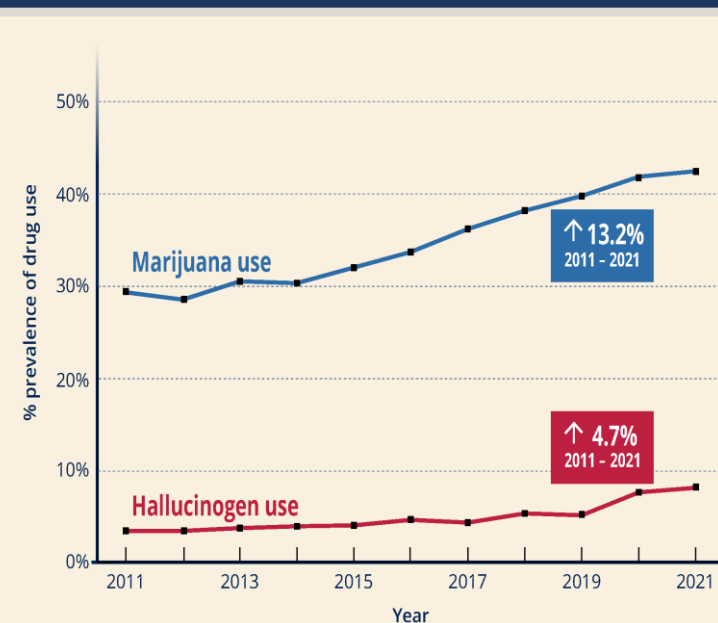
Gabapentin (Neurontin)

- “Drug users say gabapentin pills, known as “johnnies” or “gabbies,” **enhance the euphoric effects of heroin** and when taken alone in high doses can produce a marijuana-like high.” –Pew
- “Alone, high doses of gabapentin have not been found to affect breathing. **The vast majority of gabapentin deaths, about 4 in 5, also involved opioids**” – *Addiction, a journal focusing on addiction research and studies.*
- “Misuse of gabapentin is just one more collateral effect of the opioid epidemic,” said Caleb Alexander, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University who has been studying the heroin and prescription drug epidemic. **When one drug becomes less available, drug users historically seek out alternatives, he said. “What is most surprising is the sheer magnitude of its use.”** –Pew

Drug Trends in Youth & Young Adults

- Marijuana on the Rise ↑
- Hallucinogens seeing an Increase ↑
- Vaping (Nicotine & Marijuana) ↑
- Cannabis Products containing Delta-8 THC ↑

Historic Highs in Past-Year Marijuana and Hallucinogen Use Among Young Adults (Ages 19-30) in 2021



Source: 2021 Monitoring the Future Panel Survey



Delta 8 - THC

- Delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol, also known as delta-8 THC, is a psychoactive substance found in the *Cannabis sativa* plant, of which marijuana and hemp are two varieties.
- Delta-8 THC is one of over 100 cannabinoids produced naturally by the cannabis plant, but is not found in significant amounts in the cannabis plant. As a result, concentrated amounts of delta-8 THC are typically manufactured from hemp-derived cannabidiol (CBD).
- Delta-8 THC products have not been evaluated or approved by the FDA for safe use in any context

--Information taken from the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) website.



Delta 8 - THC

The FDA received 104 reports of adverse events in patients who consumed delta-8 THC products between December 1, 2020, and February 28, 2022.

Of these 104 adverse event reports:

- 77% involved adults, 8% involved pediatric patients less than 18 years of age, and 15% did not report age.
- 55% required intervention (e.g., evaluation by emergency medical services) or hospital admission.
- 66% described adverse events after ingestion of delta-8 THC-containing food products (e.g., brownies, gummies).
- Adverse events included, but were not limited to: hallucinations, vomiting, tremor, anxiety, dizziness, confusion, and loss of consciousness.

National poison control centers received 2,362 exposure cases of delta-8 THC products between January 1, 2021 (i.e., date that delta-8 THC product code was added to database), and February 28, 2022. Of the 2,362 exposure cases:

- 58% involved adults, 41% involved pediatric patients less than 18 years of age, and 1% did not report age.
- 40% involved unintentional exposure to delta-8 THC and 82% of these unintentional exposures affected pediatric patients.
- 70% required health care facility evaluation, of which 8% resulted in admission to a critical care unit; 45% of patients requiring health care facility evaluation were pediatric patients.
- One pediatric case was coded with a medical outcome of *death*.

Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant drug that dramatically affects the central nervous system.
- Crystal “Meth” is a glasslike, rock substance.
- Most commonly smoked, snorted or injected.
- Fast-acting “high” but fades very quickly. Very quick peak.
- Significantly increases in dopamine in the brain leading to repetitive use or “binge use” in order to repeat that same intense high over and over.





Methamphetamine

Short Term

- Increased wakefulness and physical activity
- Decreased appetite
- Faster breathing
- Rapid and/or irregular heartbeat
- Increased blood pressure and body temperature
- Intense high leading to binge use.

--National Institute on Drug Abuse

Long Term

- Extreme weight loss
- Addiction
- Severe dental problems
- Intense itching, leading to skin sores from scratching
- Anxiety
- Changes in brain structure and function
- Confusion and memory loss
- Sleeping problems
- Violent behavior
- Paranoia - extreme and unreasonable distrust of others
- Hallucinations - sensations and images that seem real though they aren't



Twin epidemics: The surging rise of methamphetamine use in chronic opioid users

- Conclusion: Our studies show that there has been a marked increase in the past month use of methamphetamine in individuals with a primary indication of opioid use disorder. Qualitative data indicated that methamphetamine served as an opioid substitute, provided a synergistic high, and balanced out the effects of opioids so one could function “normally”. Our data suggest that, at least to some extent, efforts limiting access to prescription opioids may be associated with an increase in the use of methamphetamine.

-“Twin epidemics: The surging rise of methamphetamine use in chronic opioid users.”

-Ellis, Kasper, Cicero - Washington University, Department of Psychiatry

How to Treatment Amphetamine Use Disorders

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy, which helps patients recognize, avoid, and cope with the situations likely to trigger drug use.
- Motivational incentives, which uses vouchers or small cash rewards to encourage patients to remain drug-free. Motivational-Enhancement Therapy.
- More drugs on the way?



NSDUH Substance Use Disorder Prevalence Estimates

Single County Authority	Total 2016 Luzerne/Wyoming Population	Prevalence Age 12+ (NHSDA) 2015 & 2016	Prevalence Age 12-17 (NHSDA) 2015 & 2016	Prevalence Age 18-25 (NHSDA) 2015 & 2016	Prevalence Age 18+ (NHSDA) 2015 & 2016	Prevalence Age 26+ (NHSDA) 2015 & 2016
Luzerne/Wyoming	343,904	22,379	860	9,317	21,572	15,515



Drug Overdoses in Luzerne County

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
144	140	160	157	126	167	205
73% Male	71% Male	67% Male	73% Male	71% Male	62% Male	75% Male
27% Female	29% Female	33% Female	27% Female	29% Female	38% Female	25% Female

--Demographics are Based on Biological Sex and Percentage of Deaths Data from Overdose Free PA (overdosefreepa.org)



Drug Overdoses in Luzerne County

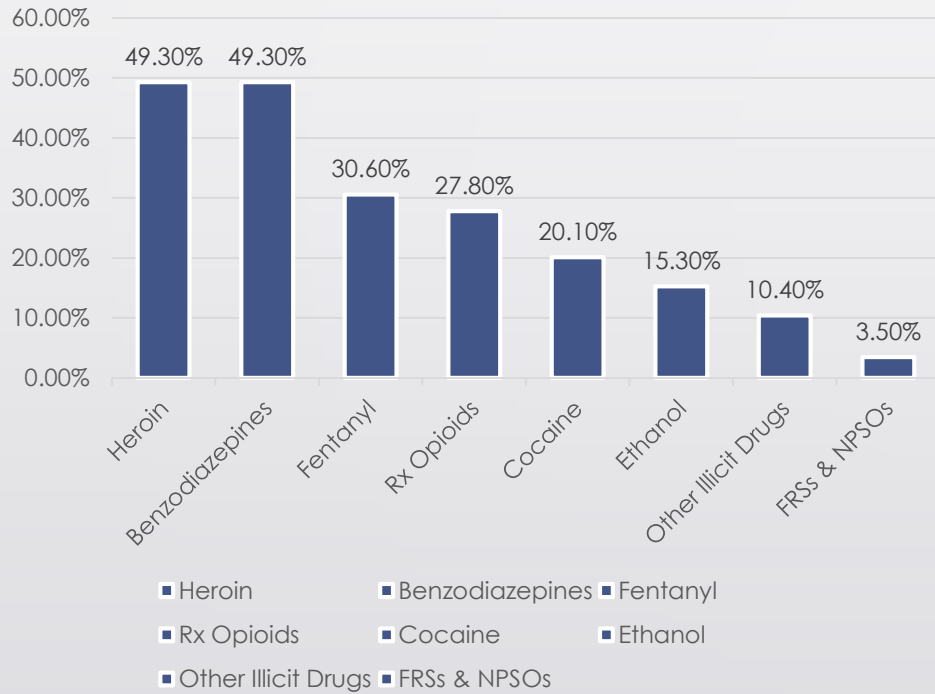
Age Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
0-17	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	N/A
18-24	6%	9%	12%	8%	3%	7%	N/A
25-34	28%	13%	36%	30%	29%	32%	N/A
35-44	27%	12%	24%	34%	28%	22%	N/A
45-54	30%	14%	16%	17%	24%	26%	N/A
55+	3%	34%	9%	8%	14%	10%	N/A
Total	144	140	160	157	126	167	205

--Information is Based on Age Group Data from Overdose Free PA
(overdosefreepa.org)

Drug Overdose in Luzerne County

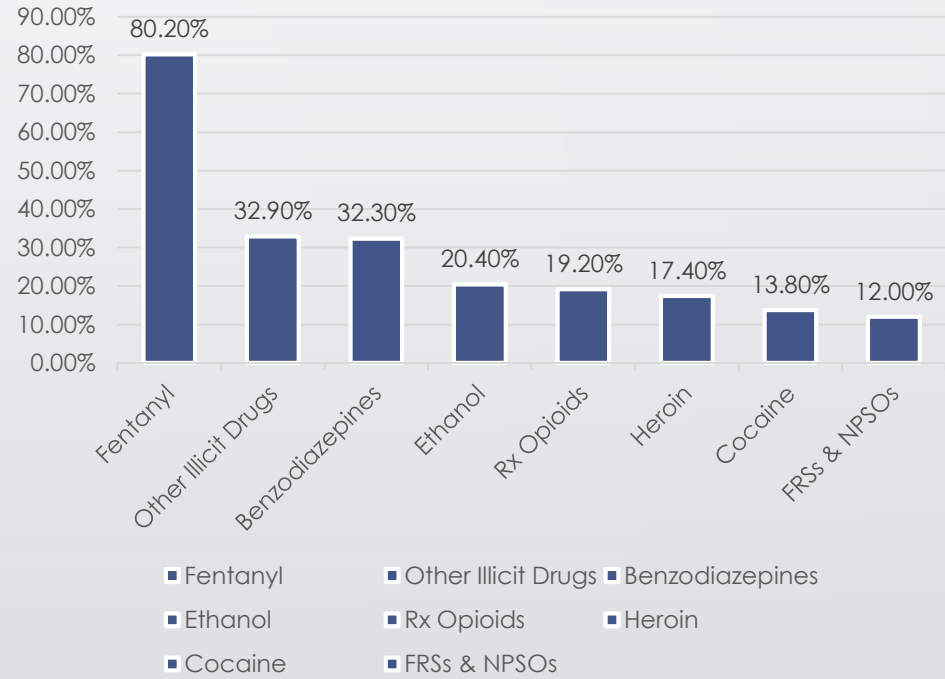
2015 - Drug Category

Percent of cases



2020 - Drug Category

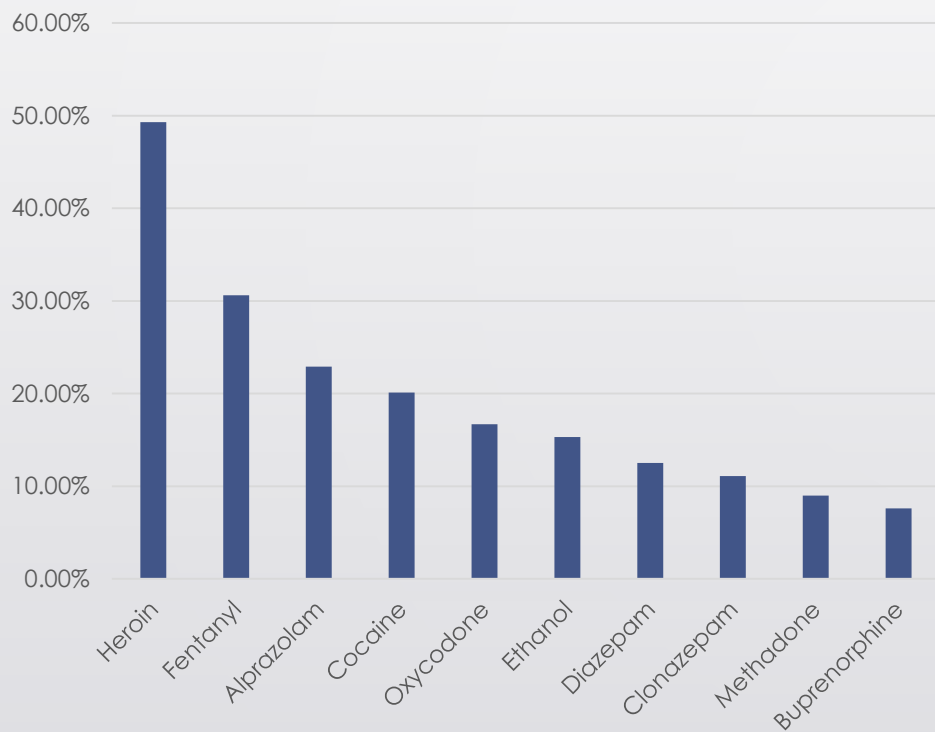
Percent of cases



Drug Overdoses in Luzerne County

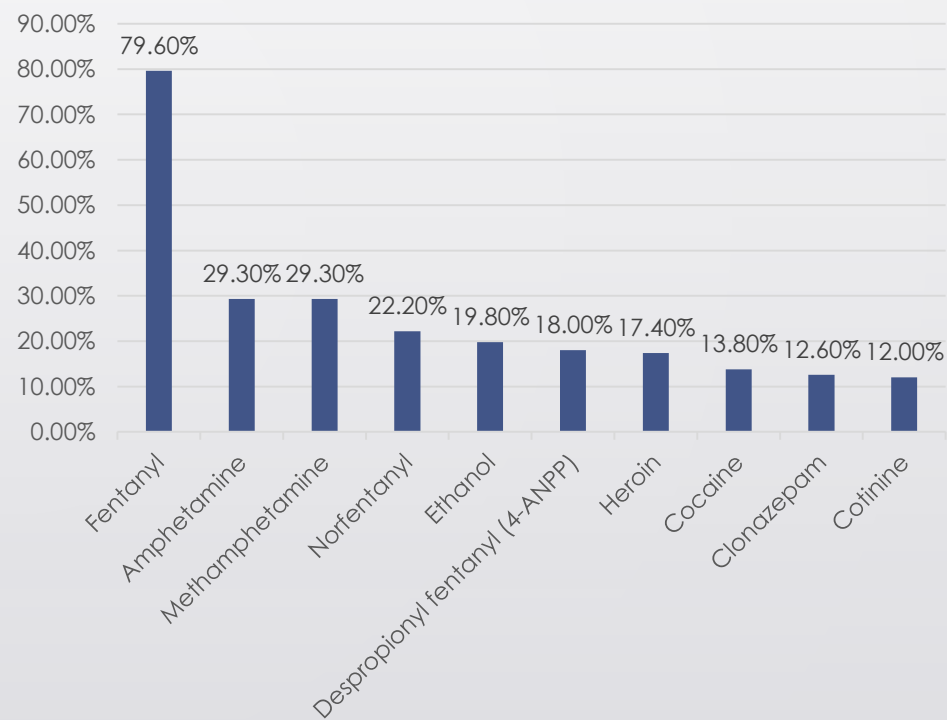
2015 - Most Found Drugs

Percent of cases



2020 - Most Found Drugs

Percent of cases





A Few Local More Trends...

Parcels

- Drugs being sent through parcel services remain a problem for Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.
- Developing collaborative relationships with security personnel and regular trips for law enforcement trained in finding drug packages at sorting facilities would increase seizures.
- In addition, larger drug trafficking organizations are increasingly using parcel services for large shipments into the area from the US Border States and internationally.

Source City

- Hazleton, PA remains a major drug distribution center for the northeast and central PA.
- Dominican groups, with ties to the Boston Area, NYC Area, and the DR, are the area's primary wholesale drug supply sources. Based on some recently completed wiretaps, Mexican cartel groups are also meeting with and cooperating with these Dominican organizations to provide them with drugs to sell.
- To a lesser extent, people from the area have been traveling to Philadelphia (Kensington) or Northern New Jersey to make large drug purchases to bring back and sell on the street level.

So, what is being to address
some of these issues and who is
doing it?



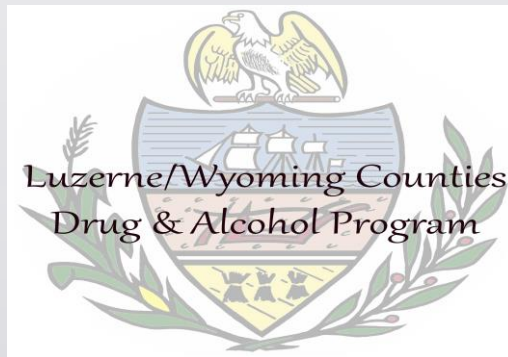


What is the Single County Authority (SCA)?

- The Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA), an affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), is a professional association that represents the 47 Single County Authorities (SCAs) across the Commonwealth.
- SCAs receive state and federal dollars through contracts with the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP).

Luzerne/Wyoming Co. Drug & Alcohol Program Mission Statement

- The Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program believes in a comprehensive and effective approach to helping people find recovery in dealing with substance abuse disorders. To that extent, the mission of the program is to provide access to high quality prevention/education services as well as effective treatment and case management services in a cost effective manner.





What is a Single County Authority (SCA)?

- An SCA is the designated agency responsible for program planning and the administration of State and Federally funded grant agreements.
- An SCA is responsible for the delivery and oversight of prevention, intervention, treatment, and treatment-related services pertaining to substance use and problem gambling disorders.

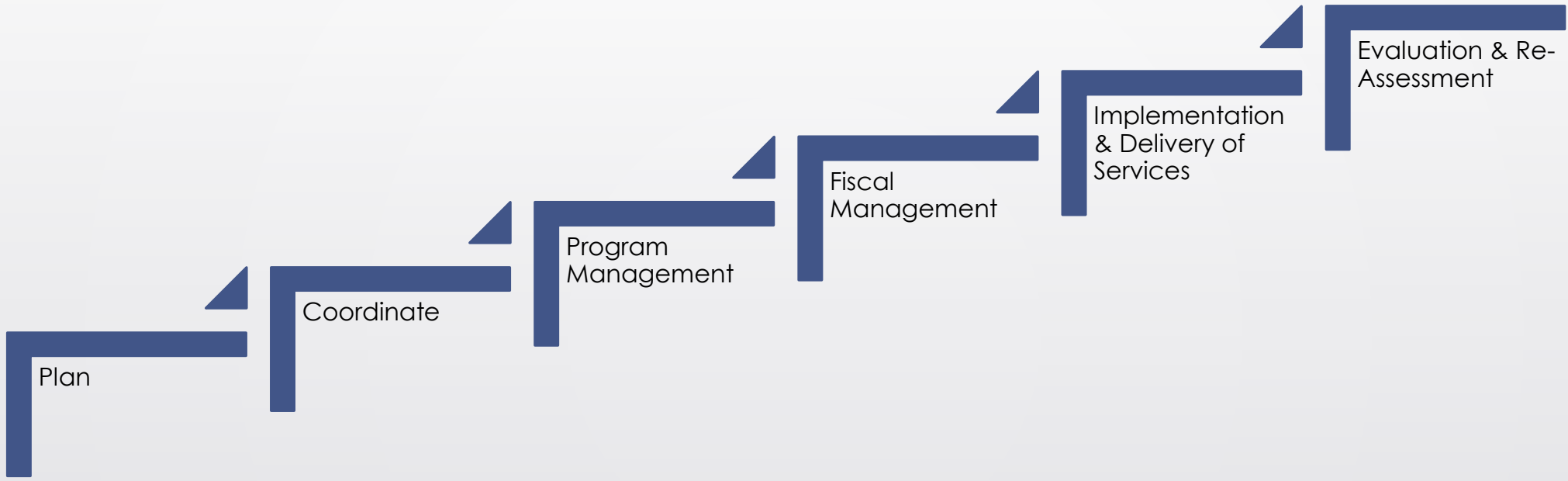
Assess the Prevention/Education and Treatment Needs of the community.

Allocate resources and funding.

Implement new programs or enhance existing programs to meet the identified needs.

Assess the implemented services. Outcomes-driven.

Network with other providers and the community to ensure services are effective.



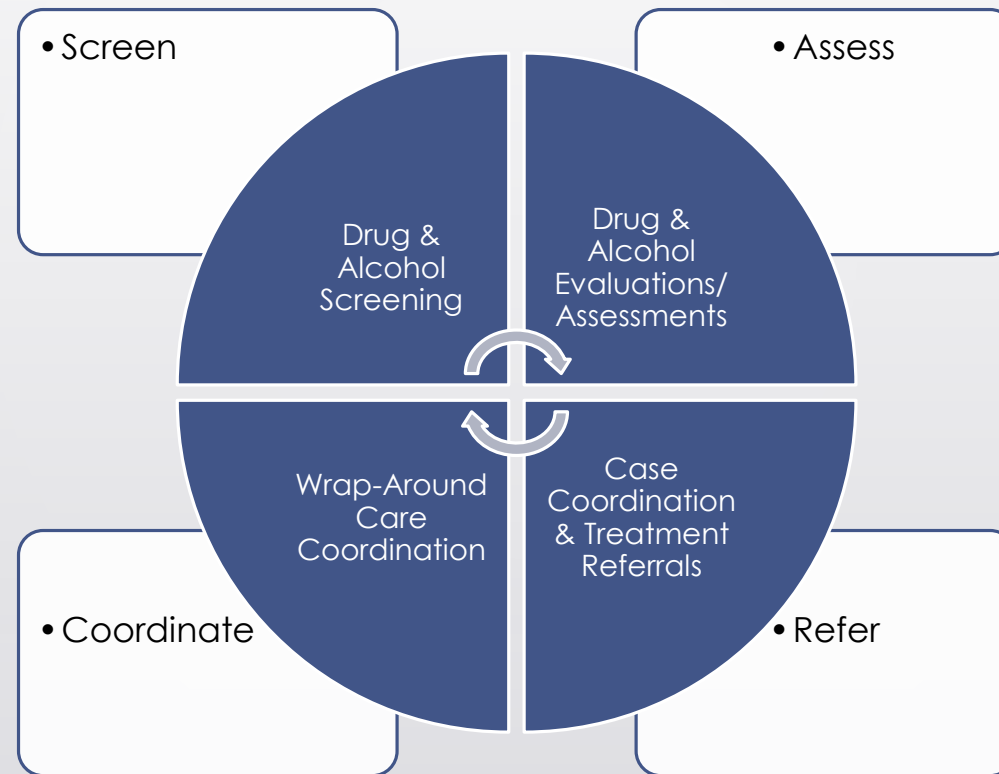


Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Case Management Services

111 North Pennsylvania Avenue, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Phone: (570)826-8732

Email: casemgmtunit@luzernecounty.org





What's Being Done?

Harm Reduction Efforts

- Medication-Assisted Treatment Programs
- Narcan Distribution Efforts
- Fentanyl Testing Strips
- Safe Syringe Programs
- House Bill 1393

New Programming

- Life Unites Us-Statewide Stigma Reduction Campaign
- SOR Housing Program
- Cost-Sharing Services
- Recovery Support Services/WHO
- Law Enforcement Treatment Initiatives (LETI)
- ATLAS Website



Harm Reduction Approach

- Harm reduction is a proven public health approach that minimizes the negative consequences of drug use, saves lives, improves health outcomes, and strengthens families and communities. This approach recognizes that there will always be individuals using and misusing legal and illegal drugs, and addresses the conditions of their use. –Wolf Administration, Pennsylvania Governor’s Office-Press Release 11/3/22.
- Provides time for interventions to increase protective factors, decrease risk factors, and improve all social determinants of health.
- Think Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs.”



Available Treatment Services for Luzerne & Wyoming Counties

- Contract with 20-25 Providers for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services (Varying Levels of Care).
- Contract with more than 50 Separate Providers Locations.
- Contracted for approximately 180-185 Different Service Lines or Activities for SUD Treatment.
- **Levels of Care include:**
 - Level 1-Outpatient
 - Level 2-Intensive Outpatient
 - Level 3-Residential/Inpatient Services (Detox & Rehab Services)
 - Level 4-Medically-Managed Intensive Inpatient Services (Hospital-Based Rehab Services)



Available Treatment Services for Luzerne & Wyoming Counties

Outpatient Providers Include:

- The Robinson Counseling Center (WB & Tunkhannock)
- -Wyoming Valley Alcohol & Drug Services (WB & Kingston)
- -A Better Today (Hazleton, WB, and Tunkhannock)
- -Trehab (Tunkhannock)
- -Pathway to Recovery (Hazleton)
- Cleanslate
- Miners Medical & Hazleton Treatment

Inpatient Providers Include:

- Pyramid Healthcare
 - White Deer Run
 - Gaudenzia
 - Firetree
 - Endless Mountains (Tunkhannock)
 - Clem-Mar House for Men
 - Graniteville House for Women
 - The Sanctuary House for Men
- 

Recovery Support Services

- Employing individuals with “lived-experience” in both addiction and active recovery to meet a substance use disorder individual where they are at in his/her use as well as his/her willingness to engage in services.
- Certified Recovery Specialists
- Certified Family Recovery Specialists
- New Roots Recovery Centers in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton.
- Community Based Warm Hand-Off Services & Emergency Room
Hospital-Based Warm Hand-Off Services.






But, There's Still Work to be Done...

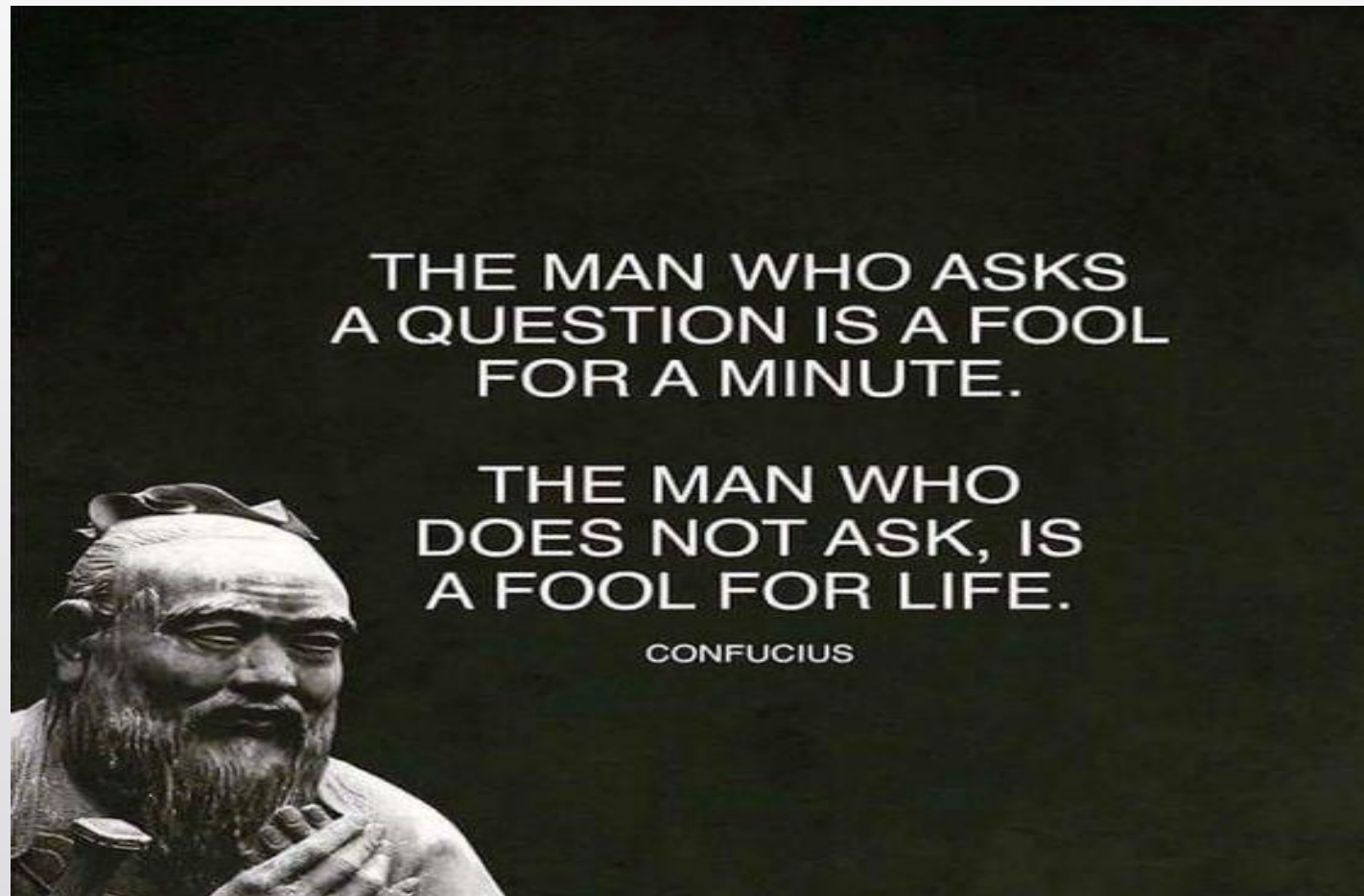
- Stigma Reduction and Community Awareness.
- Business/Industry and Community Engagement.
- Drug Take Back Events & Narcan Distribution Events.
- Medication Assisted Treatment Services and Re-Entry Services in our County Jails.
- Improved Community-Based Prevention.
- Transportation Solutions.
- Language Barriers. Increase access to Spanish-speaking clinical teams.
- Increasing Trauma-Informed Treatment Services and Recovery Support Services.



In Conclusion...

- Recovery comes in all shapes and sizes.
 - Recovery is possible.
 - You can't do this alone. Use the services available to you.
 - There is no magic wand for solving Substance Use Disorders or Addiction-Related Social Issues, like crime, poverty.
 - Stigma is real and it's much worse than you think.
 - Keep an open mind and be kind.
 - Addiction affects everyone and we all have a role to play.
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Question & Answer Time!!!



Thank you!

Ryan Hogan, Administrator

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