

Local Governments and the Opioid Crisis: The Broader Problem and Emerging Ideas

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SUMMARY

The Opioid Epidemic is the most significant drug crisis in U.S. history, affecting all ethnicities and genders. Opioid prescriptions have tripled since 1998, and according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 130 people die every day from opioid-related drug overdoses.

The Opioid Crisis Response Act is expected to pass in 2018 and provides federal support and resources toward opioid mitigation.

How are local governments dealing with this crisis?

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TAKEAWAYS

OpenGov analyzed public-safety expenses and drug overdose death rates between 2010 and 2016 in 20 cities and counties in states with highest drug-overdose deaths according to the CDC.

Findings suggest that every 3 drug-overdose death equals a 1% increase in public safety expenses, public safety expenses rose 19% on average during this time, and a 3-year gap exists between drug-overdose death and when public safety expenses start to spike.

Mt. Pleasant, SC implemented a **First Step Program**, bringing on mental health and victim advocates, creating victim and family resources, and building a network of peer and professional counselors.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP) can reduce abuse through regulation and informs policy, as demonstrated by NIC's RxGov.

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Q & A

Q: What is more effective: combating deaths or combatting overdoses?

Sgt Winstead: Once you start combatting the overdoses, deaths reduce. The agency is interested in recovery, not in the treatment side which is better handled by providers.

Jeff Stocker: Overdose and death is not mutually exclusive. As providers look to deal with overdoses, there is a framework to draw from: surveillance, patient education, public outreach should be cornerstone of engaging with the community.

Q: Is anyone studying the effectiveness of needle exchange and/or safe use locations and related impacts?

Sgt Winstead: That's a loaded question for law enforcement; the agency won't do that, but the harm reduction group may do that.

Jeff Stocker: From the data side, we're not looking at that now. Current focus is on controlled substance database or PDMPs to track formal prescriptions.

Q: Does Austin or Travis County have an PDMP site?

Jeff Stocker: Texas does, Austin does not. Most PDMPs are administered statewide. Texas prescription monitoring program can be accessed at: [Pharmacy.texas.gov\pmp](https://www.pharmacy.texas.gov/pmp)

