

# More Than 1,000 in Massachusetts Died of Opioid Overdoses in Six Months

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State House News Service

Preliminary Department of Public Health data show 1,038 people died of opioid overdoses in the first six months of this year, an estimated 5 percent decrease from the same time period in 2020.

The preliminary data, presented by Acting DPH Commissioner Margret Cooke at a Public Health Council meeting Wednesday, includes both confirmed deaths and those estimated through a modeling process.

Cooke said the rate of opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts increased 5 percent from 2019 to 2020, landing at 30.2 deaths per 100,000 residents or slightly below the 2016 peak of 30.6.

She said overdose deaths “have remained relatively stable” since 2016 despite a rise in the presence of the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, which in 2020 was recorded in 92 percent of fatal overdoses where a toxicology screen occurred.

Previously released quarterly, the state’s opioid data is now published online twice a year, with the next report due in November. In May, the DPH reported a total 2,104 confirmed and estimated opioid deaths in 2020. Cooke’s presentation Wednesday showed 1,089 confirmed and estimated deaths in the first six months of 2020.

Leigh Simons Youmans, the senior director of health care policy at the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, said the figures discussed Wednesday “demonstrate that the

opioid crisis in Massachusetts is still just that: a crisis.” She encouraged people to “check in with those in their lives who may be battling substance use disorders and help them find the resources they need.”

“Our healthcare leaders and front-line providers continue to report that the virus has been a driver for substance use and personal mental health crises – particularly among people of color and individuals living in underserved areas,” she said in a statement.

Data presented to the council showed that confirmed opioid overdose death rates “increased significantly” for Black non-Hispanic males between 2019 and 2020, while decreasing for white non-Hispanic males. The overdose death rate for women rose in 2020, and the increase was higher for Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic women than for white non-Hispanic women.

Cooke said the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services plans to invest \$40 million over the next four years “specifically for expanding access and enhancing services for Black, Indigenous and people of color communities.”

Dr. Edward Bernstein, a gubernatorial appointee to the Public Health Council and emergency medicine professor at the Boston University School of Medicine, asked during the meeting what the state has learned about the most effective practices for addressing opioids.

“I get letters from the Black community saying, you know, we’ve tried all this, what’s going to change?” he said.

Bernstein said access to mental health services, housing, jobs and education are all “key elements” and advocated for an approach that goes beyond public health alone to also involve community engagement.

Cooke said she agreed and that the state is “putting significant dollars” into a housing-first program that has

been “seeing some great success.”

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## **Five drug overdoses in New Bedford in less than 24 hours**

According to the New Bedford Police Department, there were five drug overdoses in New Bedford in less than a 24-hour period on Monday and Tuesday. Historically, New Bedford averages 1-2 non-fatal overdoses a day. No reasons were given for the spike in overdoses, but fentanyl is responsible for 93% of all overdose deaths in Massachusetts.

The overdoses were as follows:

November 5th:

6:22 am, 37-year old man on Myrtle Street

12:49 pm, 45-year old man on Willard Street

4:01 pm, 50-year old man on North Front Street

10:10 pm, 59-year old man at Blue Meadows New Bedford Housing

November 6th:

5:35 am, 46-year old man on Earle Street

New Bedford police logs reported a possible 6th drug overdose that resulted in a fatality, but the New Bedford Police Department stated that it was not a drug overdose and the Bristol County District Attorney’s office has no report of a drug overdose death.

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# New Bedford man overdoses two days in a row

A New Bedford man in his 30s overdosed twice in as many days at his north end New Bedford home. The first overdose occurred on Wednesday, October 2 at 5:52 pm. The second overdose occurred on Thursday, October 3, at 10:14 am. **There were a total of five drug overdoses in New Bedford on Wednesday ( one of them was fatal)** and two non-fatal overdoses on Thursday.

While family and friends can attempt to “Section” someone who overdoses, no law currently mandates a hold of someone who overdoses in Massachusetts. Governor Baker did propose a 72-hour involuntary hold for people who overdose, but Massachusetts legislators killed that idea so people who overdosed are immediately free to leave medical care.

Overdoses can cost taxpayers thousands of dollars each as many police, EMS and fire personnel are called to the scene and medical care is administered immediately and later at the hospital.

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# New Bedford loses at least three to likely drug overdoses over 8-day span

New Bedford lost three people to what are likely drug overdoses within an 8-day span from July 16-24. One of the victims was discovered unresponsive in front of his home by a person walking by and another was found with 15 prescription

bottles.

At 3:54 am on July 16th, a person died of a suspected overdose at the Burger King at 1383 Cove Road in New Bedford. No further details are known at this time.

At 8:13 pm on July 19th, a 44-year-old New Bedford man was found unresponsive outside of a Conduit Street home by a person who was walking. According to the Bristol County District Attorney's office, the passerby immediately called 911 and the victim was rushed to St. Luke's where he was pronounced dead. When police went back to the area where the victim was located, they found Narcan but no drugs were discovered. The victim was known to his family to have suffered from serious drug problems for several years.

At 11:56 pm on July 24th, a 50-year old Cape Cod woman died of a suspected overdose on Holly Street in New Bedford. According to police, the victim was sleeping on a makeshift bed on the floor of the living room when her girlfriend found her unresponsive on the floor, called the police, and attempted to revive her with CPR. New Bedford Rescue arrived and transported her to St. Luke's Hospital where she was pronounced dead. 15 different prescription bottles were found in the victim's possession. According to the Bristol County District Attorney's office, the incident appears to be a fatal overdose as the victim had a very long history of drug abuse.

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**New Bedford sees six overdoses in a 26 hour period**

# this past weekend

New Bedford had six overdoses within a 26 hour period from Friday night (19 July) through Saturday night (20 July) with one resulting in death. According to police logs, two of the overdoses were very public and early afternoon – one Saturday afternoon at the bus station downtown and the other at the Benfica Club on Acushnet Ave.

Details on each of the overdoses:

- 19 July at 8:13 pm on Conduit Street (resulted in death)
- 19 July at 11:43 pm on Cedar Street
- 20 July at 12:22 am on Tallman Street
- 20 July at 12:39 pm at the downtown New Bedford bus station on Elm Street
- 20 July at 2:45 pm at the Benfica Club at 1484 Acushnet Ave.
- 20 July at 10:32 pm on Katharine Street.

We do not publish the names or exact addresses of private residences.

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## Police report three possible overdoses deaths in New Bedford on Wednesday

UPDATE: The Bristol County DA's office confirmed there were three likely overdose deaths in New Bedford on Wednesday; one on a fishing boat and two in hotel rooms.  
<https://www.newbedfordguide.com/das-office-confirm-three-overdose-deaths-in-new-bedford-on-wednesday/2019/04/18>

New Bedford police logs report three possible overdose deaths and a fourth overdose in New Bedford on Wednesday.

At 7:51 am, one death was reported at the Whaler's Inn at 500 Hathaway Road in one of the apartments. A second death was reported at 8:45 am, in one of the rooms at the Marriot Fairfield Inn at 185 MacArthur Drive. At 11:48 am, an overdose was reported on Chancery Street in New Bedford and the victim was revived and transported to the hospital. A third possible overdose death was reported at 5:46 pm on the State Pier in New Bedford.

Yesterday, the Fairhaven Police Department posted the following public service announcement:

"There is likely a potent batch of heroin or fentanyl mixed substances in this community right now. There were several overdoses reported in our neighboring city. We suggest users not be alone and have Narcan available. Reach out to local outreach teams for services and help!"

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## **Woman overdoses in New Bedford's Downtown Public Library**

On Monday, a woman overdosed in the downtown New Bedford public library located on William Street across the street of the New Bedford city hall.

New Bedford police report that around 6:21 pm a 25-year-old female had overdosed on suspected heroin. She was revived and sent to St. Luke's hospital for treatment.

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## **New Bedford sees four overdoses in a 20 hour period on Sunday/Monday**

In a 20 hour period between 10-11 February, there were four overdoses in New Bedford according to the New Bedford Police Department. All survived and received treatment.

- At 5:57am on Sunday, 51-year old woman on South Street apartment
- At 11:25am on Sunday, 50-year old man on Elm Street
- At 7pm on Sunday, 32-year old man Richmond Street apartment
- At 1:35am on Monday, 36-year old man Philips Road (Southcoast condos)

In January, **New Bedford saw four overdoses in less than 24 hours.**

According to New Bedford police data, **New Bedford saw a slight increase in overdoses, but a 15% decrease in overdose-related deaths in 2018.**

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## **Five drug overdoses, two fatal in 11-hour period in**

# New Bedford

New Bedford police officers responded to five drug overdoses, two of them fatal in an 11-hour period on Jan 22, 2018. Two men overdosed together and died in the same Union Street apartment. One of the men resided at the residence and the other was a friend.

According to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office, they were both found by a roommate at 11:55pm on 22 Jan and declared deceased at the home just after midnight. A cut plastic straw with white powdery residue was found on the coffee table in front of both men.

Here are details on all five overdose incidents in New Bedford:

22 Jan at 1:14pm – Rodney French BLVD – 52-year old man

22 Jan at 5:33pm – Shawnee CT – 48-year old female

22 Jan at 6:51pm – Adams Street – 42-year old female

22 Jan at 11:55pm – Union Street – 50-year old and 28-year-old males (both deceased)

January has been a bad month for overdoses in New Bedford. On Jan. 10, **a 38-year old male and 39-year old female had overdosed the same North Front Street apartment.** On Jan 8-9, **three people overdosed at the same South First Street address.** There were **four overdoses in total during that period.** These are examples, and not a list of all the overdoses in January, 2019.

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# Three drug overdoses in 16 hours at the same New Bedford address

According to New Bedford police records, there were three drug overdoses at the same South First Street address in New Bedford in a 16 hour period. One man overdosed twice – within 12 hours.

On Jan. 8, at 9:19am, 34-year old women overdosed at the South First Street address and was transported to St. Luke's Hospital for treatment. Three hours later, a 50-year old man overdosed at the same address at 12:13pm and was transported to St. Luke's Hospital for treatment. At 1:19am on Jan. 9, roughly 13 hours later, the same 50-year old man overdosed and was transported to St. Luke's Hospital for treatment. There are no details on when he was released.

New Bedford police report that all of the overdoses happened at the same South First Street, but do not have details on the apartment numbers. There are three apartments at that address.