

New Bedford drug overdoses down 9% in 2017

Finally some good news on the overdose front: New Bedford drug overdoses are down 9% in the first eight months of 2017 compared to the same period of 2016.

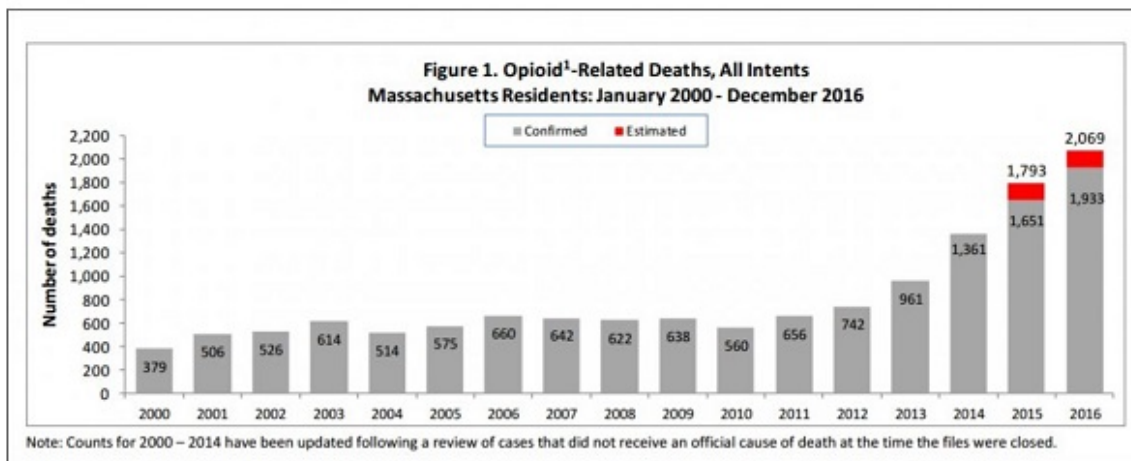
According to the New Bedford police statistics, there were 378 drug overdoses in New Bedford from 1 January to 30 September in 2016 compared to 416 total overdoses in the same period in 2017. That's a decrease of 38 or 9%.

Overdoses January 1st- August 31st

<u>2016</u>			<u>2017</u>	
Non Fatal	391		Non Fatal	352
Fatal	25		Fatal	26
Total	416		Total	378

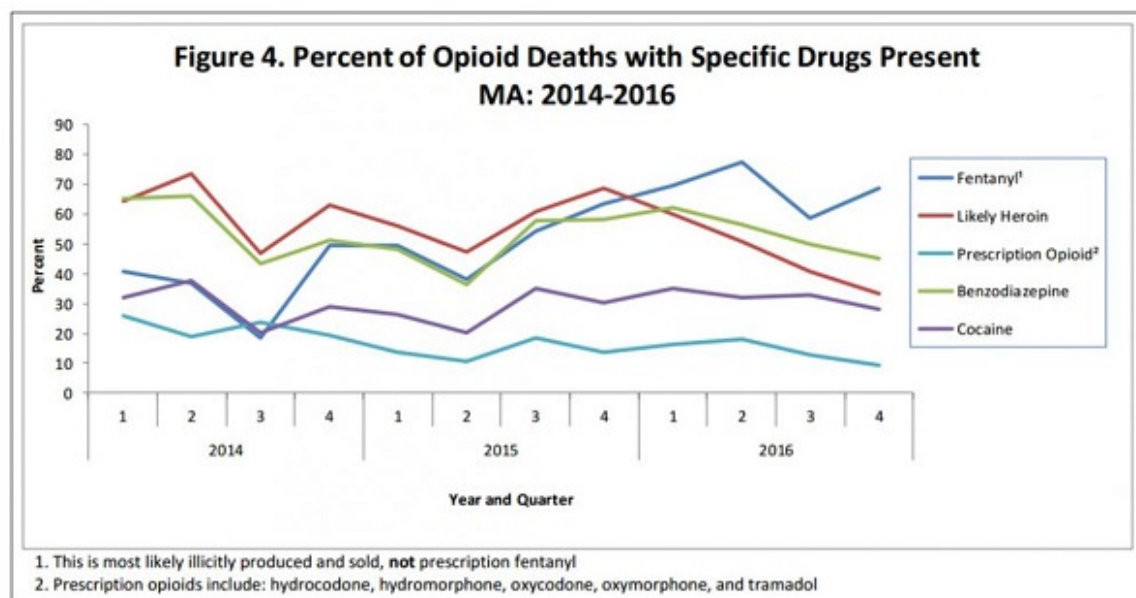
This is a stark contrast to 2016 where New Bedford saw a 75% increase in overdoses compared to 2015. New Bedford had 679 drug overdoses (42 of them fatal) in 2016 compared to 389 overdoses (25 of them fatal) in 2015.

This will mark the first decline in drug overdoses in New Bedford in a long time. There hasn't been a decline fatal overdoses in Massachusetts since 2010.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

As far in 2017, New Bedford did see an increase of fatal overdoses from 25 to 26 likely due to potent synthetic opioids. Fatalities in New Bedford nearly doubled from 2014 to 2015, jumping from 27 confirmed deaths to 48. Per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Fentanyl is the reason behind most overdoses and likely the reason for the slight increase in New Bedford.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Fentanyl was found in 75 percent of the 1,374 opioid deaths in Massachusetts in 2016 and **carfentanil, a drug 10,000 times more potent than morphine and used on elephants, has found its way into Massachusetts**. Carfentanil is approximately 100 times more potent than Fentanyl, which can be lethal in the 2-

milligram range. These two drugs are likely to be the main cause of most drug overdoses going forward and even causing overdoses in first-responders.

Here's a look at a fatal amount of each drug:



This image shows the lethal (deadly) amount of each drug shown

Considering the significant increase in Narcan use over the past few years, one could assume the overdose numbers would be much lower and the overdose deaths much higher without the life-saving drug. How many times have you read about a person overdosing and being saved with Narcan multiple times? Here's an example of a 47-year old New Bedford woman overdosing on heroin twice in a 24-hour period. I've even written an article titled '**Narcan, stabilize, release and repeat – Massachusetts solution to the opioid epidemic**'. While saving lives, Narcan will boost the overdose numbers as addicts continue to use after being saved.

Reduced numbers of people overdosing in New Bedford for the first three quarters of 2017 is excellent news. We may have finally hit a wall and turned a corner. Let's hope this victory is used to motivate health officials to push for

further successes. We've had a decade of steep increases in drug overdoses, let's hope this news is the beginning of a decade of major yearly decreases.