



Pennsylvania  
Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office  
Lackawanna County Overdose Fatality Review

10/01/19 Grant Start → 09/30/22 Grant End

**Overview**

Lackawanna County, in Northeastern Pennsylvania, has a population of approximately 210,000; its county seat and largest community is Scranton, with an estimated population of 77,000. The opioid and overall substance abuse epidemic has hit both the county and Pennsylvania hard: OverdoseFreePA reported 392 overdose deaths in Lackawanna County between 2015 and 2019—an average of 78 per year—with a peak of 98 deaths in 2018, although that number dropped to 50 in 2019. Of the decedents, 65 percent were male, 94 percent were white, and 79 percent were in the 25-to-54 age group. Open Data Pennsylvania reported that in 2018 and 2019, 31,610 doses of Naloxone were administered by Emergency Medical Services in Pennsylvania and 21,011 emergency room visits were made for opioid overdoses. It also estimated the number of individuals with drug use disorders in Lackawanna County at 6,242 in 2018, up from 5,045 in 2017. The profile of drugs of choice has changed in recent years: whereas fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, and

ethanol were the most frequently identified substances in decedents (78 percent) in 2019, the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs reported a significant uptick in cocaine and methamphetamine specifically. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's National Forensic Laboratory Information System reported that in Pennsylvania overall, methamphetamine's share of the state's total drug reports increased by 880 percent, from 422 to 3,449, between 2010 and 2017. Activities in the eastern part of the state, which includes Lackawanna County, appeared to have been a driving force behind that shift.

**Grant Focus**

- Expand jail-based treatment and effective reentry programs.
- Prioritize real-time data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

- Link data sets to identify trends and focus resources.
- Develop and disseminate research on opioid policies and interventions.
- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Strengthen the nation's prescription drug monitoring programs.
- Educate public safety and criminal justice stakeholders about substance abuse.

## Program Approach

Through this project, the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office, in partnership with community partners, will:

- Establish a local, multiagency overdose fatality review (OFR) team. The OFR team will review 2018 overdose deaths and then work forward to 2019.
- Conduct an extensive needs assessment.
- Develop an action plan to guide policies, programs, and laws to prevent overdose deaths.
- Hire a data analyst and establish a database within Lackawanna County that promotes data sharing and collaboration among local stakeholders to identify at-risk populations.
- Support more targeted programs to reduce overdose fatalities. For example, most recently, the community hosted a training for medical personnel about pain management practices and opioid prescribing guidelines.

## Project Partners

- Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office
- University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy Program Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU)
- Lackawanna County Coroner's Office
- Lackawanna County Prison
- Lackawanna County Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Local law enforcement jurisdictions

## Contact Information

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