

Chicago HIDTA Fentanyl Report 2021 Review



July 2022





Chicago HIDTA Fentanyl Report

Contents

2022

The Chicago HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC) actively tracks opioid seizures, Naloxone administrations by the Chicago Fire Department (CFD), and drug overdoses throughout the Chicago HIDTA area of responsibility (AOR). This information is analyzed and mapped to proactively target identified distribution locations that are trafficking opioids, primarily fentanyl or fentanyl-related substances (FRS). The presence of fentanyl and FRS in the illicit opioid marketplace are key factors fueling the nationwide opioid-related overdose death crisis. By effectively utilizing and combining public safety and public health resources and capabilities under the National Overdose Response Strategy (ORS), the Chicago HIDTA has successfully cultivated local partnerships with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Cook County Medical Examiners Office (CCMEO), as well as the Center for Disease Control Foundation (CDCF), to collect and analyze various data streams related to the tracking of both fatal and non-fatal overdoses occurring in the Chicago HIDTA AOR. Chicago HIDTA ISC analysts also rely on the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) to compile overdose statistics throughout the state. ODMAP is a nationwide database that can effectively identify potential overdose outbreaks in a specified geographic area based on data entry from first responders.



Introduction



Opioid and Fentanyl Related Deaths



Cook County Fentanyl Related Deaths



Illinois/HIDTA Counties Opioid and Fentanyl Related Deaths



Naloxone Administrations



Cook County Naloxone Administrations



HIDTA Counties Naloxone Administrations / ODMAP



Opioid Seizure Data



CPD Opioid Seizures



Gang Related Opioid Data



2021 Novel Substances and 2022 Outlook

Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
Investigative Support Center

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Chicago HIDTA Fentanyl Report

Introduction

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Provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics indicate there were an estimated 107,622 drug overdose deaths in the United States in 2021, an increase of nearly 15% from the 93,655 deaths estimated in 2020. Provisional numbers from the Illinois Department of Public Health reflect that there were 3,013 opioid overdose deaths in Illinois in 2021 compared to 2,944 opioid overdose deaths in 2020.

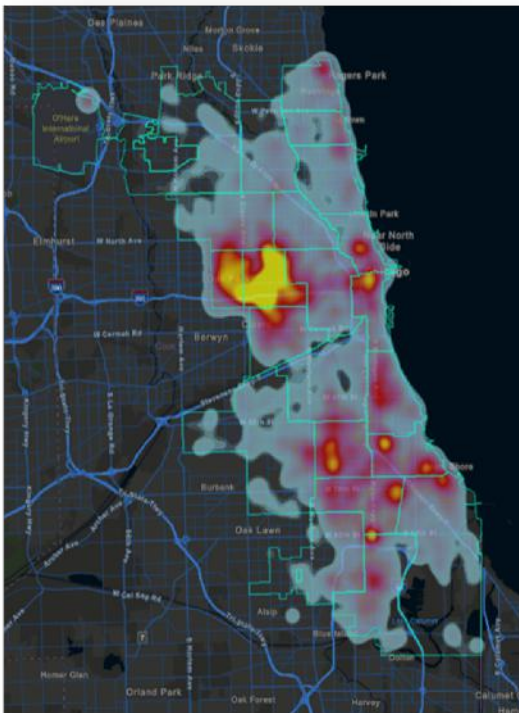
The driving force behind the overdose epidemic in the nation and the Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) area of responsibility (AOR) is the synthetic opioid fentanyl. Fentanyl or fentanyl-related substances (FRS) have been injected into the illicit narcotic marketplace and are key factors in the overdose death epidemic. Currently, it is unknown what the rate of substitution is between heroin and fentanyl. That is, the percentage of individuals unknowingly purchasing fentanyl when intending to purchase heroin.

In the Chicago HIDTA counties (Cook, Will, DuPage, Grundy, Lake, and Kendall), provisional numbers indicate that there was a total of 2,242 opioid overdose deaths in 2021. Of these deaths, 26 were attributable to heroin only, just over 1 percent. Due to lower production costs and exponentially higher potency, fentanyl and FRS provides drug traffickers with a higher return on investment. A small amount of fentanyl or FRS can be adulterated with large amounts of cutting agents for street sale which drives profit margins up. Fentanyl is now the primary, and in some cases the only, opioid being sold at the retail level in the Chicago HIDTA AOR.

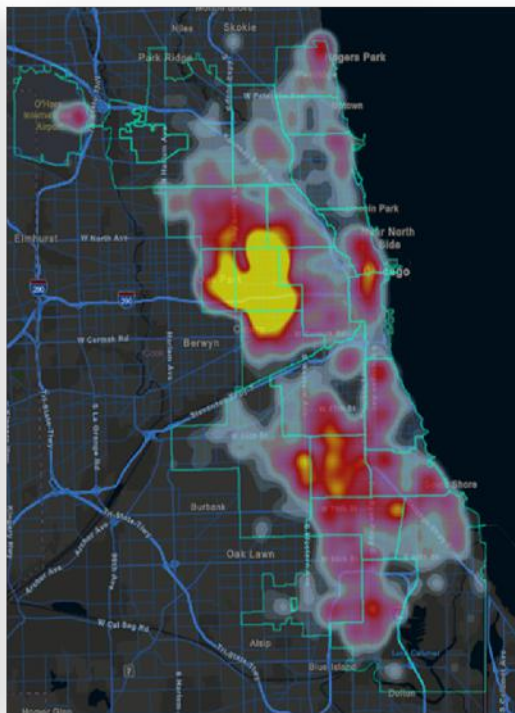
Violence and narcotics trafficking in the Chicago HIDTA AOR are inextricably linked, especially in the city of Chicago where street gang-controlled open-air drug markets are the primary sources of opioids and other drugs.

This report is intended to provide community stakeholders, policymakers, public safety professionals, and public health organizations with information regarding the opioid overdose epidemic. This dire and ongoing threat continues to negatively impact our communities and destroy lives.

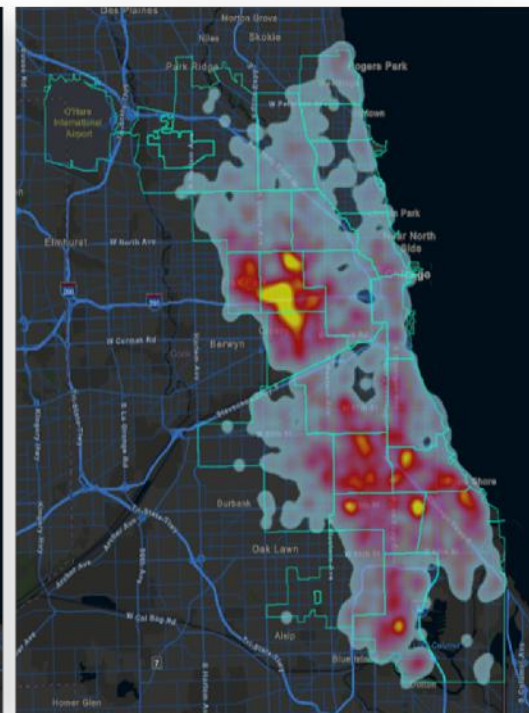
2021 Naloxone Administrations



2021 CPD Narcotic Recoveries



2021 Chicago Shooting Incidents



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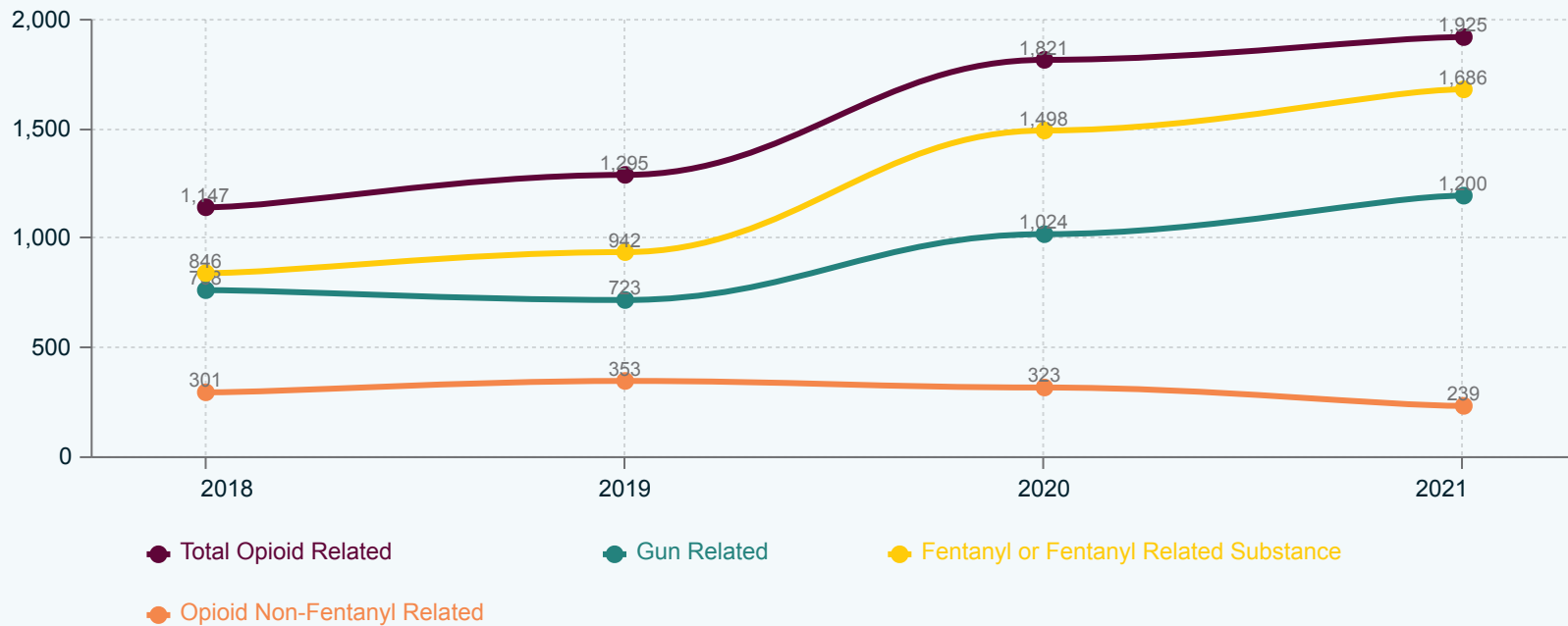
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Cook County Medical Examiner Data

2022

Cook County Medical Examiner Data

Opioid, Fentanyl, and Gun Related Deaths**

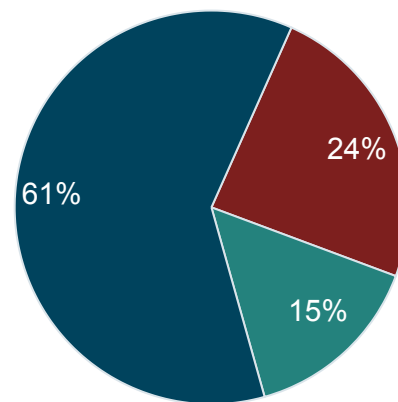


Nearly 25% of deaths

investigated by the
Cook County Medical Examiner's
Office in 2021
were **Opioid** related.
(excluding Covid-19**)

Cook County Medical Examiner Data

Cause of Death Excluding Covid-19



Total Opioid Related	1,925
Gun Related	1,200
Other Causes	4,893

**This contains information about deaths that occurred in Cook County that were under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. Not all deaths that occur in Cook County are reported to the Medical Examiner or fall under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner. The Medical Examiner's Office determines cause and manner of death for those cases that fall under its jurisdiction. Cause of death describes the reason the person died.



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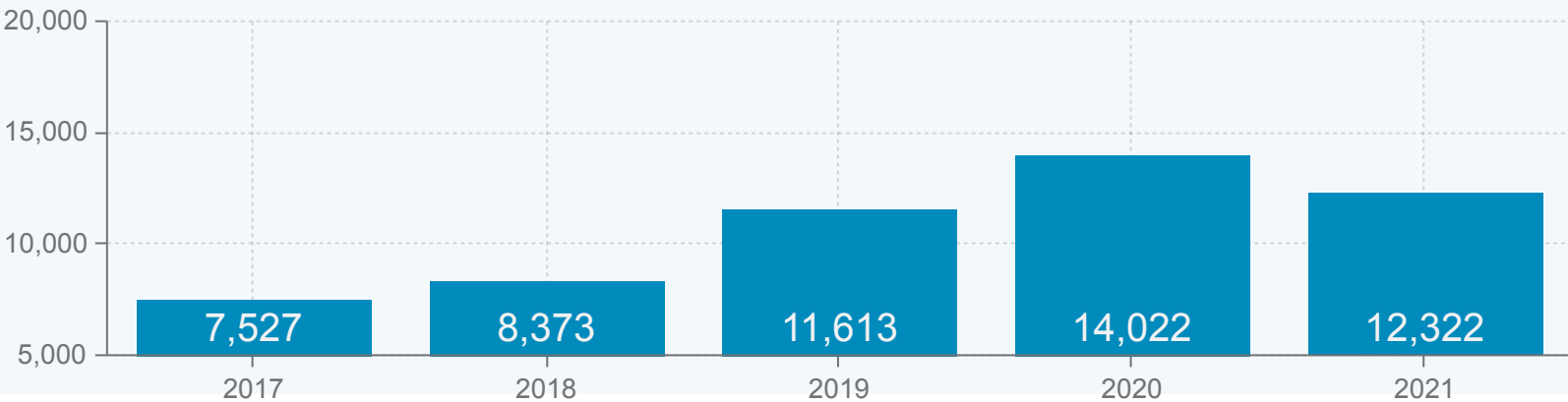
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Cook County Naloxone Administrations

2022

Naloxone Administrations

CFD EMS Data



12,322

Naloxone administrations
by CFD
in 2021

12,505

Total naloxone administrations
reported in Cook County

Highest Concentration

Neighborhood: **Garfield Park**

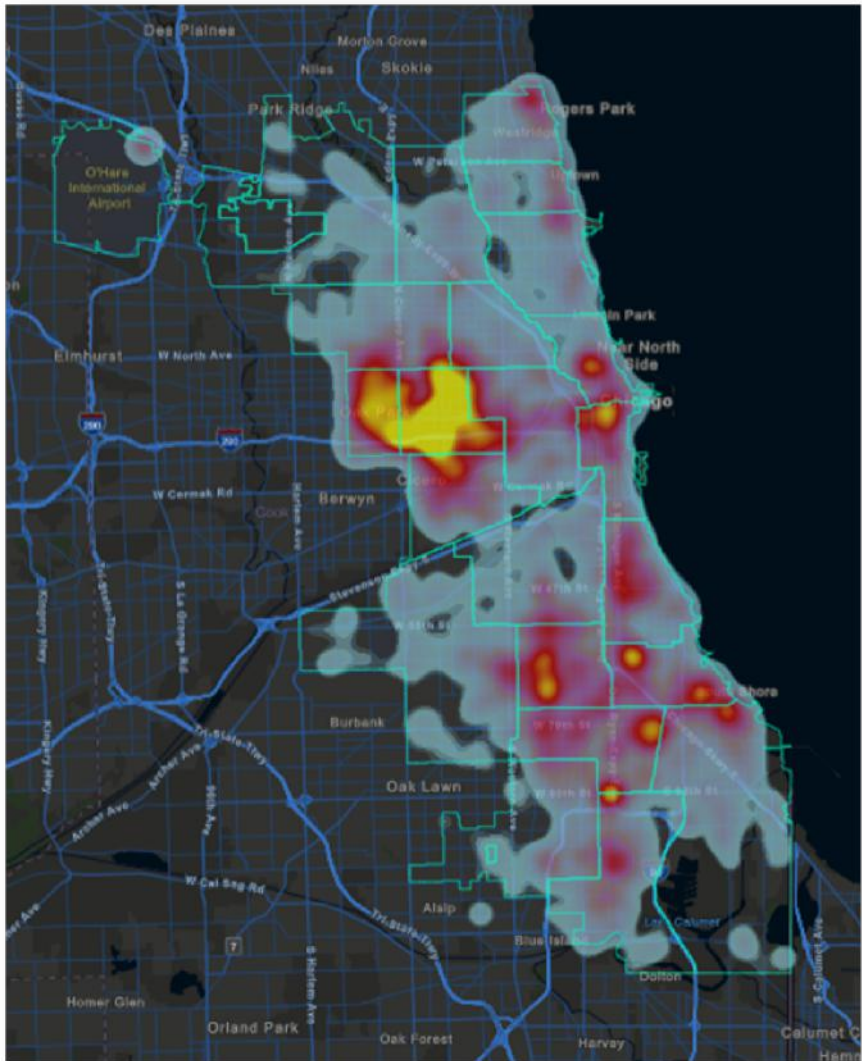
Police District: **11th District**

12,993

Cook County
Opioid Related
Emergency Department visits
in 2021



23%
decrease
from 2020



2021 Data



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Illinois/HIDTA Opioid and Fentanyl Related Deaths

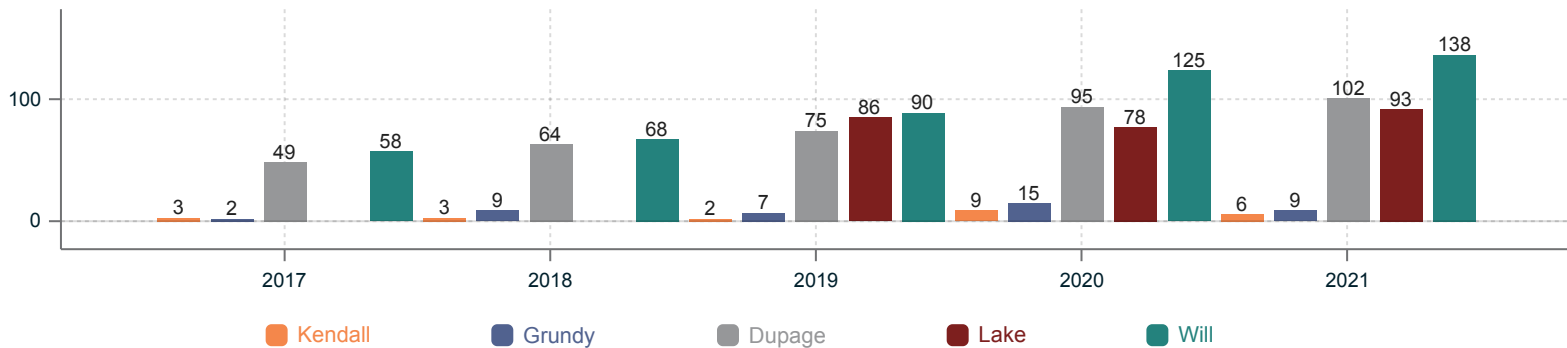
2022

Opioids, primarily fentanyl, were involved in over 80,000 of the overdose deaths in 2021 (75% of all drug overdose deaths). Used either intentionally or unintentionally, fentanyl has been increasingly used as an adulterant or as a substitute for heroin. Nearly 950,000 people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose in the United States. Drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants such as methamphetamine are also increasing with and without synthetic opioid involvement. Polysubstance use accounted for 59% of opioid related fatalities in Illinois.

Fentanyl Related Deaths

HIDTA Counties excluding Cook County

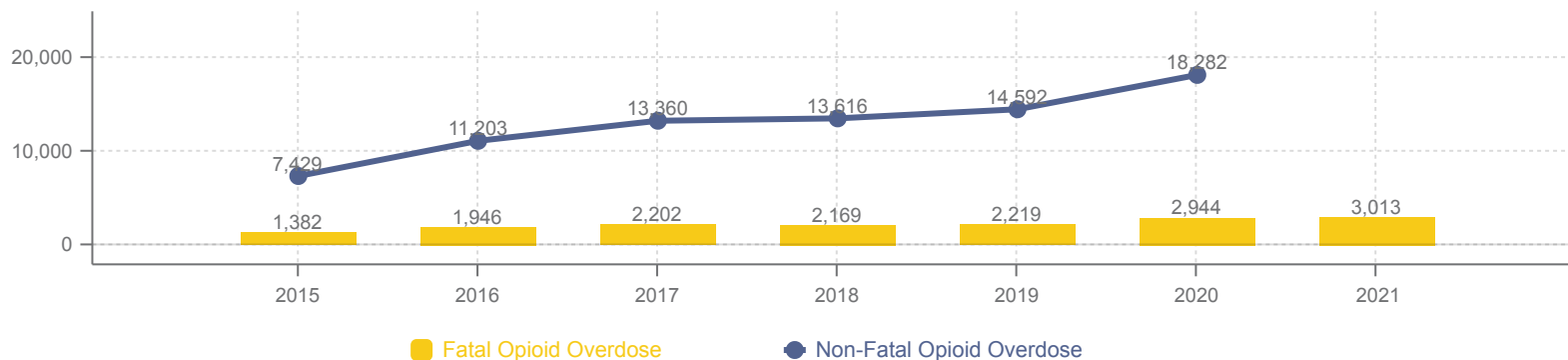
*Lake County added as a HIDTA County 2019



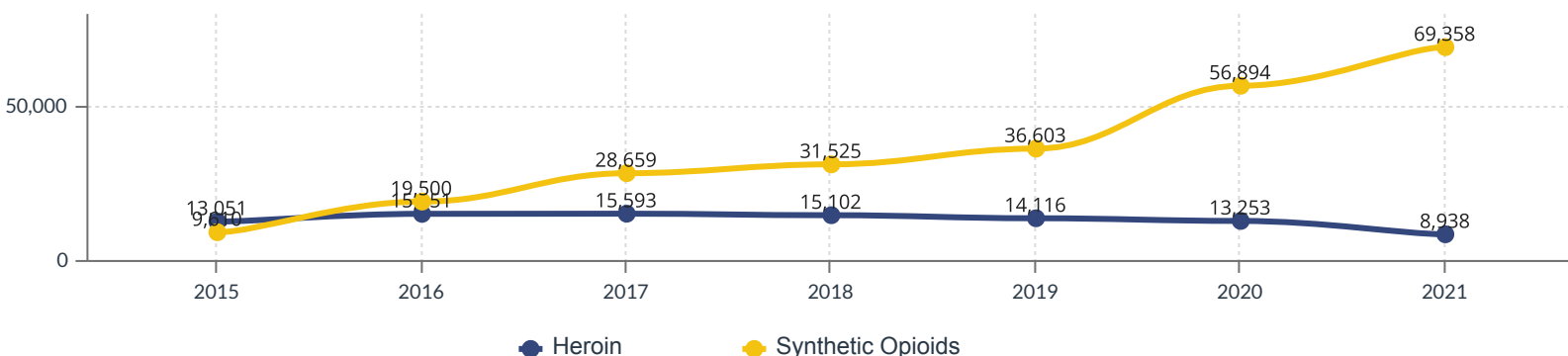
Illinois Opioid Overdose

Fatal and Non-Fatal

(Data for 2021 still pending)



National Opioid Overdose Deaths



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ODMAP

2022

ODMAP (Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program) is a program developed by the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) that supports public safety and public health efforts to mobilize an immediate response to a sudden increase, or spike, in all drug overdose events. ODMAP links first responders and relevant record management systems to a mapping tool to track overdoses and stimulate real-time response and strategic analysis across jurisdictions. Illinois has 251 entities within 52 counties currently enrolled in ODMAP. These entities entered more than 22,000 suspected overdoses into the system in 2021. Illinois has 102 counties and ODMAP will reach full effectiveness when all Illinois counties enroll in this free, life saving program. Nationally, more than 3,900 agencies participate in ODMAP and have reported more than suspected 1,272,685 overdoses.

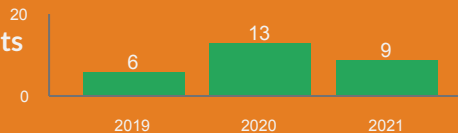
For more information about ODMAP, please visit WWW.ODMAP.ORG or contact Chicago HIDTA Drug Intelligence Officer Vic Markowski at v.markowski@chicago-hidta.org | 312.414.9442

ODMap Overdose Statistics



31%

decrease in naloxone events
over same period 2020

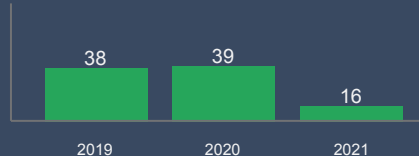


Kendall County



59%

decrease in naloxone events
over same period 2020

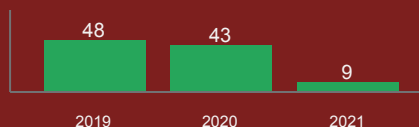


Grundy County



79%

decrease in naloxone events
over same period 2020



Lake County



24%

decrease in naloxone events
over same period 2020

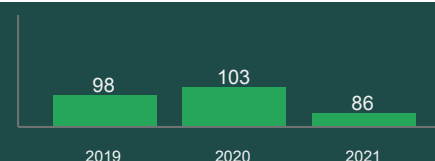


DuPage County

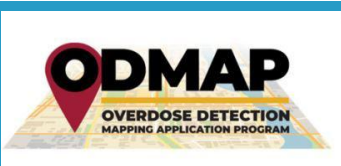


17%

decrease in naloxone events
over same period 2020



Will County



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CPD Opioid Seizures

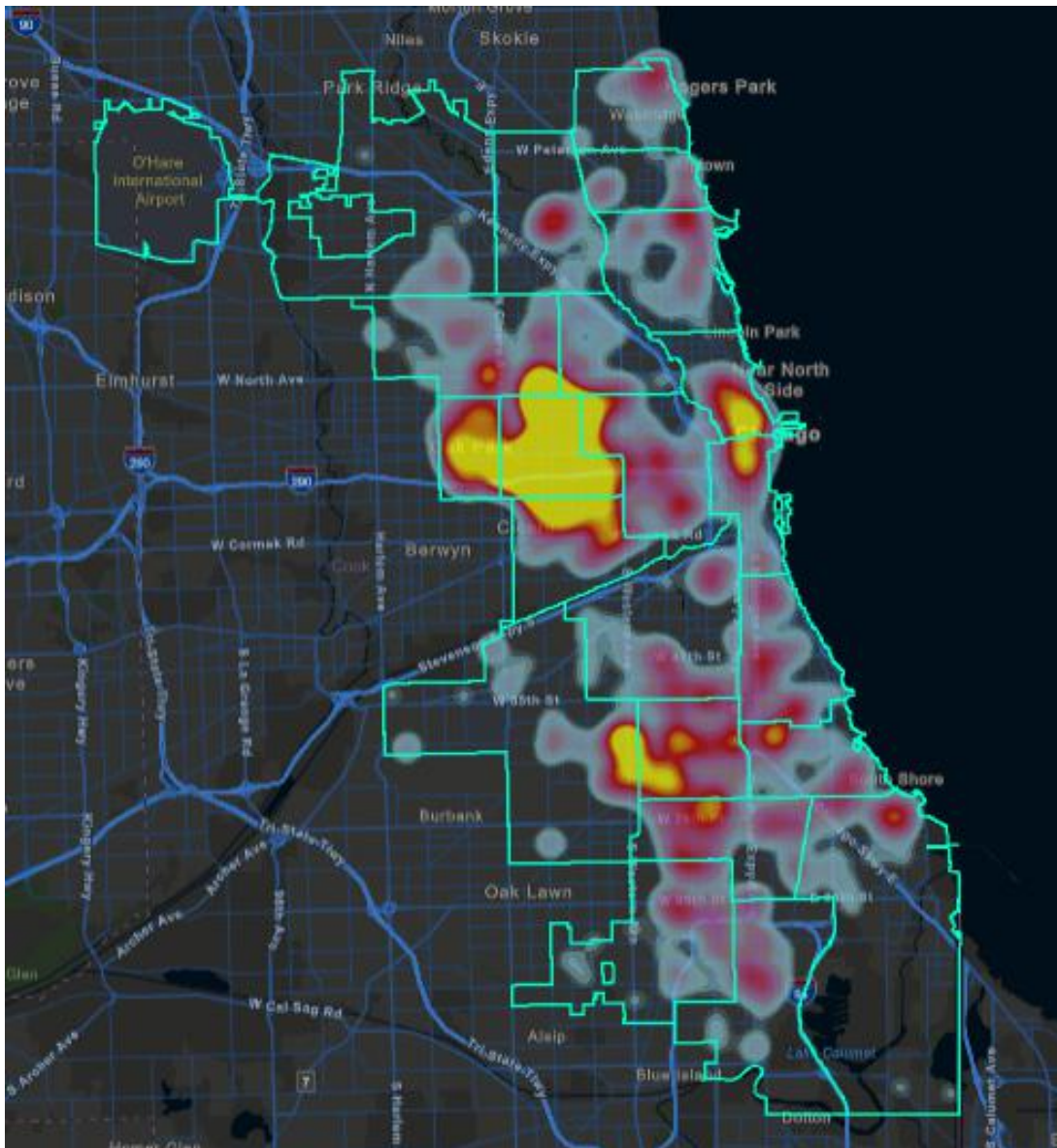
2022

In 2021, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) classified 4,848 incidents with the recovery of evidence as narcotic cases. After submission to the Illinois State Police (ISP) Crime Laboratory for testing and analysis, 4,317 of the seized items tested positive for the presence of fentanyl.

These results confirm the prevalence of fentanyl in the illicit marketplace in Chicago which is one of the primary sources of opioids in the Chicago HIDTA area of responsibility. Of the 4,317 evidence submissions to the ISP laboratory that tested positive for fentanyl, a mixture of heroin and fentanyl accounted for 2,655 items (62%) and 1,074 (38%) were fentanyl-only.

Submissions to the ISP lab from the 4,848 CPD narcotics incidents that contained heroin-only items was 36, less than 1% of the total. Other substances found to be mixed with fentanyl or FRS include cocaine and methamphetamine. Opioid traffickers are commonly involved in the sale or possession of other illicit substances. Other evidence seized in opioid cases included cannabis, cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA, other opioids, and Phencyclidine (PCP). Non-narcotic seizures in opioid-related cases included 30 firearms and cash

CPD 2021 Opioid Seizures



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Gang Related Data

2022

The year 2021 was the deadliest in Chicago in a quarter-century. Chicago continues to experience extraordinary amounts of gun violence daily, however, the surrounding suburbs also are impacted. In 2021, there were 1,087 homicides in all of Cook County with 1,002 of these gun-related. That is the first time the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office has seen more than 1,000 homicides since 1994.

Violence in Chicago increased in 2021 compared to 2020 with homicides up 3 percent with 794 homicides in 2021 compared to 771 in 2020. Shooting incidents also increased with 3,557 in 2021 compared to 3,252 in 2020, a 9 percent increase. These shooting incidents resulted in 340 more people being shot in 2021 compared to 2020 in Chicago.

The Chicago Police district with the highest concentration of murders and shooting incidents in 2021 was the 011th District with 105 murders and 474 shooting incidents. These acts of violence account for 13 percent of the murders and shooting incidents in the entire city. The 011th District is inundated with open-air drug markets which are controlled by violent street gangs. The below heat map depicts the concentration of both street gangs and opioids in this part of Chicago.

Top Gang Factions with Opioid Related Arrests

Traveling Vice Lords (TVL): Chicago Ave

Traveling Vice Lords (TVL): SUWU

Four Corner Hustlers (FCH): Fat Shorty Gang (FSG)

Black Souls: Homan and Walnut

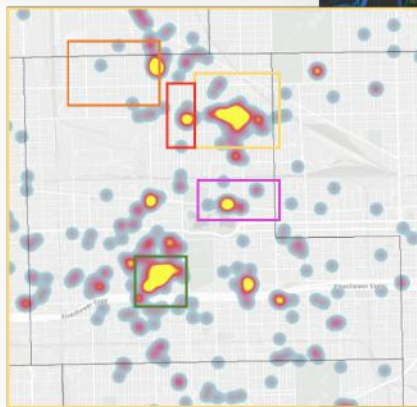
Traveling Vice Lords (TVL): Coco Cornell Gang (CCG)

42%
of all narcotics
cases are from
the 11th District

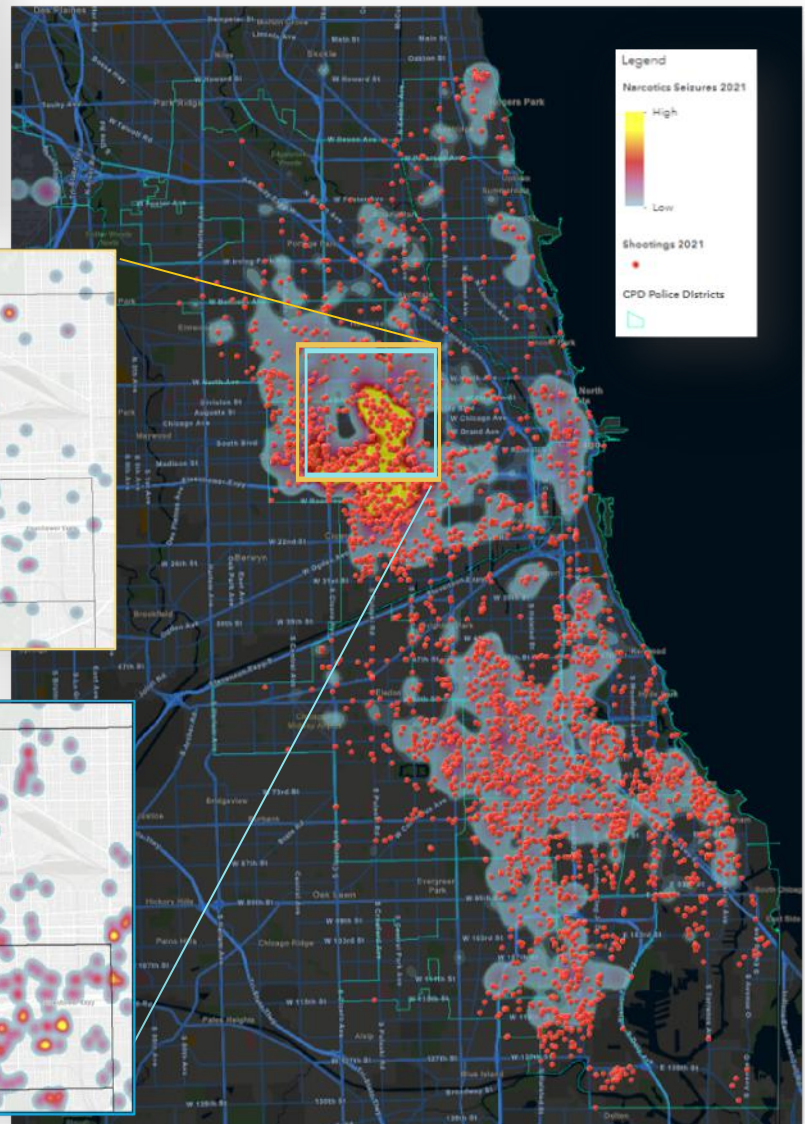
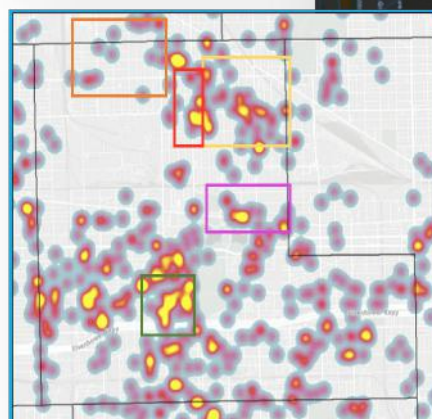
56%
of those were
suspect opioid

The 11th District
alone accounted
for
13% of
homicides and
shootings for all
of Chicago

District 11 Opioid Arrests



District 11 Shootings



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Novel Substance and 2022 Outlook

2022

Novel Substances

Efforts have been made to curb the production of illicit fentanyl and FRSs by restricting the chemical precursors and adding substances such as buprenorphine and metonitazene under Schedule I. FRSs and novel substances pose an increased risk of overdose for users. The increased use of high potency synthetic substances raises the risk of a fatal overdose by limiting the ability of Naloxone to work.

Fentanyl or an FRS was detected alongside novel substance related deaths. Xylazine, commonly referred to as "tranq", is used in combination with fentanyl in attempt to recreate the euphoric feeling of heroin. Overdoses related to xylazine and fentanyl are further complicated by xylazine's continued respiratory depression after the Naloxone administration. There is not a specific antidote for the effects of xylazine.

Metonitazene

53 Deaths

- first death in Cook County February 2021
- a synthetic benzimidazole substance abused for its opioid like effects
- about 20% stronger than fentanyl

Para-Fluorofentanyl

75 Deaths

- first death in Cook County 2014
- analogue of fentanyl
- made clandestinely in Mexico
- about 30% stronger than fentanyl

Xylazine

129 Deaths

- first death in Cook County December 2018
- used in veterinary medicine as a sedative
- commonly referred to "tranq"
- users reported open lesions on their bodies

2022 Outlook

It is expected that overdoses and overdose deaths will continue to be a public health and public safety challenge in the Chicago HIDTA AOR in 2022. One key factor is that Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) no longer have to rely solely on organically grown heroin. By purchasing precursor chemicals from India and China, cartels can produce highly profitable synthetic opioids such as fentanyl or FRS in labs based in Mexico. By producing fentanyl themselves, Mexican DTO's maximize profits, eliminate the need to transport bulk heroin from other countries, and essentially control the market.

A serious aspect of the overdose death epidemic is that illicit drug manufacturers continue to produce fentanyl analogs to exploit loopholes in federal scheduling regulations. To prevent the creation of new fentanyl analogs, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has recommended the permanent scheduling of all fentanyl-related substances. This recommendation is now being considered by Congress. Unfortunately, many analogs are even more dangerous than fentanyl. Fentanyl and its analogs have become synonymous with the overdose epidemic, the presence of fentanyl or a FRS combined with other drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, adds another layer of complexity to the opioid crisis.

In 2021, there were 3,013 overdose deaths in Illinois. Of these, 1,779 involved an opioid and another substance. The polydrug mixture of fentanyl with psychostimulants, benzodiazepine, and other substances will contribute to the devastating number of fatal opioid overdoses in the region. Drug traffickers seeking to maximize profit by either intentional compounding or unintentional contamination of fentanyl with other drugs and opioid users seeking a more potent high by using fentanyl in combination with other drugs will continue to be key factors in the overdose epidemic.



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