



MEDIA RELEASE

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Knox County Forensic Center Releases 2019 Drug-Related Death Report

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Today, the Knox County Regional Forensic Center released its 2019 Drug-Related Death Report for Knox and Anderson Counties. The report includes data on drug-related death cases the Center investigated from 2010-2019 and is shared to advance the discussion regarding addiction.

“If you don’t know someone directly suffering from substance dependency, you likely know someone indirectly affected by it,” said Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs. “I am grateful our community is coming together to address the issue and stigma of addiction.”

The number of drug-related deaths in Knox County decreased 9.8%, though raw data collected during the first two quarters of 2020 projects a surge in the opposite direction. In Anderson County, drug overdose deaths dropped 11.6%.

“The 2019 data shows the most drug-related deaths occurred for people 45-54 years old, but the sharpest increase was in people age 35-44,” said Chris Thomas, Senior Director of the Knox County Regional Forensic Center. “Fortunately, the sharpest decreases were people 15-34.”

In 2019, men continued to be disproportionately affected by drug overdose compared to women and, in Knox County, the ratio of black to white overdose deaths is 1 to 9.

As outlined in the full text of the report, the data is drawn only from drug-related deaths in Knox and Anderson Counties between 2010 and 2019 that were investigated by the medical examiner. Some key findings from the report include:

- Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues (synthetic opioids) were the most frequently identified drugs in drug-related deaths in 2019.
- Polypharmacy, which is when more than one drug is responsible for death, was involved in 69% of Knox County’s and 71% of Anderson County’s overdose deaths.
- The five most common drugs identified in drug-related deaths were synthetic opioids, methamphetamine, alcohol/ethanol, heroin and cocaine.
- Prescription opioid-related deaths continue to decrease in the Regional Forensic Center jurisdictions.

The full report is available [here](#).

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