



DATA SHORTS

Substance Intoxication Deaths State of Maryland, 2007 to 2013

In June 2014, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene released the report “Drug and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths in Maryland, 2013” (<http://dhmh.maryland.gov/data/Documents/2013%20final%20intoxication%20report.pdf>). The report contained data about the alarming increase in these deaths in the past two years. This Data Short presents data taken from that report on this important issue.

After a four year period (2008-2011) during which the total number of unintentional deaths from substance intoxication in Maryland fluctuated between 600 and 700, there have been significant increases in the numbers of these deaths in both 2012 and 2013. As shown in the first graph, the number of such Maryland deaths totaled 799 in 2012. In 2013, the number increased to 858, exceeding 800 for the first time since 2007. The increase in 2012 was nearly 20% over 2011; in 2013, the increase was more than 7% over 2012. Should this trend continue into 2014, the total number of deaths is likely to continue to increase by a minimum of 10% over 2013.

The second graph examines the specific substances that were cited by the Medical Examiner as being involved in deaths, including as underlying or contributing causes, for the years 2007 to 2013. It contains information that is also very concerning. (Note that, because some deaths involved more than one substance, the sums of these deaths annually will exceed the total number of deaths for that year.) While deaths involving prescription opioids, cocaine, and benzodiazepines have remained relatively steady over the last seven years, deaths involving heroin have increased by almost 90% between 2011 and 2013. While there is an increase in alcohol-involved deaths over the same two year period, this increase results from deaths that involve multiple substances (e.g., heroin and alcohol) rather than deaths involving alcohol alone.

The final graph examines these deaths over the last two years by age. Two age groups, individuals aged 25 to 34 and individuals 55 and over, accounted for the majority of the observed increases. Deaths among those aged 25 to 34 increased by 28%; among those over 55, the increase was nearly 12%.

In 2012 and 2013, the number of deaths due to substance intoxication has been steadily increasing. The increases have been greatest among young adults (ages 25-34). Deaths involving heroin have increased much more rapidly than those involving any other substances. There are several initiatives underway to attempt to reverse these trends; more information is available at:

http://adaa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OVERDOSE_PREVENTION/SitePages/Home.aspx.

