



# Crime Prevention Bulletin

February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
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## Arizona Fights Opioid Epidemic; A Report Card

Written by Advisory Committee on Public Safety member, Timothy Dickman.

In March of 2020, the Paradise Valley Police Department will be leading a local campaign to raise awareness on the Opioid Crisis which will include a Coffee with Cop, Citizen Safety Forum, and promotion of Black Balloon Day for families or individuals affected by overdose death. Each is an opportunity to learn about resources and responses made to address opioid use disorder in Arizona.



**Event:** Coffee with a Cop

**Date:** Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 7:30am-8:30am

**Location:** Police Station at 6433 E. Lincoln Dr., Paradise Valley, Arizona 85253

**Description:** A specialist will discuss State responses to address opioid use disorder in Arizona.

**Event:** Citizen Safety Forum 2020

**Date:** Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 5pm-7:30pm

**Location:** Paradise Valley United Methodist Church at 4455 E. Lincoln Dr., Paradise Valley, Arizona 85253

**Description:** Refreshments, keynote speakers, and presentations on the opioid crisis & drug cases.

**Registration:** [MaricopaCountyAttorney.org/CSF](http://MaricopaCountyAttorney.org/CSF)

**Event:** Black Balloon Day

**Date:** Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Location:** Various locations

**Description:** Thousands of families across the US will tie a black balloon outside their house to symbolize a loved one who is struggling with addiction or has died from an overdose.

**Did you know that on June 5, 2017 Governor Ducey declared a Statewide health emergency on the opioid epidemic?** From June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 as astonishing 3,935 suspected opioid deaths have occurred, and another 32,900 suspected opioid overdoses have been reported statewide. In addition, 20,893 Naloxone doses have been administered during this same time period in Arizona! Naloxone is a life-saving drug that is given to opioid overdosed individuals that immediately reverses the effect of the opioid in the body. The opioid epidemic impacts nearly all areas of Arizona including Paradise Valley and Scottsdale. However, some of the State initiatives are beginning to pay off. They include:

- ✓ In 2018, the medical licensing board and the pharmacy licensing board (with many other provider constituencies) published opioid prescribing guidelines. This was a broad cooperative and is believed to have positively impacted drug diversion from legitimate prescriptions.
- ✓ Final rules for licensed health care facilities went into effect in March of 2018;
- ✓ Opioid reporting rules were finalized in April of 2018 to monitor the crisis in real time;
- ✓ Sober Living licensing was implemented and went into effect in July 2019

Most of these initiatives were identified and were part of a fully implemented “Opioid Action Plan” that was completed in June 2018. That action plan identified five strategic goals statewide. Each of these goals had measurable steps assigned. They were:

(1) **Reduce opioid deaths** by enacting legislation that reduces illicit acquisition and diversion of opioids promoting safe prescribing and dispensing, decreasing the risk of opioid use disorder and improving access to treatment.

(2) **Improve prescribing and dispensing practices** by establishing a regulatory board work group to identify prescribing trends and promote enforcement issues. This also included establishing a task force to identify specific improvements that should be made to enhance the Arizona Controlled Substance Monitoring Program.

(3) **Reduce illicit acquisition and diversion of opioids** by meeting with leaders of law enforcement and first responder agencies to expand diversion programs and assist the DEA.

(4) **Improve access to treatment.** The State is now requiring all undergraduate and graduate medical education programs to incorporate evidence-based pain management and substance abuse disorder treatment into curriculums. The state also created a call-in line resource to provide consultation to prescribers seeking advice about prescribing opioids and caring for patients with opioid abuse disorder. A work group was established to identify, utilize and build upon Arizona’s peer recovery support. The State also convened an insurance parity task force to research and provide recommendations regarding parity and standardization. The federal government was engaged to outline necessary federal changes to assist with enforcement. Specific programs were implemented to increase access to naloxone and similar lifesaving drugs and to increase access to therapy for individuals with opioid use disorder while incarcerated.

(5) **Prevent opioid use disorder and increase patient and public awareness.** Public service announcements were initiated to educate patients, providers, and the public regarding opioid use and drugs like Naloxone. Also, the State has implemented a youth prevention task force to identify and implement evidence based, emerging and best practice substance abuse prevention including early identification curriculum and expanded after school opportunities and identify resource needs.

**So, how are we doing now?** The State of Arizona tracks a metric called the average morphine milligram equivalent that is prescribed, which is a measure of the amount of opioids legally prescribed monthly. That metric has declined from 62 milligrams in July 2017 to 45.4 milligrams in June of 2019. Clearly the amount of prescribing has dropped substantially. But what does this really mean? The number of newly prescribed for the first-time patients for opioids has dropped an astonishing 95% during that same time period. That translates into a decrease of 26.6 million fewer opioid pills from July 2018 to July 2019 in Arizona!

Arizona continues to have a large problem that goes beyond drug diversion of prescriptions and beyond opioids in particular. It includes illegal morphine, heroin, oxycodone, fentanyl and methamphetamine. Most drug overdoses and deaths today now are caused by combination products of opioids mixed with other dangerous substances. This includes heroin mixed with methamphetamine or oxycodone mixed with methamphetamine to name a few examples. And there is a high incidence of fentanyl in many drugs purchased illegally. Much of the fentanyl comes to Arizona from Mexico or Canada and originates in China. Clearly the fight against illegal drugs continues.

According to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the majority of abused prescription drugs were obtained from family and friends, often from within the home medicine cabinet. The Town of Paradise Valley offers a 24/7 drop-off box for the public to safely dispose of expired or unused prescriptions located within the police station at 6433 E. Lincoln Dr., Paradise Valley, Arizona 85253.

If you, a family member or friend needs assistance related to opioids, help is available. The State provides a free 24/7 call resource called the Opioid Assistance and Referral Line (**OAR Line**) for both doctors and the public. The line was implemented in partnership with Arizona's Poison and Drug Information Center. The number to save, and share, is **888-688-4222**.



Additional support and resources are available from [www.Overdose-Lifeline.org](http://www.Overdose-Lifeline.org)

*Source: All data provided are from the Arizona Division of Public Health.*

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