



Overdose Fatality Review Teams (OFRTs) in New Jersey:

**An Overdose Prevention Initiative,
Strengthening Public Health &
Law Enforcement Partnership
in Ocean County and Monmouth County**





Heroin Response Strategy

Investing in partnerships to build safe and healthy communities

The mission of the HRS is to reduce fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses by developing and sharing information about heroin and other opioids across agencies and disciplines and by offering evidence-based intervention strategies.

The Public Health and Public Safety Network

The Public Health and Public Safety Network (PHPSN) includes one Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) and one Public Health Analyst (PHA) in each HRS State. This network fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration and enhances interstate and intrastate information sharing.

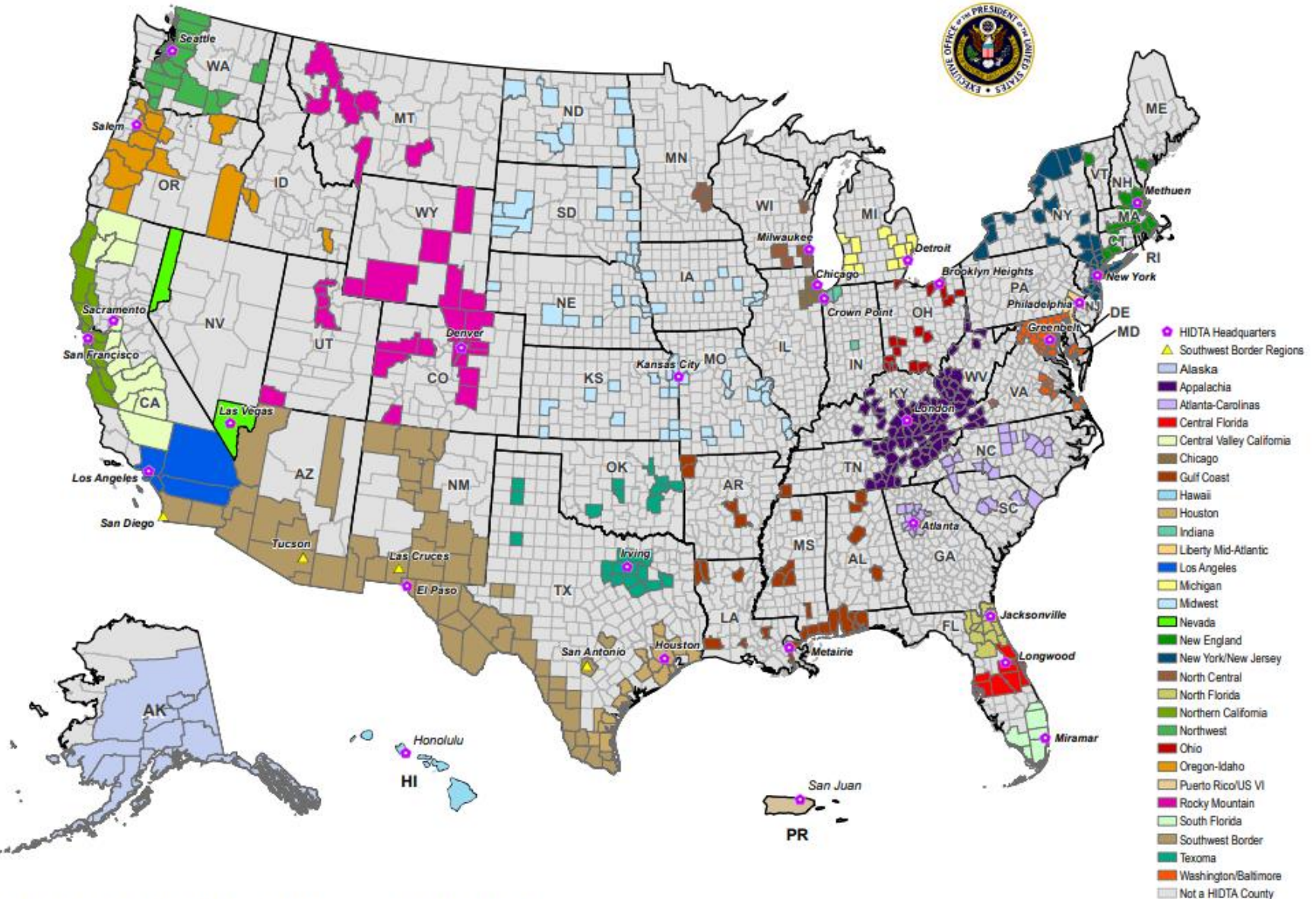
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High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program Counties

as of May 2018



Overdose Fatality Review Team (OFRT)

- An initiative established by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), NY/NJ High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) and the NJ Department of Health, Office of Local Public Health (OLPH).
- Multi-agency/multi-disciplinary team assembled at jurisdiction level to conduct **confidential** reviews of multiple individual overdose death cases.
 - **Allows public health authorities to receive information and expert consultation from a wide array of stakeholders while preserving the confidentiality of protected information, including personal health information (PHI)**
- **2 Operational Teams in NJ**
 - Monmouth County
 - Ocean County

Goals

- ❖ **TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS BY**
 - Identifying missed opportunities for prevention and gaps in system
 - Building working relationships between local stakeholders on Overdose prevention
 - Recommending policies, programs, laws, etc. to prevent Overdose deaths
 - Informing local overdose & opioid misuse prevention strategy

→ **Modeled on existing mortality review teams for children, fetal/infant, domestic violence & fatality review team in Maryland**

Monmouth County Overdose Fatality Review Team (OFRT)

A Countywide Collaboration



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How Did We Get Here...

- Recognizing staggering overdose deaths plaguing our county, we were approached by DEA/HIDTA to establish an Overdose Fatality Review Team.
- Conceptual meeting in January 2017.
- Concept was simple: Utilize the Cecil County, Maryland model.
 - Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams that critically analyze individual cases of drug overdoses to identify risk factors and missed opportunities for intervention, and to make policy and programmatic recommendations to prevent future overdose deaths.

What are we looking to accomplish?

- ▣ Promote cooperation and coordination among agencies involved in the investigation of drug overdose deaths or in providing services to surviving family members.
- ▣ Develop an understanding of the causes and incidence of drug overdose deaths in the county.
- ▣ Develop plans for and recommend changes within the agencies represented on the local team to prevent drug overdose deaths.
- ▣ Advise the Department on changes to law, policy, or practice, including the use of devices that are programmed to dispense medications on a schedule or similar technology, to prevent drug overdose deaths.

Objectives of the MCOFRT

- ❑ Establish policies and procedures for pooling all available information on overdose decedents from local, county, and state government agencies, law enforcement, private entities, etc. that maintain confidentiality.
- ❑ Conduct multidisciplinary, multi-agency reviews of all available information about a decedent.
- ❑ Identify points of contact between deceased individuals and healthcare, social services, criminal justice, and other systems.
- ❑ Identify the specific factors that put individuals at risk for drug overdose within their particular jurisdiction.
- ❑ Improve coordination and collaboration between member agencies/entities.
- ❑ Make recommendations to local, county and state authorities for changes to statute, regulation or agency policies and procedures to further the development of overdose prevention initiatives.

Monmouth County Fatal Overdose Review Team

Team consists of:

- Monmouth County Health Department
- Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
- Medical Examiner's Office
- Monmouth County Correctional Institution
- Monmouth County Board of Social Services
- Centra State, RWJBarnabas, Hackensack-Meridian Representatives
- Monmouth County EMS
- Mental Health & Substance Abuse Providers
- Monmouth County Mental Health
- New Jersey Department of Health
- DEA/HIDTA

Case Reviews

- ▣ Meetings are held once a month at the Monmouth County Health Department.
- ▣ Three to four weeks prior to each review, three to five decedents names/DOB's are emailed via secure email to participating agencies.
 - ▣ Participants are requested to search their indices for any information related to the decedents and bring relevant data to the case review.
 - ▣ Participants are requested to utilize a reporting form and complete specific areas prior to the meeting.
- ▣ All participants are required to sign in at the beginning of the meeting;
 - ▣ ***Confidentiality Agreements must be on file.***
- ▣ Chair calls the meeting to order.
- ▣ Introduction of attendees.
- ▣ Team members are reminded that they are not permitted to disclose any and all information reviewed by the Overdose Fatality Review Team.
- ▣ Each decedent is identified by initials during the review of cases.
- ▣ If an agency has no information to provide, they are still encouraged to attend for open discussions.
- ▣ Participants are then called upon, depending on the reporting form sections, to provide insight of a particular decedent.
- ▣ Open discussion and questions may be asked by participants presenting data related to a particular decedent.
- ▣ Upon completion of the review, all notes and reporting forms are submitted by each participant to the Chair and maintained at the Monmouth County Health Department in a locked secure file.
 - ▣ ***Participants are not permitted to leave with their notes/reporting forms.***



Challenges

- Convincing organizations to “embrace” the concept;
- Convincing organizations to share confidential information on decedents;
 - DCP&P, Parole, Probation
- No current legislation in New Jersey that would require agencies to participate.
- So many cases, so little time.
- Lack of funding

Team Success

- Group Collaboration
- Increased Communication
- Working towards a common goal
- Networking

Confidentiality

- All participants are required to sign a Monmouth County OFRT Confidentiality Agreement.
 - This form was reviewed and approved by Monmouth County Counsel and County Administrator.
- All Confidentiality Agreements are maintained on file at the Monmouth County Health Department in a secure file cabinet.

RECAP

- Addressing the opiate issue from a public health prospective is critical;
- Case review of decedents is critical to identify trends and opportunities for intervention;
- This is a long term multi year approach;
- No single strategy will solve the opioid crisis, a team approach is necessary;
- Networking across agencies is a benefit to creating a ODFRT in your jurisdiction, can be useful in other areas;
- Working together with stakeholders to address the opioid fatalities is critical for successful interventions.