



Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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Risk of Overdose Death Following Release from Prison or Jail

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Background

In response to the sharp increase in opioid-related deaths across the state, Governor O'Malley directed the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to review opioid-related deaths post release.

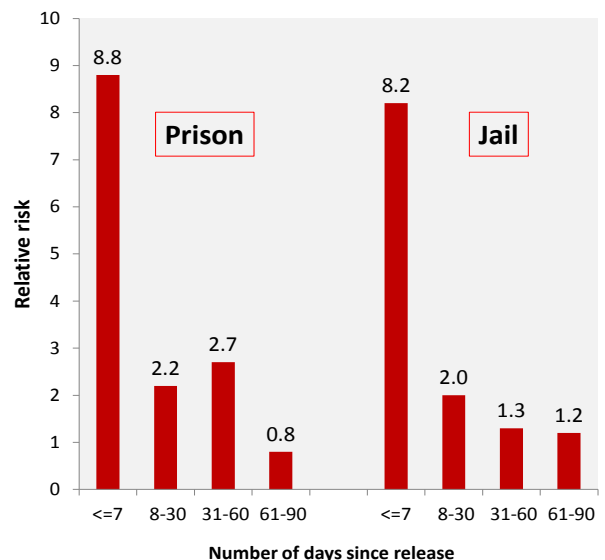
Current Update

DHMH and DPSCS matched data on overdoses from 2007 to 2013. This data match found that 39 individuals (out of 94,569 released from prison or the Baltimore City jail from 2007 to 2013) died of an overdose within the first seven days of release. For the prison population, the risk of overdose was 8.8 times greater in the first week after release, compared to the period of three months to a year after release. Notably, a majority of deaths happened after one year, potentially as a result of discontinued treatment.

For the Baltimore city jail population, the risk of overdose was 8.2 times greater in the first week after release, compared to the period of three months to a year after release. Heroin was involved in nearly 90 percent of deaths in the first week after release.

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services manages a robust treatment system within its facilities. The risk of dying as a result of opioid overdoses in the week

Relative Risk* of Dying of an Unintentional Opioid Overdose by Time Since Release from Prison or Jail, Maryland, 2007-2013.



*Compared to deaths occurring 91-365 days following release

following release reflects these individuals' high risk of vulnerability upon reentry to the community.

Reducing Overdose Deaths After Release from Prison or Jail

While the overall number of overdose deaths shortly post-release is low, the risk of an overdose was substantially higher in this period compared to later after release. Factors that may explain this finding include reduced drug tolerance following an incarceration period when drugs were largely unavailable, or events following release that involved the use of multiple drugs. There are major efforts to reduce overdose deaths after release from prison or jail:

- ⇒ **Increasing Treatment.** The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services recently released a report which reviews the availability of treatment and recovery services in its facilities and includes recommendations to improve access to treatment. The Department continues to focus on increasing access to treatment for inmates, and has increased access to drug treatment in their facilities by 23% since fiscal year 2008.
- ⇒ **Educating Inmates Upon Release.** As part of a statewide public awareness campaign, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is distributing opioid overdose prevention materials in correctional facilities and treatment programs that serve the inmate population. The materials include information on how to identify and respond to an opioid overdose. The materials also include instructions to call 211 for information on drug treatment options and a SAMHSA toolkit for patients and family members.
- ⇒ **Working with the Judicial System.** The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, the Office of Problem Solving Courts, and the Judicial Information Systems are working together to analyze data relating to court-ordered drug treatment, and to identify innovative ways to support drug offenders in treatment.