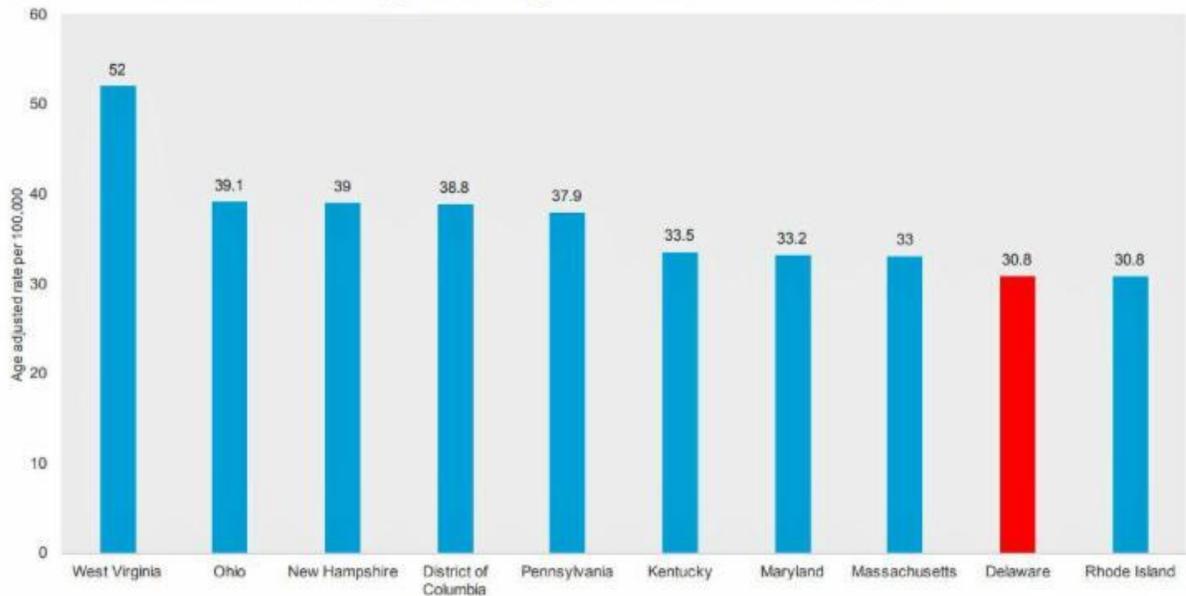


States with the Highest Drug Overdose Death Rate, 2016



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

NEWS:

Report, State Legislator Make Recommendations for Improving Delaware's Substance Abuse Response

AUGUST 4, 2018 – A research team from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Bloomberg American Health Initiative is recommending four strategies to strengthen Delaware's response for dealing with opioid addiction.

"Delaware is in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis related to opioids," stated the [recently released report](#).

According to the Division of Forensic Science (DFS), 345 Delawareans died from overdoses in 2017. That total was up about 12 percent from 2016 when Delaware's overdose rate tied for ninth among all states at 30.8 deaths per 100,000. (See graphic.)

Through July 23 of this year, 145 people have died from suspected overdoses in Delaware, according to DFS.

The report proposes four major strategies for the state:

- Increase the capacity of the treatment system.
- Engage high-risk populations in treatment.
- Create incentives for quality care.
- Use data to guide reform and monitor progress.

Acting on a request made by Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker early last year, the team of researchers and clinicians crafted their recommendations after meeting with state agency officials, behavioral health organizations, treatment providers, and patient advocates. The group also studied data on Delaware's epidemic as well as the experiences of other states and localities.



State Rep. Ruth Briggs King

State Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, said the report contained no surprises, confirming the issues previously cited by individuals and families who have been battling the epidemic for many years. She added that the "silo mentality" of Delaware's state agencies has not worked to fully meet the numerous complications created by widespread opioid addiction.

"We have been raising concerns and attempting to address these challenges in a piecemeal fashion, or with legislation that is well-intentioned, but has not been comprehensive," Rep. Briggs King said. "Of equal concern is that the state budget has not reflected the depth of the epidemic, failing to include appropriations sufficient to address it."

Rep. Briggs King suggested several initiatives to improve the situation:

- Actively recruit health care providers qualified to work with addicted Delawareans; and review and increase current reimbursement rates for such services.
- Coordinate agencies and addiction service providers using an updated, well-maintained information system.
- Improve treatment and recovery services for those incarcerated or in detention centers.

Task the Department of Health and Social Services to develop housing and employment support for those in recovery.