



“Committed Service and Responsiveness”

OFFICE OF THE CORONER COUNTY OF CHESTER

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For Immediate Release

Chester County Coroner’s Office Mid-Year Report on Fatal Drug Overdoses

July 30, 2018

The Chester County Coroner’s Office has released data on deaths due to drug overdose in Chester County as of June 30, 2018. A total of 59 people died of a drug overdose during this period, with 57 deaths determined to be accidental and 2 due to suicide. Since the number of drug overdose deaths varies widely from month to month, the Coroner’s Office cautioned that it is not possible to accurately estimate a total for 2018 from these mid-year data.

The demographic profile of those who died of a drug overdose so far in 2018 is similar to that for 2017, with the affected population remaining predominantly white men in the 25-44 year age range.

Characteristic	2017 (N=153)	2018 YTD (N=59)
Age 25-44 years	47%	55.9%
Gender – Male	69.3%	76.3%
Race – White	91.5%	76.3%

Toxicological testing performed as part of the Coroner’s office investigations continued to find illicit synthetic opioids in the majority of drug-related deaths. Illicit synthetic opioids include fentanyl, fentanyl-related substances, and non-prescription synthetic opioids, with one or more of these substances documented in approximately 78% of deaths so far this year. Heroin was present in 43% and cocaine in 35% of deaths, often in combination with fentanyl. Data on drug overdose fatalities are reported to overdosefreepa.org and detailed information on demographics and all the drugs involved can be viewed at that site.

Chester County Coroner Christina VandePol, M.D., stated “Heroin continues to be replaced or mixed with more potent drugs like fentanyl, overwhelming the tolerance level of many of those who suffer from opioid addiction. Super-potent fentanyls like 3-methyl fentanyl are increasingly common and users may not know that’s what they’re getting. We know physicians are now prescribing fewer opioids which should result in fewer people becoming addicted. But right now we need to focus on access to medication-assisted treatment for those who already have substance abuse disorders.”

The Chester County Coroner’s Office remains committed to supporting law enforcement and providing answers for families and the community with a thorough medicolegal investigation of every suspected drug overdose death. Information on such deaths is reported on the Coroner’s Office website at chesco.org, as well as to Chester County Drug and Alcohol Services, the District Attorney’s Office, the Chester County and PA Departments of Health, and <http://www.overdosefreepa.org>.

Approved for Release

Christina VandePol, M.D.