

**Special Topic:
Considerations for Children and
Families Affected by Opioid Use**

Child Welfare Training Toolkit



National Center on
Substance Abuse
and Child Welfare

Acknowledgement

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National Center on
Substance Abuse
and Child Welfare

Learning Objectives

After completing this training,
child welfare workers will:

- Differentiate between different types of opioids and opioid analogs with knowledge of classifications, potency, and effects
- Identify physical indicators of opioid use including long-term physical and psychological effects
- Discuss risk factors and signs of opioid overdose with knowledge of current data trends
- Integrate harm reduction and opioid overdose prevention strategies to mitigate level of risk to children and families
- Recognize benefits of medication for opioid use disorder with knowledge of historical stigma, supporting evidence base for approved medications, and information on short- and long-term treatment options
- Understand special considerations for treatment of opioid use disorders before, during, and after pregnancy

Opioids



Opiates vs Opioids—What's the Difference?

Opiates

- Naturally Derived

Opioids

- Semisynthetic
- Synthetic

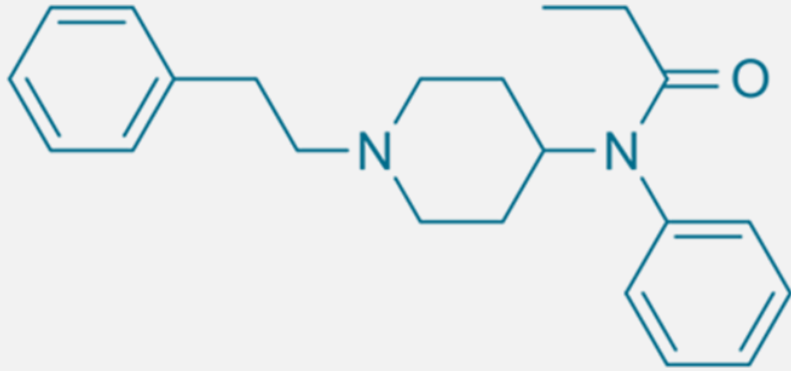
What Is Fentanyl?

**Highly potent
synthetic opioid**

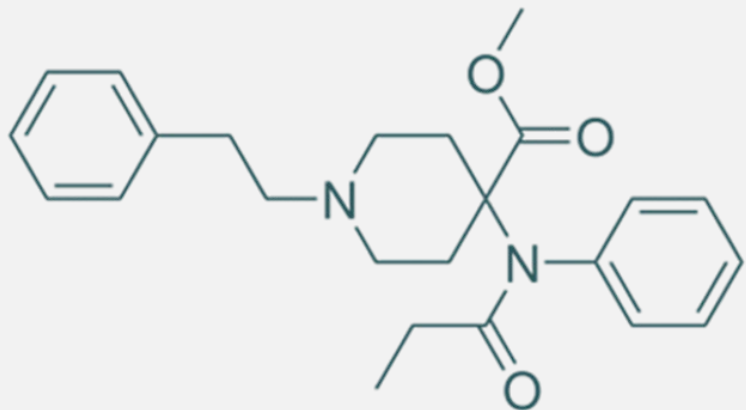
**Primarily used to treat
severe pain** in post-
operative hospital settings

**Schedule II-controlled
substance**

**100x more potent
than morphine**



Fentanyl VS Fentanyl Analogs



What's the Difference?

Similar in chemical structure but harder to detect

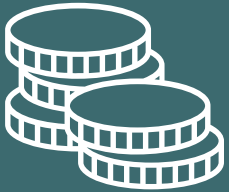
Variation in potency due to limited testing

Increase in types of fentanyl/fentanyl analogs in the U.S. drug market

- Carfentanil
- Acetylfentanyl
- Furanalyfentanyl
- Rainbow Fentanyl*

Illegal Manufacturing of Fentanyl

Higher potency and cheaper to produce compared to other opioids



U.S. drug supply primarily from **Mexico and China**

Increase in **intentional contamination** with other illicit drugs



Emerging Threat: Fentanyl Combined with Xylazine

- Xylazine is a powerful sedative
- Fentanyl-related deaths with xylazine detected increased by 276% between 2019-2022
- Prompting executive designation authority for the first time in U.S. history



How Opioids Affect the Brain and Nervous System

Spinal Cord

Brain Stem

Limbic System





Physical Signs of Opioid Use

| | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Euphoria | Elation | Sedation | Drowsiness | Nodding Off |
| Dry Mouth | Warm Flushing of the Skin | Heavy Sensation in Arms and Legs | Decelerated Breathing | Upset Stomach/ Diarrhea |
| Severe Itching | Scabs, Sores, Puncture Wounds | Depression (from drug wearing off) | Clouded Mental Functioning | Weight Loss/ Poor Hygiene |



Behavioral Signs of Opioid Use

**Doctor shopping
for prescriptions**

**Poor performance
at work or school**

**Unexplained
periods of absence**

**Stealing
prescriptions from
family or friends**

**Not fulfilling
personal
responsibilities**

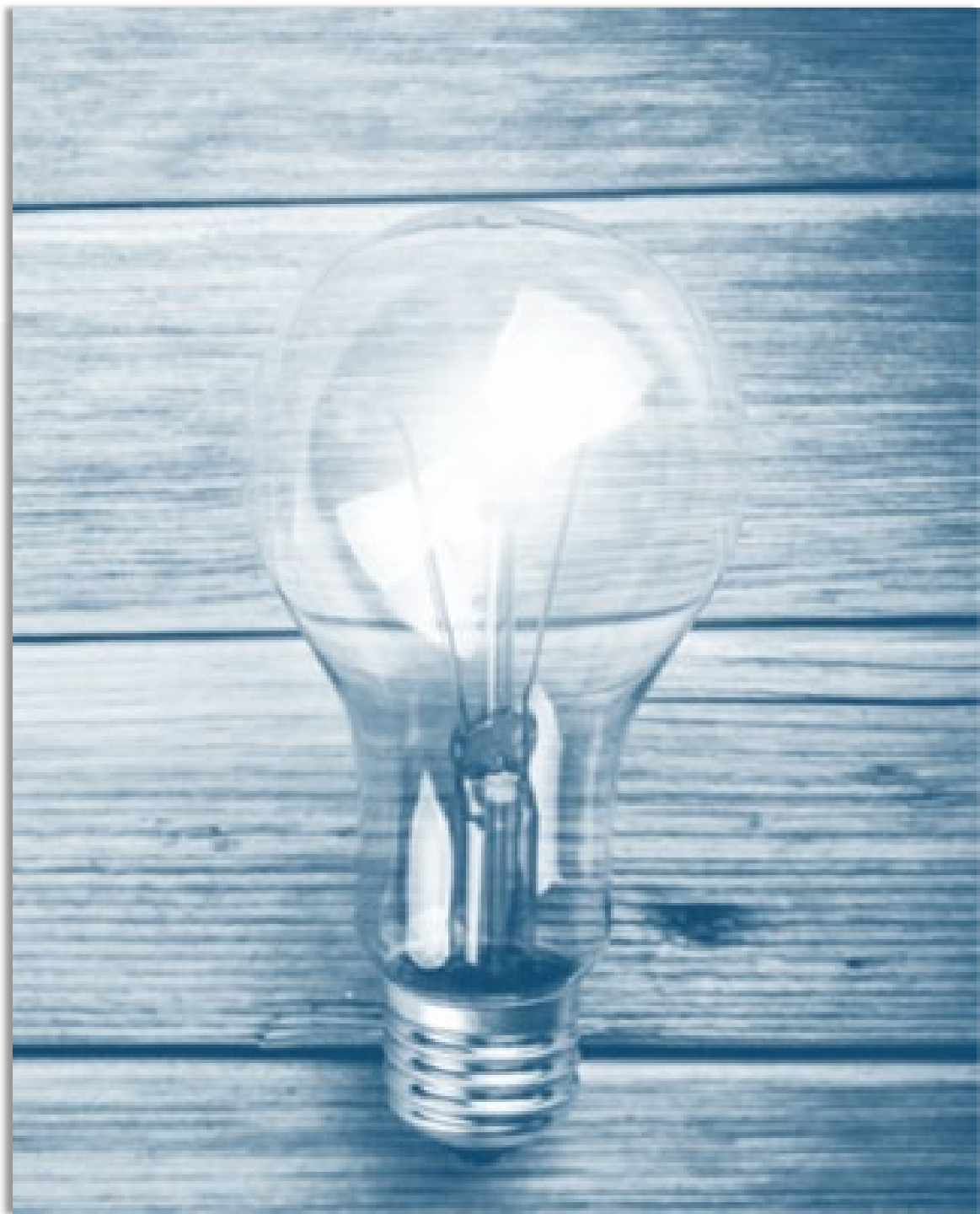
**Increased social
isolation**

Understanding the Psychological and Physical Effects of Opioid Use

Tolerance

Withdrawal

Addiction



Risk Factors for Opioid Overdose

Changes in tolerance levels

Mixing opioids with respiratory depressants

Mixing opioids with stimulants

History of chronic health conditions

History of past overdoses



Signs of an Opioid Overdose

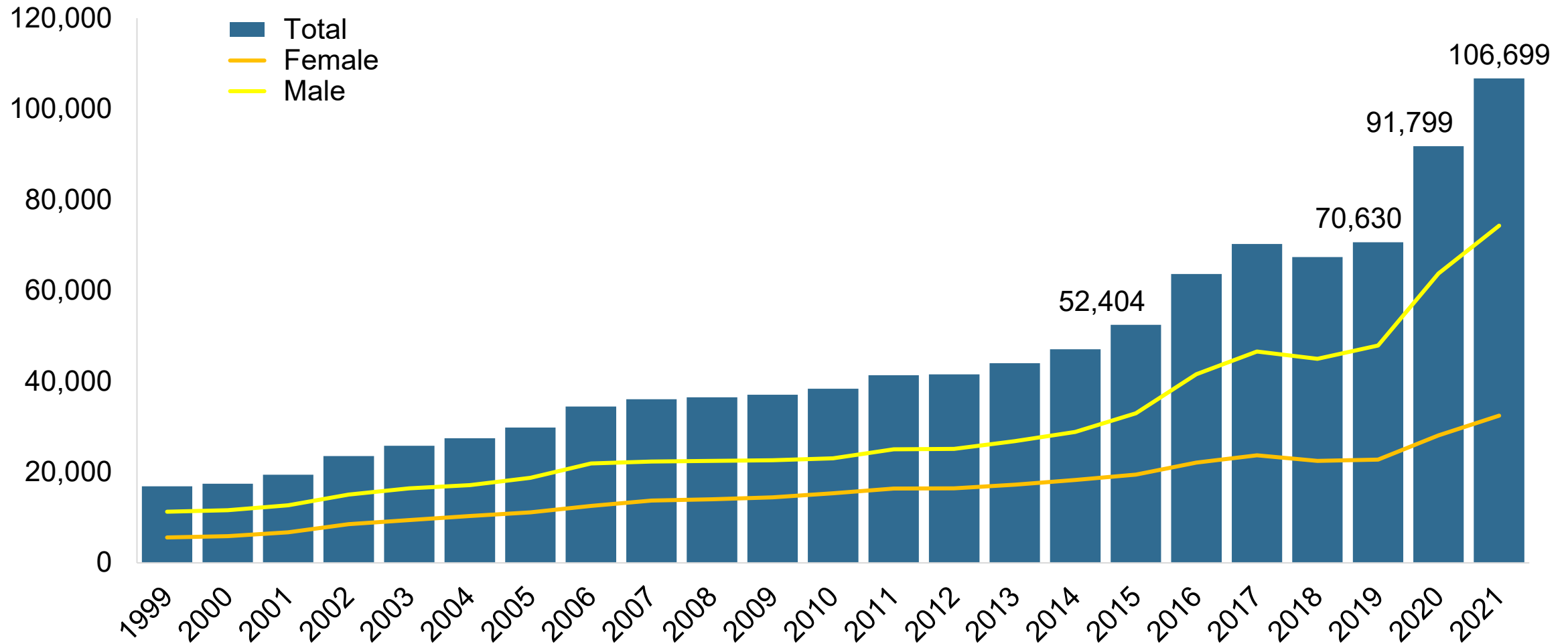


- Unconsciousness
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Faint heartbeat
- Vomiting
- Inability to speak
- Very small pupils
- Limp arms and legs
- Pale skin
- Purple lips and fingernails

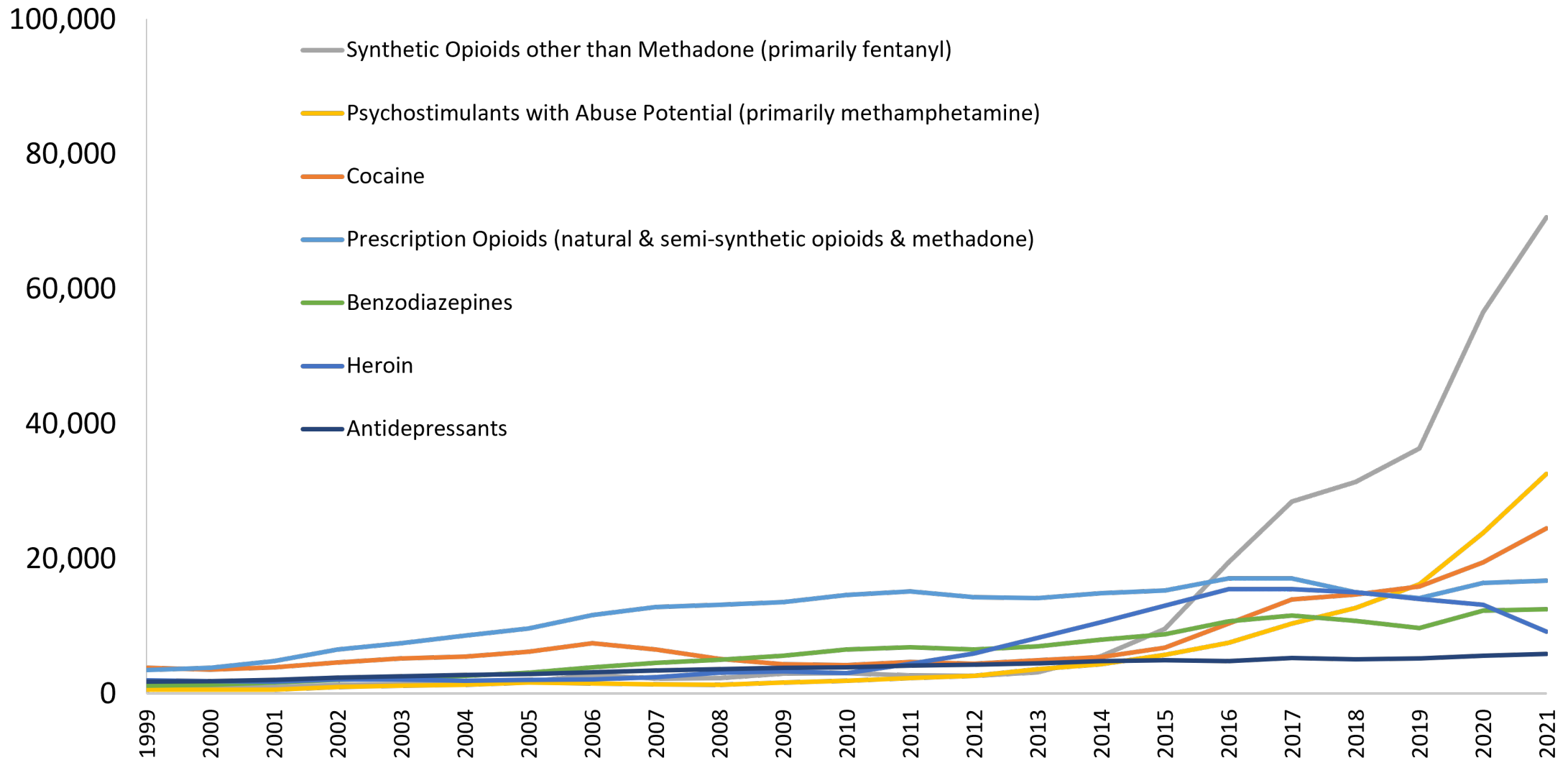
Drug Overdose Death Rates



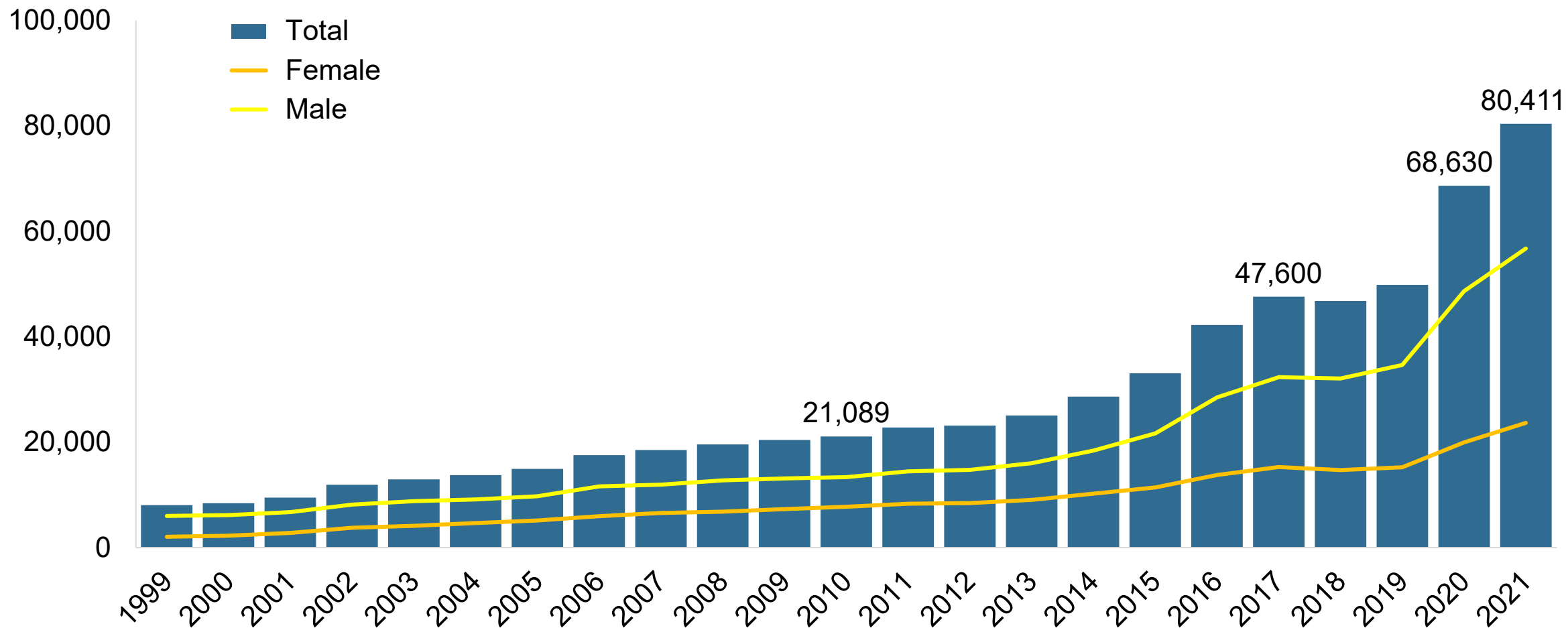
National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths, Number Among All Ages, by Gender, 1999-2021



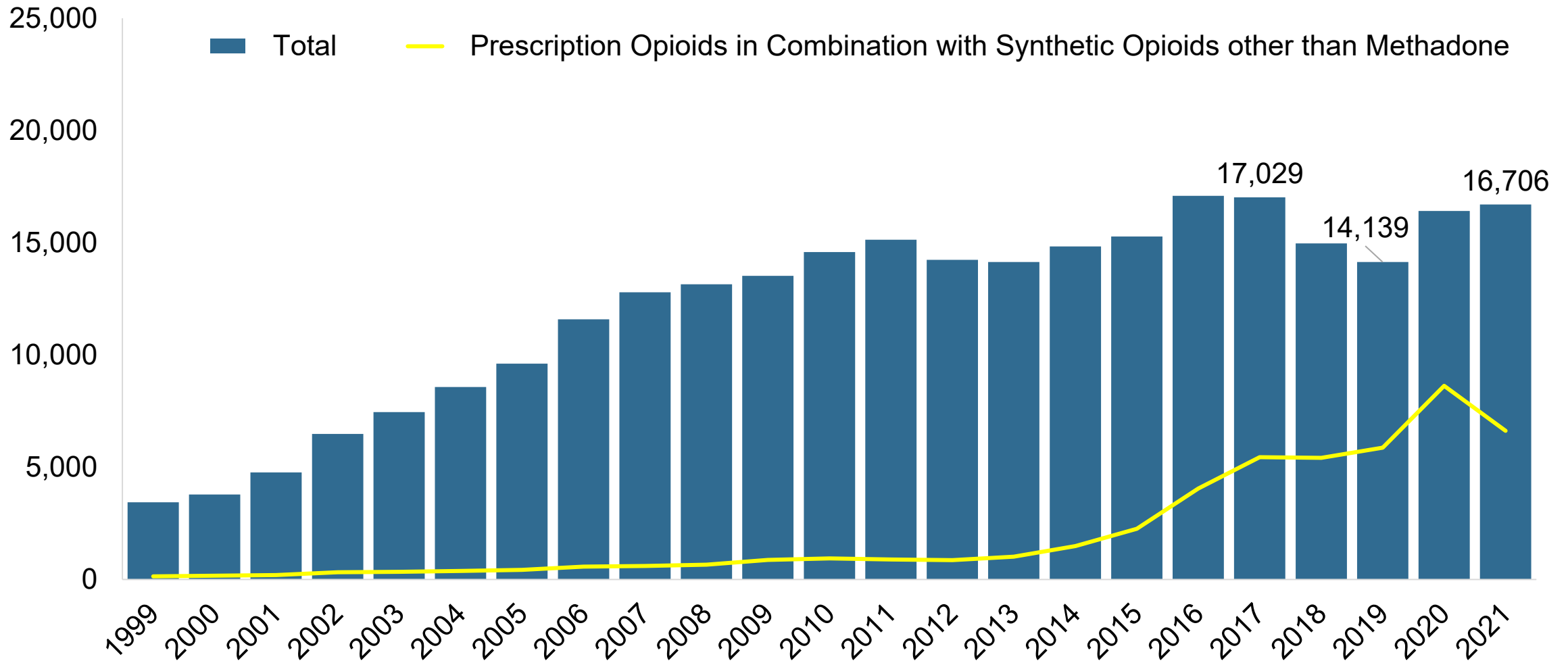
National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2021



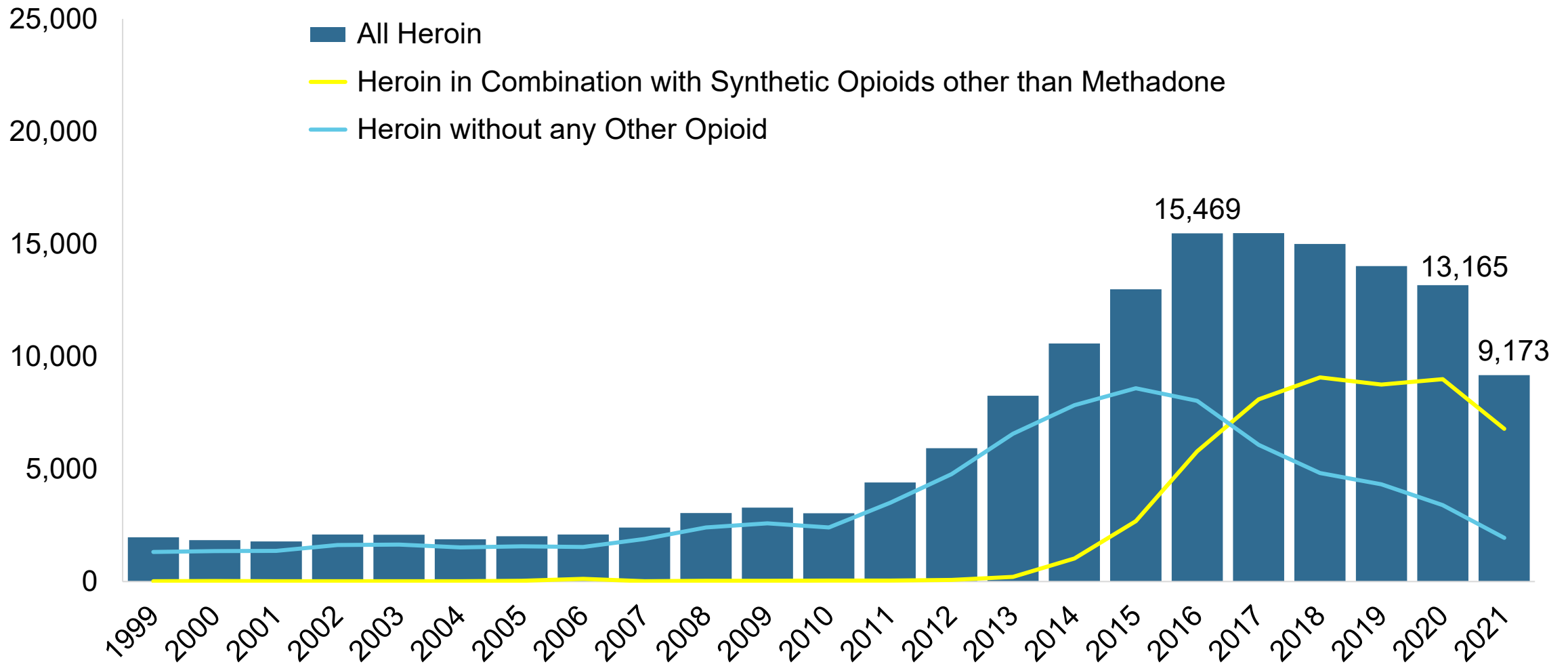
National Overdose Deaths Involving Any Opioid, Number Among All Ages, by Gender, 1999-2021



National Overdose Deaths Involving Prescription Opioids, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2021



National Overdose Deaths Involving Heroin, by other Opioid Involvement, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2021



Changes in Reported Drug Overdose Death Rates by States

[CDC Heat Map](#)

Harm Reduction and Opioid Overdose Prevention Strategies



Harm Reduction in the Context of Child Well-Being—Let's Talk About It!

Large Group Discussion

Examples of Harm Reduction Strategies in Child Welfare



Providing lockboxes for medications

Referring to treatment services

**Connecting children to age-appropriate
therapeutic and mental health services**

Teaching positive parenting skills

**Removing children from the home
when they are in immediate danger**

**Incorporating healthy family routines
to aid in reunification and recovery**

Safe Storage & Proper Disposal of Opioids

Steps to Ensure In-Home Safety:



Lock Box



Pharmacy
Drop Off Box



Mail Back
Programs



FDA Flush List



Trash Disposal



Fentanyl Test Strips

Benefits

- + Detect the presence of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs
- + Effective with all different types and forms of illicit drugs
- + Cost effective method for reducing harm and saving lives

Drawbacks

- Do not provide any information about the quantity or potency of the fentanyl detected
- Can not detect the presence of any other harmful substances
- Remain illegal in some states due to drug paraphernalia laws

Naloxone



Opioid antagonist

Rapidly reverses an opioid overdose


Restores normal breathing

Administered as an injectable
or nasal spray

Jessica's Story

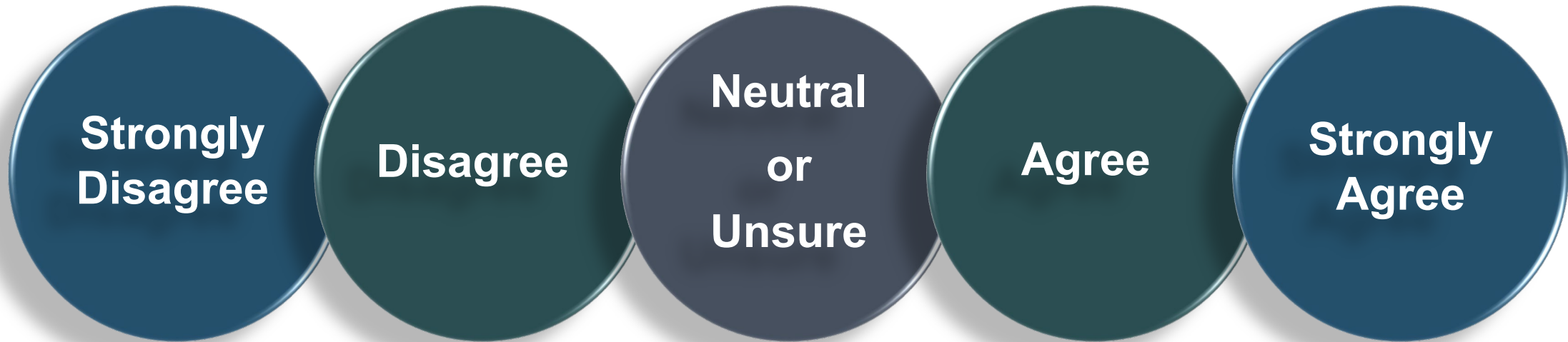
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[Digital Story on Narcan Opioid Overdose Reversal](#)

A photograph showing a doctor in a white lab coat sitting at a table with a patient. The doctor is writing on a clipboard with a pen. The patient is sitting across from the doctor with their hands clasped together. The scene is brightly lit, possibly from a window, creating a warm and professional atmosphere.

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

MOUD Values Discussion



-
- Treatment programs that provide medication for opioid use disorders are just substituting one addiction for another.
 - The stigma associated with medication for opioid use disorders prevents parents from seeking treatment.
 - Medication for opioid use disorders should be made available to pregnant persons.
 - Opioid-exposed newborns and their parents should be referred for child welfare intervention regardless if the exposure was illicit or provider-prescribed (as in treatment for medication for opioid use disorders).

MAT or MOUD— Why Does This Matter?

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) implies that medication plays a secondary supportive role to other forms of OUD treatment

MOUD reinforces that medication is its own form of OUD treatment



Reducing MOUD Stigma

MOUD is safe and effective
when taken as prescribed

MOUD treatment
is considered recovery



What Are These Medications & How Do They Work?

- reduce or eliminate opioid withdrawal symptoms
- reduce risk of opioid overdose or death

Methadone

+

Buprenorphine

Methadone

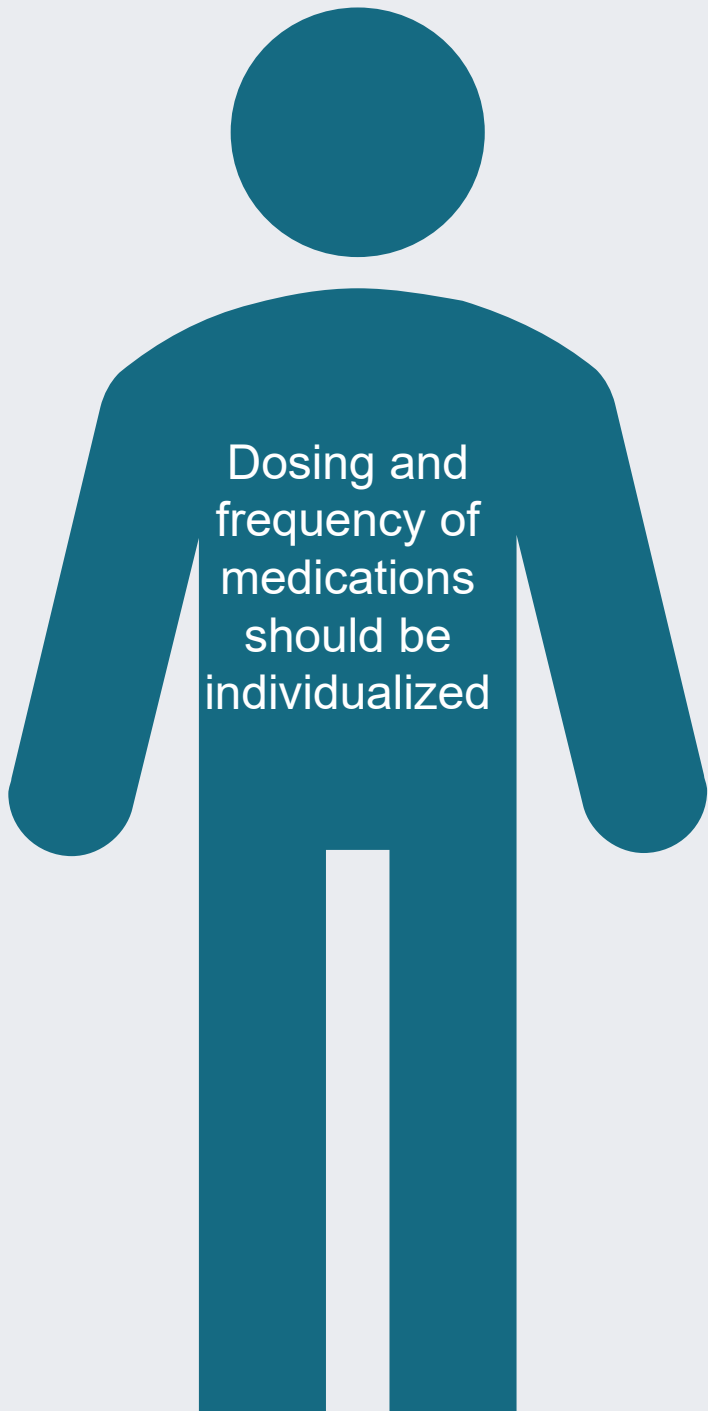
+

Buprenorphine

+

Naltrexone

- blunt or block effects of illicit opioids
- reduce or eliminate opioid cravings



Dosing and frequency of medications should be individualized

MOUD Treatment

Length of treatment includes both short-term and long-term options:

Medically Supervised Withdrawal

Medication Tapering

Maintenance Treatment





MOUD Benefits



Reduces illicit opioid use



Retains individuals in treatment



Reduces risk of opioid overdose and death



Lessens healthcare usage and treatment costs

Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder Before, During, and After Pregnancy



MOUD During Pregnancy

Guidance from ACOG and SAMHSA:

Methadone or Buprenorphine

Behavioral Therapies

Medical Services



Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) vs Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)

NAS is a treatable condition that infants may experience as a result of prenatal exposure to certain substances including opioids

NOWS is a related term referring to the symptoms that infants may experience as a result of exposure to opioids specifically

NAS/NOWS symptoms may include



Severe irritability



Difficulty feeding



Gastrointestinal
issues



Respiratory
problems



Neurological
seizures

Treatment Options for NAS/NOWS



Non-Pharmacological

Pharmacological



Important
Considerations for
NAS/NOWS
Treatment:

Type of infant prenatal substance exposure

Infant's overall health
(including length of mother's pregnancy term)



Non-Pharmacological Treatment Strategies for NAS/NOWS

Allowing infant to stay in the same room as mother

Encouraging skin-to-skin contact, swaddling, gentle rocking, and other positioning methods to increase infant's comfort

Providing frequent feedings of high calorie formula or breast milk in small quantities to help improve infant's feeding habits

Limiting sound and light exposure to help reduce over stimulation

Use of Pharmacological Treatment for NAS/NOWS



Medications can be used to treat moderate to severe withdrawal symptoms

First-line medications include liquid oral morphine or liquid oral methadone

Adjuvants for severe NAS relief also include clonidine or phenobarbital

Benefits of medication use include control and prevention of seizures, reduced agitation, improved feeding, and digestive health



Post Discharge Care for Infants Treated for NAS

Referral and Linkage:

- Home visiting programs
- Case management services
- Access to specialized health care providers

Best Practice Example:

- Plans of Safe Care

Unique Risks of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome



Difficult to interpret cues from infants



Parenting challenges caused by difficult to interpret cues



Consequences of lack of training and protocols among hospital staff

NAS Treatment and Collaborative Discharge Planning

Small Group Discussion

Postpartum Treatment Considerations for Opioid Use Disorders

Increased risk for overdose 7-12 months post birthing event

May require MOUD dosing adjustments due to physiological changes

All plans for discontinuation of MOUD should be made with the mother's healthcare team



**Recovery
Is Possible!**



Doorway Recovery Videos

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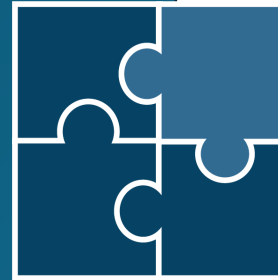
[Fay's Story: Learning to Love Herself All Over Again](#)

Contact

Contact the NCSACW TTA Program

Connect with programs that are developing tools and implementing practices and protocols to support their collaborative

Training and technical assistance to support collaboration and systems change



National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare



<https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/>



ncsacw@cffutures.org



Toll-Free @ 1-866-493-2758

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Resources

Resources, 1 of 2

- American Academy of Pediatrics: [*America's Opioid Crisis: The Unseen Impact on Children*](#) (2018)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: [*State and National Opioid Fact Sheets*](#) (2022)
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: [*Committee Opinion No. 711: Opioid Use and Opioid Use Disorder in Pregnancy*](#) (2017)
- California Health Care Foundation: [*Opioid Safety Toolkit: Emerging Options for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome \(NAS\)*](#) (2019)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [*Understanding the Opioid Overdose Epidemic*](#) (2022)
- Health Resources and Services Administration - Maternal and Child Health: [*Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in Maternal and Child Health Fact Sheet*](#) (2019)
- Health Resources and Services Administration - Maternal and Child Health: [*HRSA's Home Visiting Program: Supporting Families Impacted by Opioid Use and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome*](#) (2018)
- National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors: [*Opioids Fact Sheet-Version V*](#) (2018)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [*A Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Pregnant Women with Opioid Use Disorders: Practice and Policy Considerations for Child Welfare, Collaborating Medical, and Service Providers*](#) (2016)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [*Guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics on Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome Webinar*](#) (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [*The Management of Care for Pregnant Women with Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Webinar*](#) (2021)

Resources, 2 of 2

- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare and the Office of Civil Rights, Video Series: [Part 1: Civil Rights Protections for Individuals with a Disability: The Basics](#); [Part 2: Civil Rights Protections for Individuals with an Opioid Use Disorder; Medication-Assisted Treatment and Common Misconceptions](#); [Child Welfare Case Staffing: Social Worker and Supervision](#); and [Child Welfare Case Staffing: Child Welfare Court Case](#) (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Tip Sheet #1 Harm Reduction in the Context of Child Well-Being: An Overview for Serving Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders](#) (2024)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Tip Sheet #2 Harm Reduction in the Context of Child Well-Being: Key Considerations for Policymakers](#) (2024)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Tip Sheet #3 Harm Reduction in the Context of Child Well-Being: Practice Recommendations for Child Welfare Workers](#) (2024)
- National Perinatal Association: [Perinatal Substance Use Webpage](#)
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation: [Research Brief: Substance Use, the Opioid Epidemic and the Child Welfare System: Key Findings from a Mixed Methods Study](#) (2018)
- [Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative Website](#) (2022)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [SAMHSA's Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit](#) (2024)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [Opioids Webpage](#) (n.d.)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: [Safe Opioid Disposal - Remove the Risk Outreach Toolkit](#) (2021)
- Youth.gov: [Opioids Webpage](#) (n.d.)