



**LAKE COUNTY
ADAMHS
BOARD**

2015-2024

FATALITY REPORT

Prepared By :

Lake ADAMHS
Board Staff

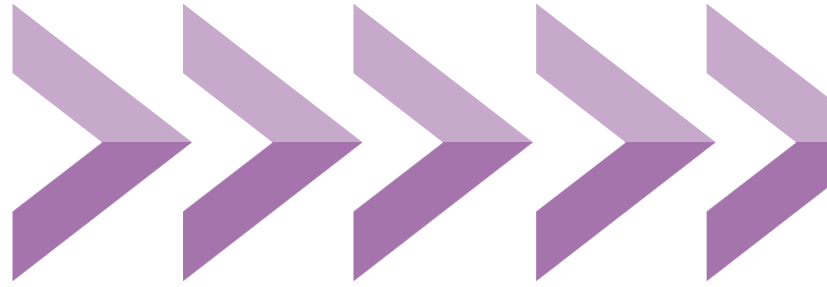
Presented To :

Lake County residents
and ADAMHS Board
Members



Lake County ADAMHS Board

Table Of Contents



About Lake ADAMHS

4

Why Report / Voices of Impact

5

Director's Statement

6

10-Year Suicide Report

7

Suicide Statistics

9

Suicide Prevention Summary

13

10-Year Overdose Report

16

Overdose Statistics

18

Overdose Prevention Summary

23



About Lake County ADAMHS Board

Lake County

Population - U.S. Census

- 2020 - 232,603 (+1.1%)
- 2010 - 230,041

Population - Estimates

- 2023-2024 - 232,500
(-0.04%) decrease



We are established by Ohio statute, and the Lake ADAMHS Board plans, monitors, evaluates, and funds services for Lake County residents with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. These services are delivered through a network of providers.

Network Service Providers :

- BRIDGES: Mental Health Consumer Empowerment
- Catholic Charities Community Services
- Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
- Crossroads Health
- Extended Housing
- Family Pride of Northeast Ohio
- The Fine Arts Association
- Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers
- Lifeline, Inc. and 2-1-1
- NAMI Lake County (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare / Community Services Network
- Signature Health, Inc.
- Torchlight Youth Mentoring Alliance
- University Hospitals
- Windsor-Laurelwood Center for Behavioral Medicine
- WomenSafe, Inc.

www.HelpThatWorks.us



WHY PROVIDE A 10 YEAR REPORT?

This report exists to document and share the progress of our community's efforts to address suicide and overdose over the past decade. Like financial or performance reports in business, it provides a clear record of where we've been, where we are now, and what challenges remain. Charts, graphs, and tables make the data easier to understand, helping stakeholders see both trends and outcomes at a glance. By presenting this information in a concise, accessible way, the report strengthens accountability, guides decision-making, and ensures our work continues to improve lives.

Voices of Impact

"MY SON PASSED RIGHT IN FRONT OF MY EYES...IT WAS THE HARDEST THING."

"I'D TELL MY DAD: I LOVE YOU,

BUT I HOPE YOU'RE IN A BETTER PLACE NOW."

"THROUGH LARRY'S DEATH, SOMEONE WILL LEARN THE LESSON - AND WILL SURVIVE."

We interviewed individuals like Colleen, Tommy and Ilene that have been affected by overdose death and provided their perspective and insight. Each shared deeply moving stories — from the search for help and the pain of relapse to the ongoing struggle and hope found in recovery. Those who have lost loved ones offered heartfelt reflections on the lasting impact of loss and the challenges faced by those left behind. Their stories of heartbreak, resilience, and remembrance continue to motivate our efforts to educate the community and ensure that support and services remain available for individuals and the families who surround them.

www.HelpThatWorks.us



Kimberly Fraser

Director's Statement

Over the past decade, Lake County has faced the heartbreaking realities of suicide and overdose—tragedies that have touched every community, every neighborhood, and, for many of us, every family. This report presents the data that helps us understand these crises more clearly, but behind each number is a person—a friend, neighbor, colleague, or loved one whose life ended too soon because of a preventable disease of the brain.

As a Board, we remain steadfast in our commitment to prevention, treatment, and recovery. Our work is guided by compassion and by evidence, ensuring that every initiative—from crisis response to long-term care—moves us closer to a future where help is accessible, hope is visible, and no one faces their struggles alone.

The numbers in these pages tell a story of both loss and progress. They show the challenges we continue to face, but also the power of collaboration, resilience, and community action. Together—with our partners, providers, and residents—we are saving lives, reducing stigma, and building a stronger foundation for the next decade of prevention and recovery in Lake County.

Data measures progress; people measure purpose. Let this report serve as both—a reflection of how far we've come and a reminder of the lives we honor by continuing this vital work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Fraser'.

Kimberly Fraser - Executive Director, Lake County ADAMHS Board

www.HelpThatWorks.us

SUICIDE REPORT

by Kimberly Fraser

Lake ADAMHS 10-Year Suicide Report (2015–2024)

Over the last decade, suicide has continued to be one of the most pressing public health challenges in Lake County. This report examines suicide data from 2015–2024, along with related behavioral health indicators, to better understand long-term trends, disparities, and opportunities for prevention. While there are areas of progress, data confirms that suicide remains a significant and complex issue requiring coordinated, community-wide response.

Key Findings on Trends

- **Overall Numbers:** Suicide deaths in Lake County have remained relatively stable over the 10-year period, with minimal fluctuation. Recent years show signs of leveling, but suicide continues to affect residents across age groups.
- **Youth Mental Health:** Consistent with national data, local youth report increasing levels of sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts. Although there was a small decline in reported depressive symptoms from 2021 to 2023, levels remain significantly higher than a decade ago.
- **Protective vs. Risk Behaviors:** While some protective factors—such as reduced substance misuse among youth—show improvement, many indicators connected to suicide risk (violence, trauma exposure, lack of connectedness) have worsened over the 10-year span.

Key Findings on Disparities

- **Gender:** Female youth continue to report higher rates of depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts compared to male youth. However, male residents—particularly middle-aged men—remain more likely to die by suicide.
- **LGBTQ+ Populations:** LGBTQ+ youth face disproportionate challenges. More than half report persistent sadness or hopelessness, and one in five report suicide attempts within the past year (CDC Report, 2023).
- **Race and Ethnicity:** While disparities by race and ethnicity are less consistent, data reveals the differences in mental health experiences and risk factors that warrant continued monitoring and culturally responsive strategies.

SUICIDE REPORT

Continued

Lake ADAMHS 10-Year Suicide Report (2015–2024)

Emerging Issues

New data collection tools highlight critical areas shaping suicide risk:

- **Social Media & Technology:** Heavy social media use is linked to negative mental health impacts, particularly among female students.
- **School Connectedness:** Only about half of youth report feeling connected to their school community, a known protective factor against suicide.
- **Community Stressors:** Housing instability, substance use, and exposure to violence remain contributing risk factors for both youth and adults.

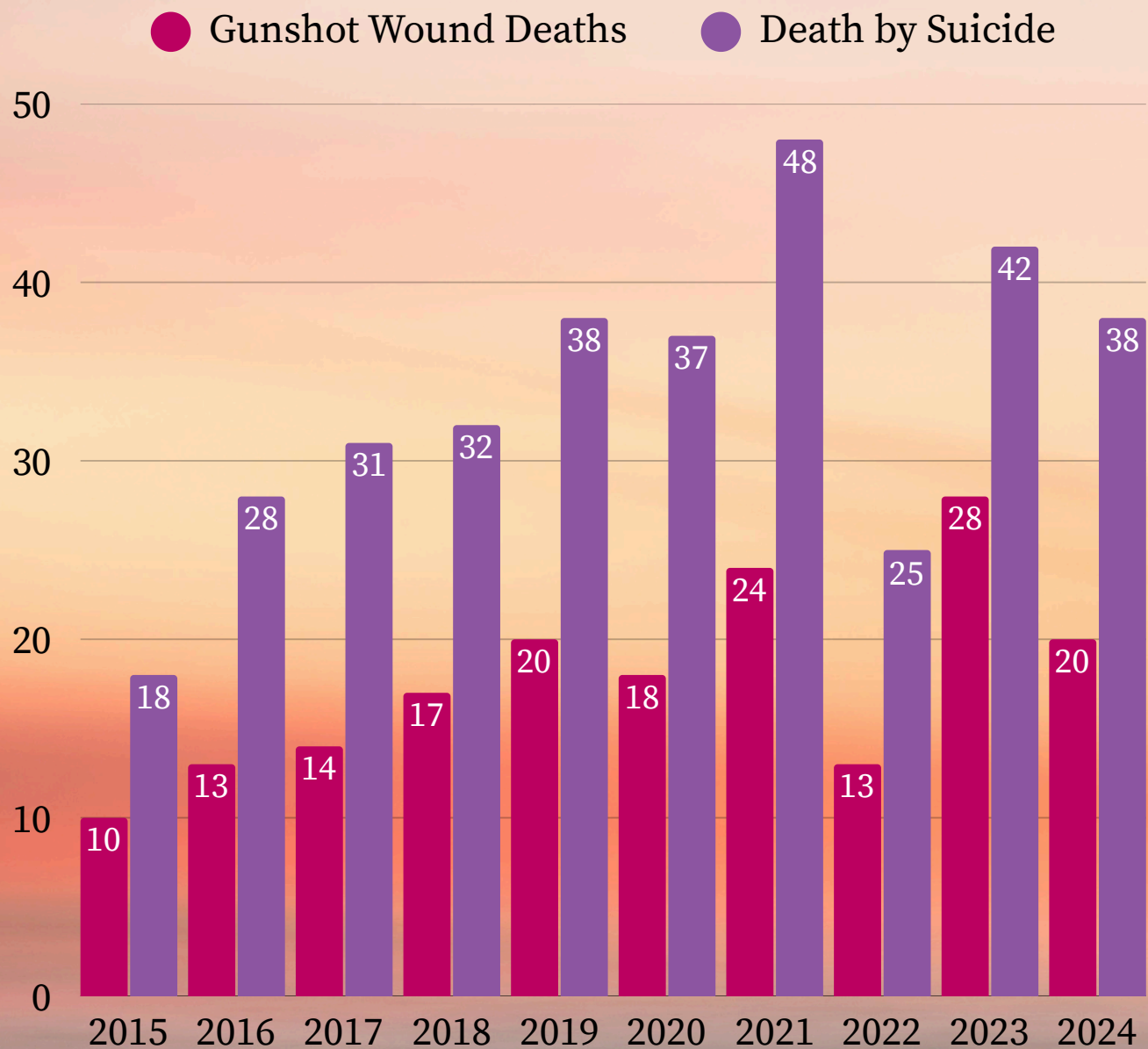
Moving Forward

The past decade of data underscores the need for sustained and adaptive prevention strategies. Promising efforts include:

- Expanding school- and community-based mental health supports.
- Enhancing protective environments that foster connectedness and resilience.
- Addressing disparities by tailoring strategies for youth, women, LGBTQ+ residents, and middle-aged men.
- Strengthening coordination among healthcare, schools, law enforcement, and community organizations to ensure early intervention and crisis support.

Conclusion

Suicide is preventable, but progress requires collective action. The Lake ADAMHS Board remains committed to using data to inform strategy, investing in prevention and treatment, and fostering partnerships that reduce stigma and increase access to life-saving supports. While the past decade shows both concerning trends and emerging signs of hope, the next 10 years offer a critical opportunity to strengthen the community's response and save lives.



53% GUN WOUNDS

More than half of suicides in Lake County are caused by gunshot wounds—nearly double the next leading method, hanging. This trend underscores the critical importance of gun safety and secure firearm storage.

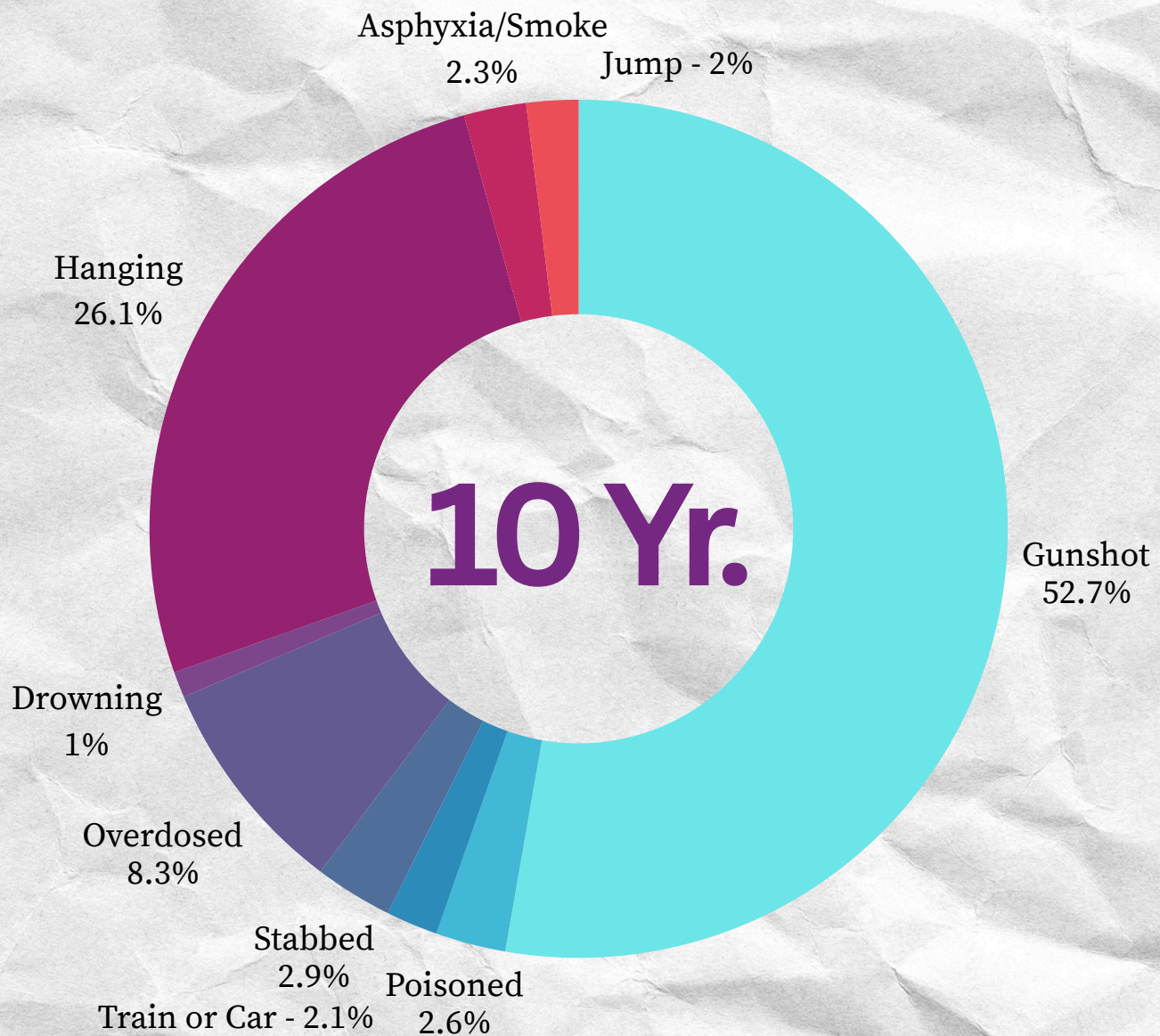
111% INCREASE

Suicides have risen by about 111% overall, 18 deaths in 2015 to 38 in 2024, with a peak of 48 deaths in 2021. Contributing factors include isolation, economic pressures, and the challenges that followed. Continued awareness, accessibility, and visibility of support services remain critical.

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Suicide Methods

Log of the Last Ten Years

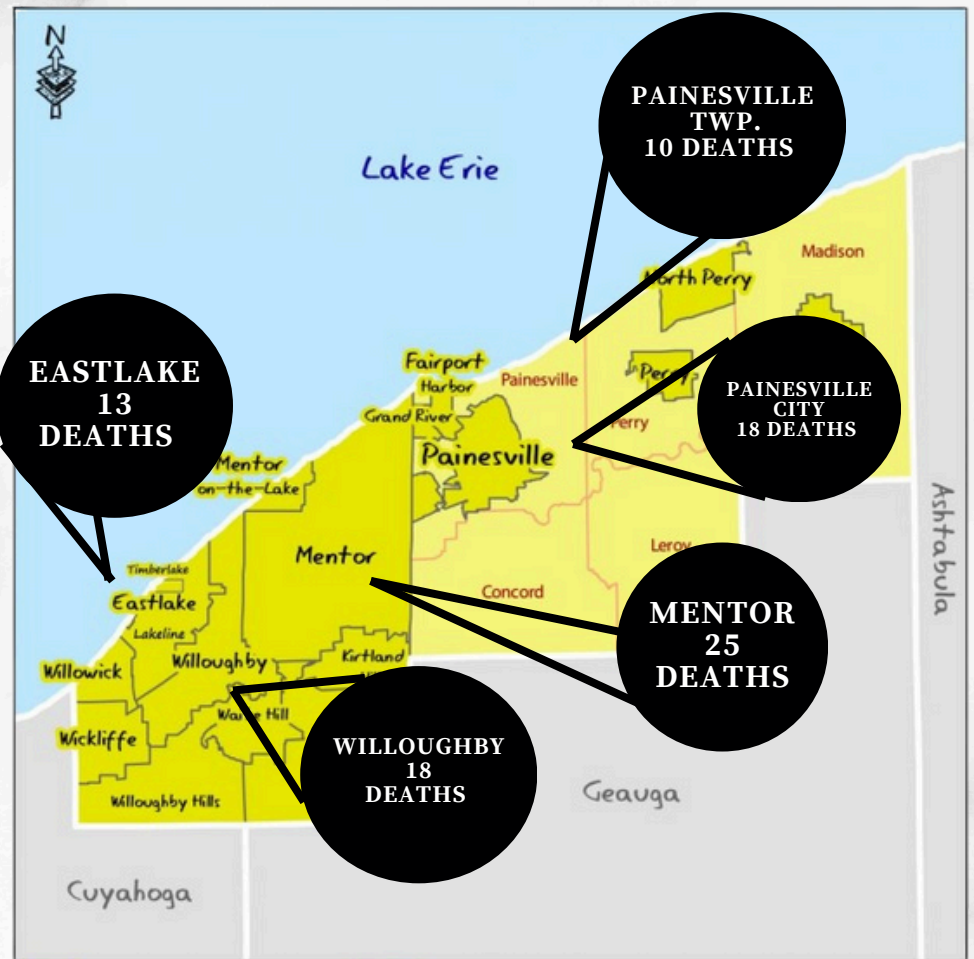


SUICIDE METHODS: 10-YEAR TRENDS

- Gunshot-related suicides spiked in 2023 (28) but have since declined by 29% to 20, however, they remain 100% higher than in 2015 (10).
- Hanging deaths have dropped, decreasing by 26% since 2021 (from 15 to 11) but are still an 85% increase from 2015 (6).
- Overdose-related suicides have decreased by 55%, falling from 11 in 2015–2016 to 5 in 2023–2024.

TOTAL OF SUICIDES 2021 – 24

When examining coroner's reports from 2021 to 2024, the data shows that no single city consistently holds the highest number of suicide deaths. Instead, there is a shifting pattern from year to year. Over the four-year period, Mentor (25), Painesville (18), Willoughby (18), Eastlake (13), and Painesville Township (10) recorded the highest overall numbers. It is important to note that deaths occurring at hospitals in the City of Willoughby and Concord Township are listed separately from the city totals.



Suicide Totals by Each City

When compared to population size, these numbers align in some ways but also reveal important nuances. Mentor, the largest city in Lake County with about 47,000 residents, also recorded the highest number of deaths. Willoughby and Painesville, the next largest population centers, each reported 18 deaths, roughly reflecting their size. However, Eastlake, with a smaller population of about 17,000, had 13 deaths—proportionally higher than expected. Painesville Township, though not a city, is one of the county's largest townships and recorded 10 deaths, a significant total for its population.

This fluctuation highlights that suicide is not concentrated in one community but is a countywide concern affecting both larger population centers and smaller municipalities. Rather than pointing to one city as “most impacted,” the data reinforces the importance of continuing countywide prevention and intervention efforts, ensuring that all communities have access to the resources, education, and crisis response services needed to save lives.

**LAKE ADAMHS BOARD HAS
DISTRIBUTED 250+ GUN LOCKS AT
COMMUNITY EVENTS TO PROMOTE
SAFE STORAGE AND REDUCE SUICIDE
RISK.**

**SINCE 2022, THE LETHAL MEANS
SAFETY COMMUNITY HAS BEEN AN
ACTIVE PART OF THE SUICIDE
PREVENTION COALITION.**

Safe Storage = Suicide Prevention

The Board has run awareness campaigns with local gun retailers, had a presence at the county fairgrounds gun show, and hosted Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) training—connecting firearm owners and sellers with safety resources.

Over the past six years Lake ADAMHS has delivered 100+ behavioral-health presentations focused on prevention, outreach, and safe-storage messaging. Research shows that adding time and distance to access lethal means — like a firearm — reduces the likelihood an impulsive attempt will be carried out and saves lives.

Suicide Prevention Summary

WHERE WE ARE NOW – SUICIDE

The Lake ADAMHS Board and its partners have taken meaningful steps over the past several years to strengthen prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts around suicide and overdose deaths. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment to quality improvement, we are better positioned than ever to support individuals in crisis and the families and communities affected.

Commitment to Quality (CQI) and Best Practices

The Board continues to prioritize continuous quality improvement, with internal staff and agency partners receiving specialized training in Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR), strengthening clinical response and ensuring providers are equipped to intervene effectively. The Board is advancing the Zero Suicide model by working to normalize suicide prevention practices across systems of care—embedding routine screening, direct conversations about suicide, and proactive follow-up as standard elements of patient safety.

Coalition and Community Action

Under the leadership of the Lake ADAMHS Board, the Suicide Prevention Coalition hosts community events, trainings, and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma, increase help-seeking, and build protective connections.

This Suicide Prevention Day event at a local park hosted 50+ people and heard many impactful stories, family photos were offered to support those left behind and a local music artist, James Nemecek, spoke about his own mental struggles and how he uses songs to reflect /support on them.



Suicide Prevention Summary

WHERE WE ARE NOW – SUICIDE

The Board has also launched a range of targeted campaigns to expand awareness and connect residents with lifesaving services. Yard signs have been placed at each partner agency, linking directly to the ADAMHS network to ensure quick access to crisis resources.

We have also led grassroots outreach efforts with more than 20 locally owned taverns and restaurants, distributing over 40,000 custom drink coasters featuring messages on suicide prevention, behavioral health, binge drinking, and nicotine addiction. This initiative was designed to meet people where they are and spark conversations in everyday settings.



Recognizing that Lake County exceeds the state average in both adult and teen binge drinking, we have prioritized youth-focused prevention campaigns. These efforts have included distributing to youth 10,000+ calming strips through schools to encourage stress management and self-care, and created animated video series on social media platforms that have over 4,000,000 impressions countywide. This repetitive message reaches young people in relatable ways with coping skills, substance use risks, and help-seeking behaviors.

Together, these campaigns demonstrate a strong commitment to prevention, early intervention, and community education—meeting both youth and adults with resources that can truly make a difference.

Suicide Prevention Summary

WHERE WE ARE NOW – SUICIDE

Awareness and Support Efforts

Through multi-channel marketing campaigns—including social media, public service announcements, and community events—the Board has increased awareness of prevention resources and expanded outreach to families, caregivers, and individuals in crisis. Family support networks are being strengthened so that loved ones have the tools and connections they need both during and after a crisis.

The Trauma Response Team is available to provide counseling and support to any public or private organization in the county when tragedy strikes, ensuring that those left behind are not alone in navigating their grief and recovery.

Statewide Alignment and Resources

Ohio's 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has expanded access to immediate support, connecting residents anywhere in

the state with trained crisis professionals 24/7. In Lake County, localized services remain available around the clock through the Crisis Hotline, staffed by local providers who understand the community's unique needs—including proximity, weather challenges, and other factors specific to our area.



HELP!



Moving Forward

By combining evidence-based practices, data-informed strategies, coalition engagement, and public awareness campaigns, the Lake ADAMHS Board has built a stronger foundation for prevention and crisis response. While challenges remain, our collective progress demonstrates that Lake County is not only tracking outcomes but also actively shaping solutions.

OVERDOSE REPORT

by Kimberly Fraser

Lake ADAMHS 10-Year Overdose Report (2015–2024)

Over the past decade, overdose has remained the most urgent public health crisis in Lake County. This report examines overdose mortality data from 2015–2024, along with related substance use and behavioral health indicators, to better understand long-term trends, emerging patterns, and opportunities for prevention.

Lake County was identified as Ohio’s epicenter of the opioid epidemic, serving as a bellwether county in the 2020 national litigation involving five major pharmacy chains. This recognition underscores both the county’s early and severe impact from opioid prescribing and its leadership in pursuing accountability and systemic change.

While progress has been made, overdose continues to affect individuals, families, and entire communities—reinforcing the need for a data-driven response that spans prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery.

Key Findings on Trends

- 2015–2016: Unintentional drug overdoses surpassed motor vehicle crashes as Ohio’s leading cause of accidental death. By 2016, the state ranked 11th nationally for overdose deaths.
- 2018: U.S. life expectancy declined for the first time since 1918, largely due to overdoses and suicides—so-called “deaths of despair.”
- Expanded access to 1,100+ naloxone kits and fentanyl test strips, education on safe medication disposal, drop boxes at all police stations, and 2,000+ Detera bags distributed for at-home use.

Key Findings on Disparities

- Adults aged 25–44 remain most at risk, but rising overdose incidents among adults over 55 highlight a shifting age profile that warrants attention.
- Race and Ethnicity: Non-Hispanic White residents account for over 96% of overdose deaths, though one in four Lake County residents are non-White—raising concerns about disparities, underreporting, and barriers to care.

OVERDOSE REPORT

Continued

Lake ADAMHS 10-Year Suicide Report (2015–2024)

Emerging Issues

Recent data reveals new and concerning dynamics shaping overdose risk:

- The spread of fentanyl into stimulants and counterfeit pills poses heightened risk for individuals who may not know they are consuming opioids. Fentanyl was involved in 81% of overdose deaths in 2022.
- Medical and recreational marijuana were approved in Ohio, while vaping continued to surge—particularly among teenagers.

Moving Forward

A decade of data highlights both the progress made and the urgent work ahead. Promising efforts include:

- Expanding Education and Support: Programs like the Quick Response Team, Trauma Response Team, and the First Responder Program focus on intervention and the mental health of first responders.
- Improving Treatment Pathways: Expanded access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT), residential treatment, recovery housing, and other recovery support services.
- Enhancing Coordination: Strengthening data sharing among public safety, healthcare, and behavioral health providers to quickly identify and respond to emerging trends including virtual behavioral incident trainings.
- Reducing Stigma and Raising Awareness: Public campaigns such as *Talk. They Hear You.* and *You Matter*, along with community events like the first-ever Concert of Hope on Overdose Awareness Day.

Conclusion

Overdose is preventable. The Lake ADAMHS Board remains committed to advancing a comprehensive, compassionate approach—one that integrates data, reduces stigma, and builds pathways to long-term recovery. As the landscape of substance use continues to evolve, sustained collaboration across systems will be essential to save lives and support a healthier, more resilient community.

*Overdose Deaths***NUMBERS & STATISTICS**

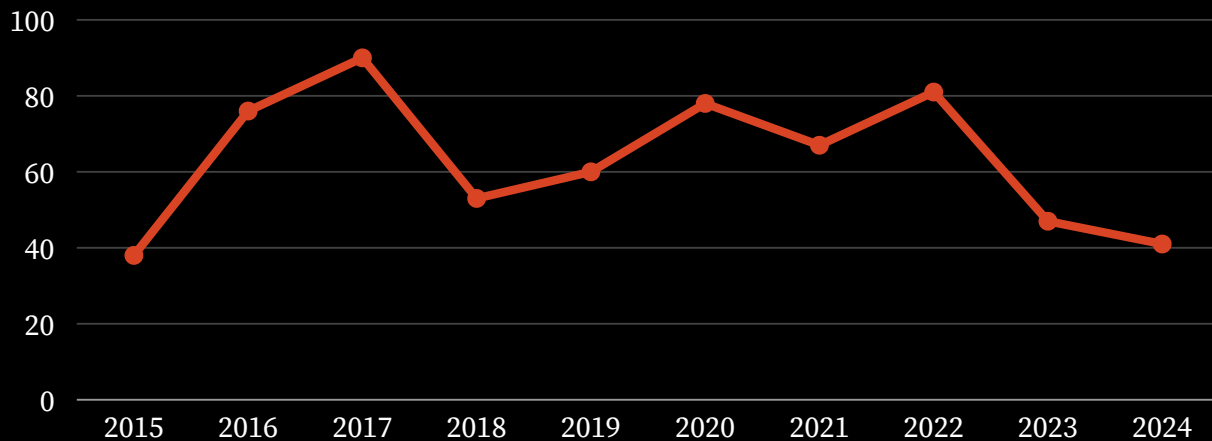
Over the past 10 years, 631 overdose deaths have occurred in Lake County, with adults in their 30s leading all age groups. Men account for 73% of these deaths, and 96% involve non-Hispanic White residents.

54%

*Overdose Reduction
From 2017 vs. 2024*

29%

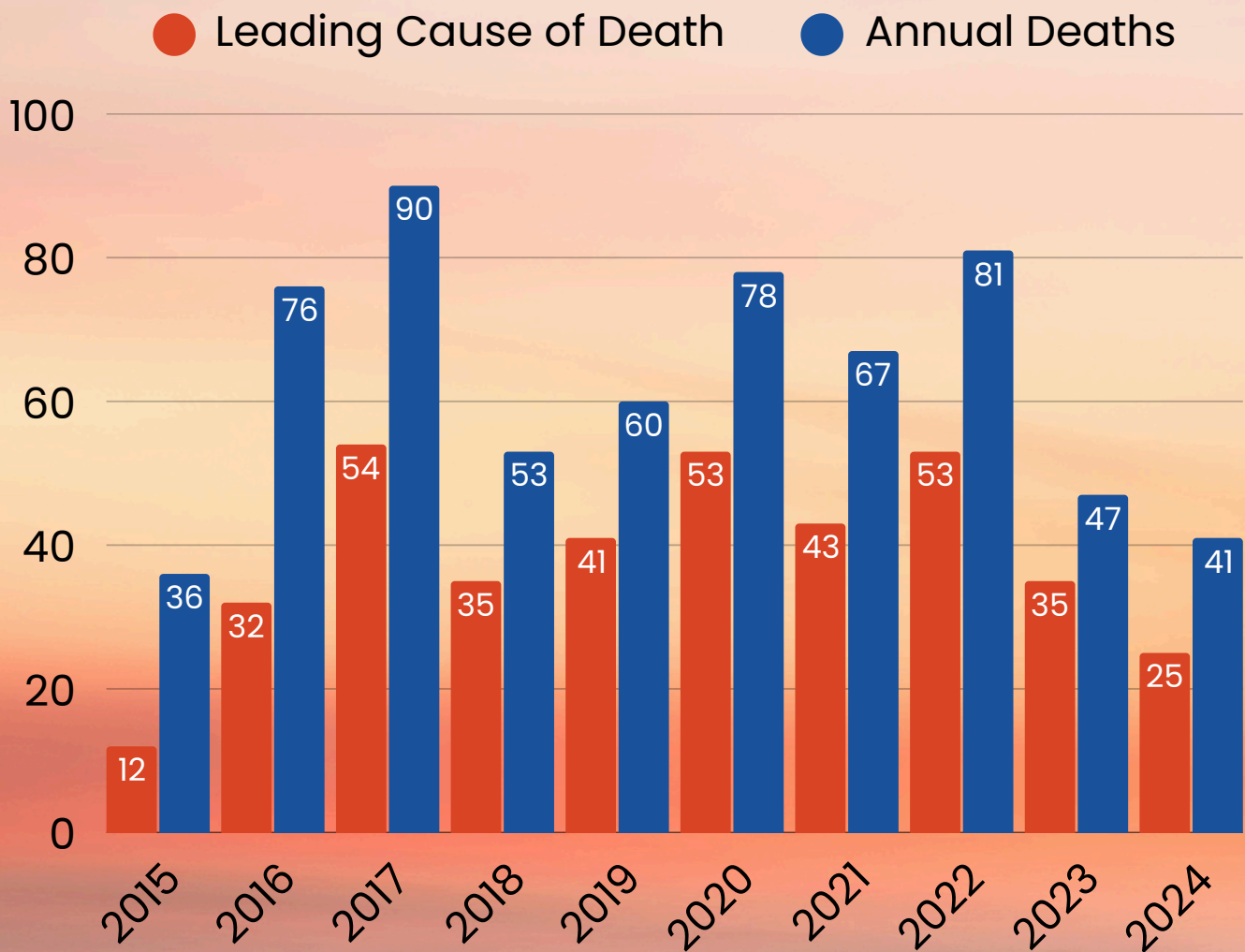
*Overdoses were
Adults in their 30s*

**Overdose Deaths and Racial Disparities**

Non-Hispanic White residents account for over 96% of overdose deaths in Lake County. While the county is majority White, about one in four residents identify as a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic White. The fact that only 4% of overdose deaths involve these groups may reflect true differences in risk but also highlights potential underreporting, data misclassification, or barriers to prevention and treatment.

Generational Impact of Substance Use

Over 700,000 Ohio children have been affected by parental or familial substance use, and over 1,000 grandparents each year become primary caregivers for grandchildren due to a parent's substance use disorder. This underscores the multi-generational impact of addiction on families and communities.



62% OF DEATHS

More than half of overdose, 62%, in Lake County include a combination of fentanyl and other opioids — only in 2015-2016 did fentanyl deaths (44) outpace this combination (34) as the opioid crisis was shifting with new prescription regulations to limit drug access and improve tracking.

23% DECREASE

Over a three-year span, overdoses decreased by 23% when comparing 2016–2018 to 2022–2024. Although a spike occurred between 2019 and 2021 during the height of the fentanyl crisis, expanded awareness efforts and increased access to support services—strengthened by COVID-related and Medicaid funding—have contributed to saving lives.

ADULT ILLICIT DRUG USE IN LAKE COUNTY HAS CONSISTENTLY REMAINED ABOVE 11.4% OVER THE PAST DECADE.

YOUTH ILLICIT DRUG USE HAS AVERAGED 3.3% OVER THE SAME 10-YEAR PERIOD.

Fentanyl and Opioid Mixtures in Overdose Deaths

Although fentanyl-related deaths in Lake County spiked in 2016 with 32 cases, fentanyl in combination with other opioids has led all overdose categories from 2017 to the present. Over time, the pattern of overdose deaths has shifted, with fentanyl increasingly appearing in a wide range of street drugs. Its relatively low cost and highly addictive nature have made fentanyl the dominant driver of overdose deaths in the county.

60 PER

Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System: Reduced average prescriptions per person from 60 in 2017 to 30.7, helping save lives.

14 DAILY

In 2017, on average, 14 Ohioans died each day from accidental overdoses up from 8 the prior year.

8.4% RATE

Lake County has an 8.4% rate of uninsured adults and Ohio has a 6.6% rate, an 1.8% increase.

8% BINGE

Lake County's 8.1% binge or heavy drinking rate rates higher than the state average of 6.5%.



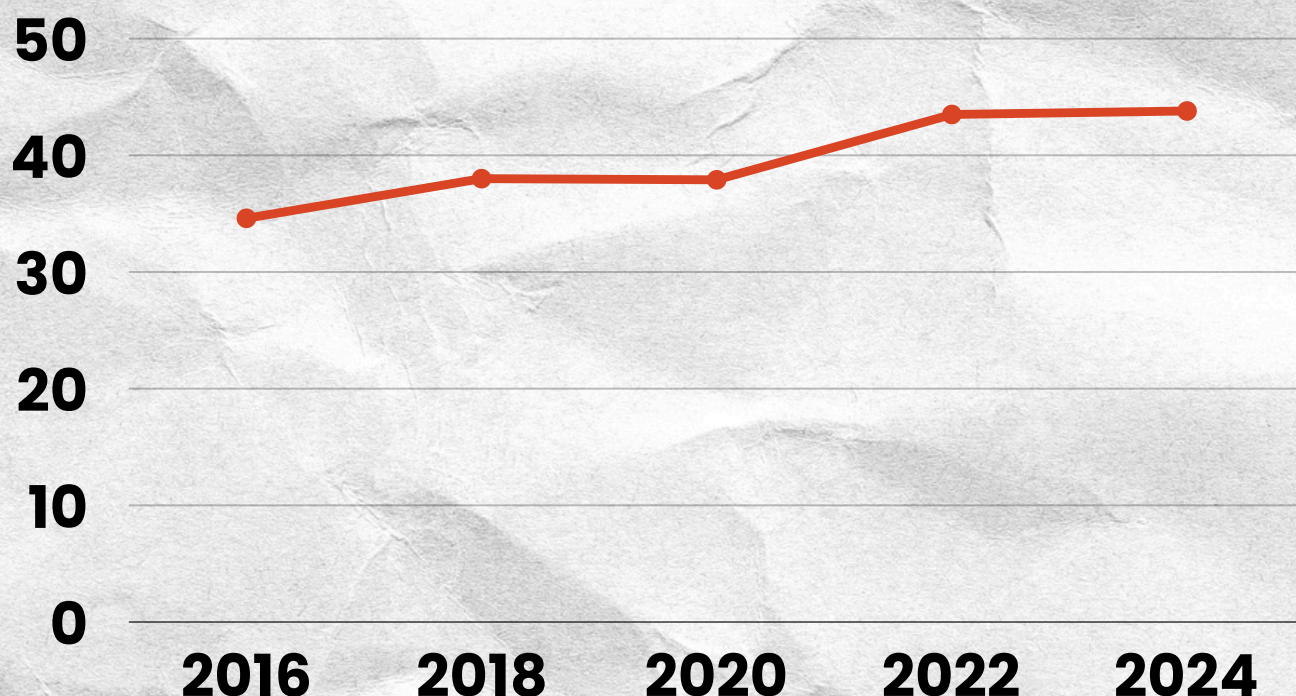
59% MIXED

More than half of all overdose deaths (59%) involved fentanyl or another opioid, often in combination with other substances—meaning 1 in 2 overdoses were linked to opioids.

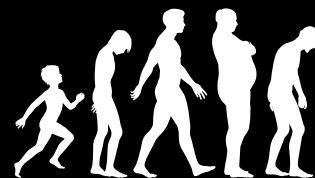
4 CHILDREN

Between 2016 and 2018, the number of neonatal abstinence syndrome cases in Lake County increased from 24 to 28. Neonatal abstinence syndrome occurs when newborns experience withdrawal symptoms due to exposure to opioids or other substances while in the womb.

Average Age of Overdose



STATISTICS



Over the past decade, the average age of overdose victims in Lake County has gradually increased, reflecting a shift in the populations most affected. In 2016, the average age was 34.6, rising steadily to 43.8 by 2024, and remaining above 42 for the past four years. Tracking these trends over time helps identify which age groups are at greatest risk and informs strategies for prevention and intervention.

Also, during this time, annual overdose deaths in Lake County have fluctuated, reflecting the impacts of the opioid crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in healthcare access. Deaths spiked in 2017 during the height of the opioid crisis, rose again in subsequent years, and then declined as the pandemic disrupted both risk and reporting. More recently, numbers appear to be stabilizing, through policy changes such as the expansion of Medicaid in Ohio.

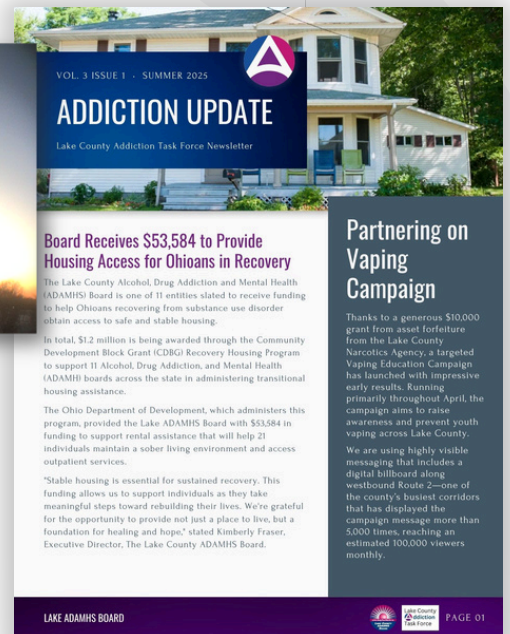
Overdose Prevention Summary

WHERE WE ARE NOW – OVERDOSE

Over the past several years, the Lake ADAMHS Board and its partners have taken meaningful steps to strengthen prevention, treatment, and recovery supports related to overdose deaths. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to quality improvement, Lake County is better positioned than ever to help individuals at risk of substance use disorders and the families and communities affected.

Expanded Treatment Access

Additional residential treatment beds and recovery housing have been added within Lake County to address capacity challenges, while the Cleveland Clinic hospital in Mentor provides greater access to specialized behavioral health and addiction services. Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and other recovery support services continue to expand, ensuring that individuals struggling with addiction can receive timely, comprehensive care.



Coalition and Community Action

Under the leadership of the Lake ADAMHS Board, the Lake County Addiction Task Force leverages local expertise to monitor trends in drug use, overdoses, and related criminal activity. The Board has launched several targeted campaigns, including yard signs to increase awareness of proximity to services, restaurant drink coasters to address binge drinking, website ads to prevent vaping, and digital billboards highlighting the dangers of mixtures in street-purchased narcotics. These strategies are designed to inform and educate the community to prevent drug misuse.

Overdose Prevention Summary

WHERE WE ARE NOW – OVERDOSE

Programs like the Quick Response Team (QRT) connects first responders with individuals and families after overdose incidents, linking them to services and supports.

Public campaigns—including *Talk. They Hear You.* and *You Matter*—along with the Recovery Concert of Hope on Overdose Awareness Day, raise awareness, celebrate recovery, and reduce stigma through community engagement. The Board has also become a Project DAWN site and has distributed over fentanyl test strips have been distributed to residents and local agencies. Medication drop boxes at all Lake County police stations have been created, combined with 2,000+ Deterra bags distributed directly to residents, provide residents convenient at-home disposal options for unused medications. Together, these initiatives demonstrate the Board's commitment to building a healthier, safer Lake County, keeping prevention, recovery, and hope at the center of community action.



Awareness and Prevention Efforts

Through school-based programs like special presentations by nationally recognized speakers—including former NBA player Chris Herren—the Board has expanded prevention education for youth. These programs build awareness of the risks of drug misuse and encourage healthy decision-making.

Moving Forward

By combining evidence-based practices, expanded treatment, coalition efforts, and prevention campaigns, Lake County is strengthening its response to overdose. The Lake ADAMHS Board remains committed to a comprehensive approach that integrates prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery to support individuals, families, and communities.