 

Audrey Rehberg Raven Helmick

Presenters:

Audrey Rehberg, MPH, Indiana State Department of Health - Audrey graduated from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health and received her Master’s degree in Public Health and Community Health from Purdue University. She joined the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) as the Naloxone Program Manager in December of 2017.

Raven Helmick, Indiana State Department of Health - Raven graduated from Rogers State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and received her Master’s degree in Epidemiology from the University of Oklahoma. Upon graduation she worked within the Oklahoma State Department of Health’s Acute Disease Service where she acted as an intern-epidemiologist. After her time at Oklahoma State, she joined Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) where she is the current Prescription Drug Overdose Epidemiologist for the department.

John O’Boyle, Indiana State Department of Health - John graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Public and Environmental Affairs and a minor in Criminal Justice.  He worked at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as a special agent for nearly 25 years prior to joining ISDH. He now serves as the INVDRS & PDO Records Consultant.

Course Description:

This course will provide a brief look into the dangerous impact fentanyl is having on the population of Indiana and what first responders can do to protect themselves when arriving to the scene of a suspected drug overdose. The first responders will also become certified in naloxone administration.

It is becoming common knowledge that the United States is in the midst of an opioid epidemic and Indiana is experiencing this epidemic in its own light. In 2016, 485 Indiana residents experienced a fatal drug overdose involving opioids and data suggests this is an extreme undercounting due to a lack of drug specificity on death certificates. This is a 77% increase in opioid-involved deaths in just one year’s time. Preliminary research suggests the dramatic increase in opioid-involved deaths has been caused by the increased use of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that can be both illicitly and licitly produced. In many instances, fentanyl is mixed with heroin or cocaine, with or without the user’s knowledge, and is 50-100x more potent than morphine.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and data from the National Forensic Laboratory Information System, reports from law enforcement agencies indicate that much of the fatal synthetic opioid overdoses may be due to the illicitly produced fentanyl as confiscations or seizures of fentanyl increased nearly seven-fold from 2012-2014. The increasing availability of illicit fentanyl has preceded the dramatic increase in opioid-involved deaths. There is a potential threat to first responders who may come into contact with fentanyl or its related substances through routine lifesaving activities. Since fentanyl can be ingested orally, inhaled, or absorbed through eyes and skin, any suspected fentanyl substance should be treated with caution, as even exposure to a small amount can lead to an overdose.

     Naloxone, when administered properly, can be an effective tool in reversing opioid related overdoses and has the potential to save lives. It can be administered by EMS, law enforcement, other drug users, or family/friend bystanders who have obtained the medication. The Indiana State Department of Health has provided both training and naloxone medication kits throughout various counties in the state. Through certified naloxone education and training, any first responder can provide a life-saving intervention to an individual experiencing a suspected overdose.

