Leveraging ODMAP Data in an Overdose Fatality Review:

Lessons from Ocean County, New Jersey

Submitted by Kimberly L. Reilly, MA, LPC

In 2018, Ocean County, New Jersey, was experiencing unprecedented numbers of overdoses (219 fatal overdoses and 811 documented naloxone administrations in 2018 compared to the 2013–2017 average of 177 overdoses and the 2015–2017 average of 741 documented naloxone administrations), and it became evident that it was a growing public health emergency.

To combat the rising numbers of nonfatal and fatal overdoses, the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) became the first in New Jersey to conduct an overdose fatality review (OFR). The OFR provided an innovative process that looked to identify overdose themes in the county.

The Ocean County Overdose Fatality Review Program (OC-OFRP) is a comprehensive initiative to gain qualitative data on the life experiences of residents who died from fatal overdoses to reduce overdose deaths. If the county could ascertain root causes for overdose, then it could develop truly impactful recommendations for programs and policies to save lives.

Over the past several years, OFRs have become an effective tool to identify ways to make local-level change. An example of this occurred at an OC-OFRP meeting in summer 2020. At this meeting, the New Jersey State Police reported that at the time of a specific overdose death, Ocean County had been in an overdose spike. This one piece of information about overdose spikes resulted in multiple questions from the OC-OFRP membership during the meeting asking for clarification.

OC-OFRP's Questions About the Overdose Detection Mapping Application (ODMAP)

What is an overdose spike?

When a jurisdiction has more overdoses than the pre-determined 24-hour threshold, then it is a spike in overdose activity. The threshold is based on the average number of overdoses in a jurisdiction.

At that time, the Ocean County threshold was set to 10 overdoses in a 24-hour period.

How do you know this?

The Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP)

How is this ODMAP data collected?

In New Jersey, through local law enforcement. When an officer responds to a fatal or nonfatal overdose, that information is then entered into ODMAP. The information captures whether the overdose was fatal or nonfatal, whether naloxone was administered, and the municipality of the event.

This was the first case in which the New Jersey State Police had shared ODMAP data. Like so many times in an OFR, information shared at a meeting by members is just the beginning of an idea/recommendation and transitioning the information and data into an actionable recommendation can seem complicated and unclear.

As of 2022, the OC-OFRP has reviewed more than **178 drug-related deaths** and grown to having more than **30 affiliated partners** with strong relationships with behavioral health agencies and local law enforcement. The OC-OFRP has developed multiple subcommittees to support the OC-OFRP, including the following:

- Executive Committee
- Stigma Reduction Committee
- Chief's Opioid Response Committee
- Ad Hoc Committee to review recommendations from the fatality review meetings

Building a Recommendation Action Plan

For the OC-OFRP to move forward with the new ODMAP data/information and make an actionable plan, the following steps were taken:

1. Be curious and ask questions.

The first step was simple: the OC-OFRP facilitator needed to learn more about ODMAP. Sometimes, a fact-finding mission is just a phone call to the right contact person.

2. Use an executive or recommendation committee to move an idea into a draft recommendation.

After learning more about ODMAP and confirming that a local health department could get access to the platform, the next step was engaging the OC-OFRP Executive Committee to endorse the idea of using ODMAP at the local level. The executive team identified the value of having access to overdose spike information and wanted to explore how other jurisdictions may be using ODMAP.

3. Do not recreate the wheel.

The next step was partnering with the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) liaison to help facilitate meetings with other counties and states that were using ODMAP to identify best practices.

4. Develop a full recommendation.

The OC-OFRP decided to develop an Ocean County Overdose Response Plan that would utilize ODMAP data from the previous 24-hour period to identify overdose spikes using a tiered threshold that would be determined through a subcommittee process.

5. Draft a recommendation implementation action plan.

This step may be the most difficult in the process, since the OFR has to identify who will take responsibility of the recommendation. For the OC-OFRP, it was determined that the OCHD could successfully implement this project as a local health department familiar with data analysis and with strong community partnerships. It was decided that grant funding would be ideal to support the project in its infancy to dedicate full-time staff to the development of the Ocean County Overdose Response Plan. If funding was secured and the plan was successfully developed, then the OCHD could sustain the project after funding was completed.

6. Identify and track grant funding opportunities that exist at the local, state, and national level.

This activity is ongoing. OFRs consistently identify new recommendations. Having an ongoing list of funding opportunities available that can possibly fund and support existing or future OFR recommendations will greatly increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Securing Grant Funds to Implement Recommendation

It was perfect timing. The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) was launching the Implementing Overdose Prevention Strategies at the Local Level (IOPSLL) funding opportunity. The OC-OFRP was ready to move into action and applied for and received funding to implement the recommendation to develop an overdose response plan.

Timeline to Develop a Data-informed Overdose Response Plan

From November 2020 through July 2022, the Ocean County Overdose Response Plan was developed through a subcommittee process.

August 2020	• ODMAP discussed in OFR meeting
Fall 2020	• Executive meeting approval • Research on ODMAP done
November 2020	• NACCHO application submitted • Application accepted (funding received)
January 2021	• Ocean County Overdose Response Plan • Ocean County media campaign

Ocean County Overdose Response Plan

Using ODMAP data combined with emergency room data, Ocean County identified an average of five fatal/nonfatal overdoses a day.

Using that as a baseline, a tiered response was developed using the overdose data from the previous 24 hours.

Ocean County's Tiered Response Plan

Tier	Overdose Threshold	Response Plan
Tier 1: Situational Awareness	**10–13 suspected overdoses** (fatal and nonfatal) If fatal, move to Tier 2 response.	• Email alert to subcommittee members · Launch internal alert • Email alert to distribution list
Tier 2: Activation	**14–15 suspected overdoses** (fatal and nonfatal) If 25 percent fatal, move to Tier 3 response.	• Email alert to subcommittee members · Launch internal alert • Email alert to distribution list • Sharing of media campaign material • Sharing of Narcan resources
Tier 3: High Alert Response	**17 or more suspected overdoses** (fatal and nonfatal)	• Email alert to subcommittee members · Launch internal alert • Email alert to distribution list • Sharing of media campaign material • Countywide alert sent via information messaging system at health department • Sharing of Narcan resources • In development—social media posts

At times of overdose spikes, email notifications are sent to partners including ages and municipalities of overdose events. The spike notification emails provide the knowledge of overdose activity to the partners but also provides flexibility for them to use the information that works best for the community, their clients, and their staff.

For example, the local hospital system disseminates the spike notification email to all emergency room staff to provide awareness of the current overdose climate in the county. Behavioral health partners utilize the spike notification to alert staff providing individual or group sessions in order to provide additional supports for clients who may be in early recovery.

Access the **Ocean County Overdose Response Plan** at https://www.ochd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Ocean-County-Overdose-Response-Plan-Draft-2nd-Edition.pdf.

Visit the COSSUP Resource Center at **www.cossup.org**

Learn more about OFRs and facilitation at **www.ofrtools.org/**.

About the Institute for Intergovernmental Research

The Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR) serves as the connecting point for COSSAP training and technical assistance (TTA) efforts and collaborates with Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) leadership and fellow TTA providers to work directly with COSSAP site-based grantees. IIR's role includes guidance and contributions by subject-matter experts in priority COSSAP areas of focus; coordination of the COSSAP TTA network's cadre of experts and providers; publication production and design of COSSAP resources; planning, coordination, and delivery of national-level trainings and working group meetings; COSSAP Resource Center development and maintenance; coordination of distance-learning opportunities and resource dissemination; and other complementary activities.

About BJA

BJA provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. To learn more about BJA, visit www.bja.gov and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.