

Opioid Abuse and Mental Health

Learning briefs provide information on key challenges faced in our region using data to foster discussion and to inform action

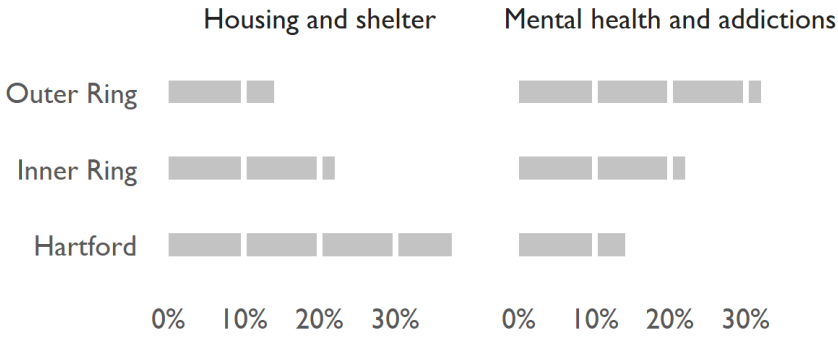
SNAPSHOT OF THE REGION

While substance abuse is not a new challenge, opioid abuse has been rapidly increasing throughout the country. Connecticut and Greater Hartford are no different and communities are working to respond to this challenge.

In the last year, 25 percent of calls to 211 were requests for ‘mental health and addiction’ support, exceeded only by calls for housing and shelter (28 percent)¹. Calls for mental health and addiction were the highest share of calls in many suburban towns in the inner ring (towns like West Hartford and Manchester) and outer ring (towns like Simsbury and Tolland).

Connecticut has the 5th highest rate of opioid-related emergency department visits in the country.² ‘Alcohol and Substance Abuse’ is one of the top 5 reasons for Emergency Department non-admissions at area hospitals³ and opioids were rated as the second most problematic substance (following alcohol).⁴ From 2003 to 2014, hospitalizations of babies born addicted to opioids and experiencing withdrawal nearly tripled in Connecticut, from 137 to 384.⁵

Top reasons for 211 calls



People returning from jail or prison often face these challenges - 77 percent of returning citizens have identified substance abuse treatment needs, while 25 percent have mental health treatment needs.⁶

Admission for opioid treatment increased in the region by 14 percent since 2012, with most of the increase occurring in suburban areas.⁷ In 2017, over 2,700 residents were admitted for treatment.

1 CT 211 Counts data, accessed 3/21/18
 2 Opioid-Related Inpatient Stays and Emergency Department Visits by State, 2009–2014. HCUP Statistical Brief #219. December 2016. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
 3 St. Francis Community Health Needs Assessment, 2016
 4 Hartford Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, 2016
 5 ‘For babies with opioid withdrawal, a mom-centered approach,’ CT Mirror, 10/23/2017
 6 Greater Hartford Reentry Center Plan, Diamond Research Consulting, 2017
 7 DMHAS, Unduplicated Clients by Town, 2012 – 2016

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Accidental drug deaths increased in the region 2.4 times since 2012, with 206 deaths recorded in 2017.⁸ Most of this increase has occurred in the white population in inner-ring suburbs – towns like East Hartford, Manchester, Newington and West Hartford. Deaths from drug overdose in the region ranged from 14 to 81 years old, with an average age of 43 years. 76 percent were men and 70 percent were white. Fentanyl, cocaine and heroin are the substances most frequently-involved in accidental deaths.

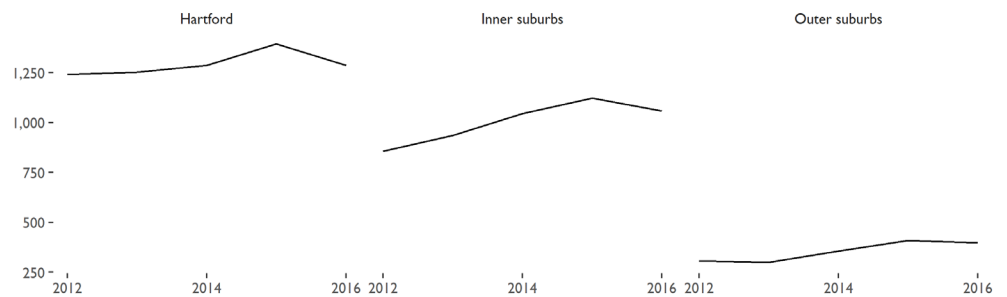
HARTFORD FOUNDATION INVESTMENTS

The Hartford Foundation has had long-standing investments in substance abuse and mental health services. In addition, broad-based support in our priority areas – education, family economic security and vibrant communities - helps address the complex, intersecting challenges of opioid use and mental health.

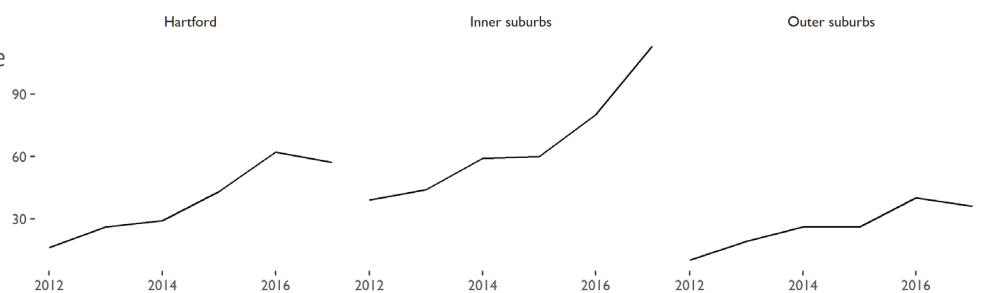
Best practices have focused solutions in three areas: 1) prevention, 2) treatment and 3) recovery. Hartford Foundation funds have provided programmatic, operating and capacity-building support to organizations in the region working in these areas.

Funds for prevention have supported online education about Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, weekly opioid prevention training and population data on mental health and substance abuse. Treatment and recovery services offered by grantees include behavioral health services, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), counseling and therapy, mental health and substance abuse evaluations for returning citizens, rehabilitation services and medication management and integrative therapies (acupuncture, yoga, and expressive art therapy, nutritional education and writing) to address both addiction and mental health.

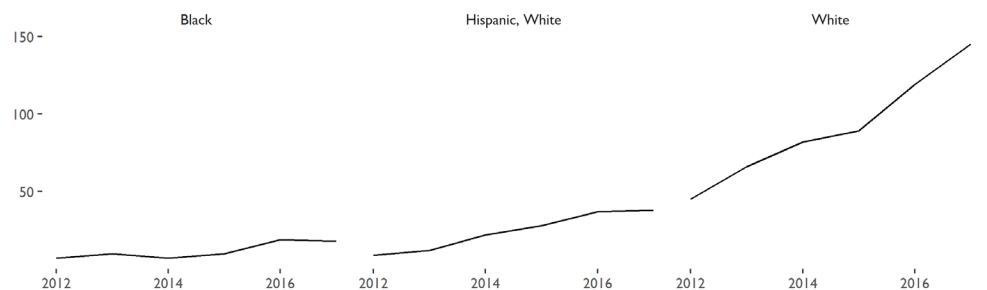
People admitted for opioid treatment by town (Hartford region)



Accidental drug-related deaths by town (Hartford region)



Accidental drug-related deaths by race (Hartford region)



8 Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2012 – 2017 data