



# Ashland County Health Department

**Ashland County  
2023 Overdose Death Summary Report  
Prepared by: Ashland County Health Department  
March 6, 2024**

The purpose of this report is to take a deeper dive into the overdose deaths of Ashland County citizens by looking at various demographics and data points of those who have died by overdose in 2023.

2023 is the second year that Ashland met and completed an official report. A full report was provided to ODH in 2022 and data was provided in 2021.

Included in this report is information about the nature and composition of the review committee, data, demographic information, and charts related to the 2023 review. A comparison of the number of deaths in previous years is included. A summary of findings rounds out the report with suggestions for the next steps toward prevention.

Ashland County is a rural county in Ohio with a population of about 52,447 at the 2020 census. The major area of population concentration is the city of Ashland which is about 20,000. The remainder of the population is distributed among various small towns and townships. Ashland County is mostly White at 96.5% making this community homogenous with a median household annual income of \$58,168 with less than 11% of people in poverty. Currently, Ashland has an unemployment rate of 4.5% which is above the state rate of 3.7%.

This report builds upon the first full report submitted in 2023 for the year 2022. Ashland County Health Department and the residing community partners find value in meeting annually to review these cases and try to determine action steps to help reduce the cases in the county.

Law enforcement and the court system are aware that more dangerous drugs are making their way into the community. This new surge is of major concern as we are seeing the impact in the number of cases.

Submitted by:

Vickie Taylor, Health Commissioner

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# Overdose Fatality Review Committee for Ashland County

## Purpose and Objectives

Two major objectives were presented to the committee for the meeting which was held on March 7, 2024:

1. Review for data accuracy for submission to ODH and for report creation.
2. Determine what we can do to reduce overdose rates in Ashland County.

## SFR Meeting Frequency and Structure

Due to the small numbers of suicides and overdoses in Ashland County, the Health Commissioner calls and conducts a joint review of both types of cases as provided for in Section 307.6410 of the Ohio Revised Code. Currently, this is an annual meeting but can meet more frequently should the numbers warrant more frequent meetings.

In January and February, the Health Commissioner pulls the death data report from ODH and determines which cases are classified as overdose cases. This list of names is given to the county coroner's office to verify and pull local reports and autopsy information. Once the deaths are verified as suicide, the names are given to the rest of the committee members.

## Committee Members and Partner Agencies

The committee consists of the following:

ACHD Health Commissioner

ACHD Medical Director

ACHD Director of Nursing or delegate

Chief of Police for the City of Ashland

A representative from the Ashland County Sheriff's Department

Coroner or designee

Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Board

Director of Ashland County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (since this is a combined meeting)

A representative from University Hospital (often the pharmacist)

Ashland County Prosecutor

Director of Ashland County Job and Family Services

## Review Process and Data Collection

Data is collected from the various organizations and during the meeting, the Overdose Fatality Review Data Form found in the ODH Overdose Fatality Review Manual is used to house the information. This data is then presented in a Spreadsheet for ODH.

Records used for investigation include:

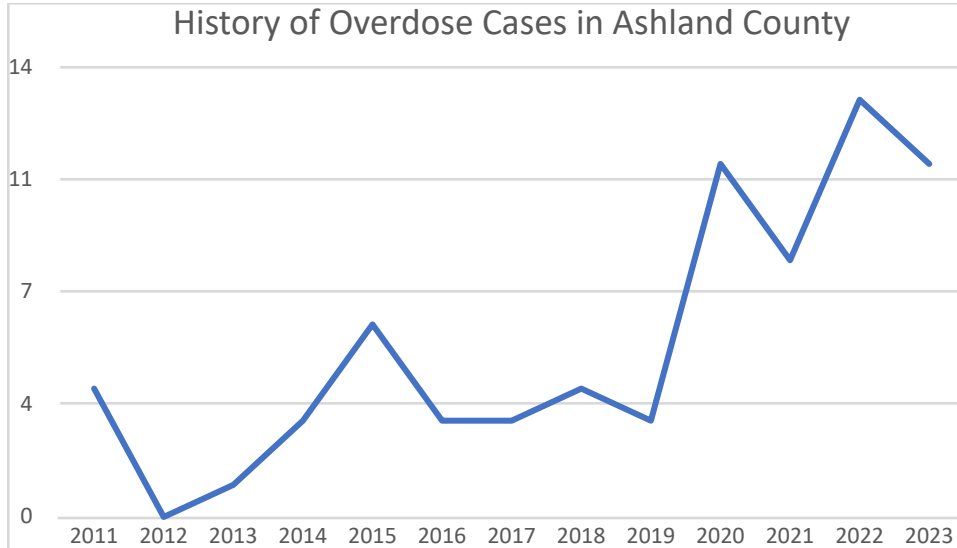
- Death Certificates
- Coroner's reports

- Obituaries
- Law Enforcement Reports
- Past criminal history
- Autopsy reports (if performed)
- Job and Family Services involvement
- Treatment for mental health or drug use interventions

# ODFR Data, Charts, and Findings

## Number of Overdose Deaths and trends

**Chart 1: Overdose Deaths per year (data are from ACHD Vital Statistics and ODH Overdose reports).**



Overdose rates are slightly down but not as low as pre-Covid rates. Law Enforcement was not surprised the rates were higher due to the increase of drug sales in the county.

## AGE and SEX

**Chart 2: Number of Overdoses among Ashland County Residents by Age**

Age	2023		2022		2021	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
0-18	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
18-24	2	18%	0	0%	1	12.5%
25-34	1	9%	2	15%	4	50%
35-44	5	46%	6	46%	3	38.5%
45-54	3	27%	4	31%	0	0%
55-64	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%
65+	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>	

**Chart 2B Age Counts**

	2023	2022
<b>Average Age:</b>	36	34

<b>Youngest</b>	19	22
<b>Oldest</b>	45	42

**Chart 3: Number of Overdose Deaths among Ashland County Residents by Sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>2023</b>		<b>2022</b>		<b>2021</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Males	7	64%	9	69%	6	75%
Females	4	36%	4	31%	2	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>	

## Race and Ethnicity

### Race:

#### 2021-2022

With the demographic of Ashland County being over 96% white/non-Hispanic, it would not be surprising that all of the deaths were categorized as such. For both years of comparison, the race/ethnicity of the total suicides was White/non-Hispanic. However, in 2022 one death was attributed to Black, one Mexican/Hispanic and 11 to white.

#### 2023

As with previous year, most of the cases (10) were White non-Hispanic except for one who was American Indian or Alaskan Native.

### Education Levels

Chart 4 below is a summary of the education levels of each of those who have died from suicide. In both years, the majority had at least a high school education and some college. These figures are consistent for both years with 2021 having one who did not graduate from high school. Demographics for Ashland County show that about 90% of county residents are high school graduates or higher and 22% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Ashland County does have a private University.

**Chart 4: Number of Overdoses among Ashland County Residents by Education Level**

<b>Education</b>	<b>2023</b>		<b>2022</b>		<b>2021</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Did not Graduate from High School</b>	5	46%	4	31%	1	12.5%
<b>High School Graduate or GED</b>	4	36%	7	54%	3	37.5%
<b>Some College</b>	2	18%	0	0%	4	50%

<b>College Graduate or Higher</b>	0	0%	2	15%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>	

## Community Breakdown

One's zip code can be a social determinant of health and a determining factor for higher risk for certain illnesses and diseases. According to Healthy Northeast Ohio ([healthyneo.org](http://healthyneo.org)). The mental health index is a measure of social determinants and health factors correlated with self-reported poor mental health. Both Ashland City and Loudonville have a high mental health index meaning of 72 and 64.3 on a scale of 0 (low need) to 100 (high need).

More information can be found at [healthyneo.org/Ashland County](http://healthyneo.org/Ashland County).

**Chart 5: Number of Suicide Deaths among Ashland County Residents by Zip Code**

Zip Code/ Area	2023		2022		2021	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
44805 - Ashland City	7	64%	9	68%	3	38%
44001 – Amherst *	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%
44838 - Hayesvilles	0	0%	0	0%	1	12%
44287 – West Salem (partial AC)	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%
44840- Jeromesville	1	9%	0	0%	0	0%
44842 - Loudonville	0	0%	1	8%	2	26%
44848 - Nankin	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
44859 - Nova	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
44864 - Perrysville	2	18%	1	8%	1	12%
44866 - Polk	1	9%	0	0%	0	0%
44874 - Savannah	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
44880 - Sullivan	0	0%	0	0%	1	12%
44837 - Greenwich (partial AC)	0	0%	0			
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>	

**\*Death occurred in Ashland County, but the residence was Amherst (Lorain County).**

## Drug Type

Below is a summary of types of drugs found in the decedent's toxicology reports and/or listed on the death certificate as cause of death. Many victims had multiple drugs in their system at the time of death so if you add the number in the chart below, it will far exceed the number of deaths. This data shows that fentanyl and its derivatives are the major drugs causing overdose deaths. Cocaine was on the increase in 2022 compared to 2021. However, 2023 also shows an

increase in methamphetamine use.

Chart 6: Number of Overdose Deaths among Ashland County Residents by Drug Type

Drug Class	2023		2022		2021	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Fentanyl	9	26%	10	31%	8	27%
Methamphetamine	5	15%	1	3%	1	3%
Fluro Fentanyl	2	6%	4	13%	3	10.5%
Acetyl Fentanyl	1	3%	1	3%	3	10.5%
Alcohol	1	3%	3	10%	2	7%
Diphenhydramine	0	0%	0	0%	3	10%
Opioids	0	0%	2	6%	1	3%
Benzodiazepines	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%
Clonazepam	0	0%	1	3%	2	7%
Marijuana/THC	2	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Cyclobenzaprine	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%
Heroin	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
Cocaine	3	9%	5	16%	1	3%
Gabapentin	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
Tramadol	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%
Trazadone	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%
Difluoroethane	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Benadryl	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Xylazine	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
4-ANPP **	3	9%				
Benzoyllecgonine	1	3%				
Bromazolam	1	3%				
Ketamine	1	3%				
Mitragynine	2	5%				
Oxycodone	1	3%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\*The number of overdoses adds up to more than the number of deaths due to multiple drugs being present

4-ANPP is a new drug class for Ashland County. We know it is a synthesis process for fentanyl, but it was determined it should have a single designation.

## Discussion and Implications

Ashland is concerned about the increasing trends of overdose deaths in 2022 and higher again in 2023. The county prosecutor stated they are seeing more of the fentanyl coming into the county from many other counties and this is alarming. We can only assume the trends will continue and more illegal drugs will be brought into the county.

## Next Steps for Ashland County

The following suggestions were provided to develop more steps in addressing overdose in Ashland County:

- Continue with Narcan distribution through Project Dawn and other harm-reduction programs
- Continue with drug education programming in the local schools
- Talk about self-care, especially to those with high-stress situations or severe medical crises
- Law enforcement put out more messaging on the Quick Response Teams (QRT) that are in place within the county
- Share on blogs and social media messaging on how to recognize, respond, and recover from drug overdose and drug use
- Make the public aware of all the programming available within the county for rehabilitation and counseling.