



Florida Behavioral Health Association

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Alarming Overdose Statistics Bring Attention to the Need for Treatment

Holiday stresses and demands can trigger anxiety and depression

Tallahassee, Fla. Data recently released by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) paints a troubling picture about drug -related deaths in Florida. FDLE's [Medical Examiners Report](#) shows disturbing data that total drug-related deaths increased by 17 percent in 2020 – that is 2,134 more deaths over the same time period in 2019. Even more concerning, is that 7,842 opioid-related deaths were reported, a 28 percent increase, and 6,089 opioid-caused deaths were reported, which is a 42 percent increase.

“In normal circumstances, holiday stresses and demands can trigger anxiety and depression, but this combined with the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic present complex challenges to those who are trying to achieve sobriety,” said Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) President and CEO Melanie Brown-Woofter. “This problem is not unique to Florida; unfortunately, we are seeing escalating overdose numbers across the entire country.”

Most recently, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released [staggering overdose statistics](#) showing that during a 12-month period from May 2020 to April 2021, over 100,000 people died of drug overdoses in the U.S. Of those 100,000 overdose deaths, 75,000 were due to opioid use.

“We cannot attribute all of these overdoses solely to the pandemic,” Brown-Woofter continued. “The last two years simply unveiled the opioid epidemic that has been going on for years.”

“These numbers are devastating,” said Jan Cairnes, Hanley Foundation CEO and the chair of the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA), the service arm of the FBHA. “But as we enter the holiday season, I want people to know that Hanley Foundation and The Florida Behavioral Health Association members have resources available and trained professionals who want to help end this drug epidemic.”

If you or someone you know struggles from substance use disorder, there is national and statewide help available. Most FBHA members have a toll-free [helpline](#) available. Florida's First Lady Casey DeSantis's [Hope for Healing](#) website helps connect those in crisis to services.

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) provides techniques on how to recognize and resolve holiday triggers. In addition, the [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) (National Council) shares tips for coping with unwanted holiday stress and how to keep you and your family healthy and safe. National Council encourages those who are struggling to make time for self-care, noting that simple things are impactful, like talking to a friend, going for a walk outside and spending time with people who love and support you.

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The Florida Behavioral Health Association is a non-profit organization that provides statewide leadership on behavioral health policy and practice. FBHA supports member agencies offering services to those in need of mental health and substance use disorder assistance and support. Its members include a broad range of provider types, ranging from small specialty organizations to comprehensive treatment organizations with multiple locations within a geographic region.

For more information, please visit www.floridabha.org