Monroe County Overdoses During the First Four Months of 2020

Data Analysis for Project CLEAN

CLEAN-2020-03

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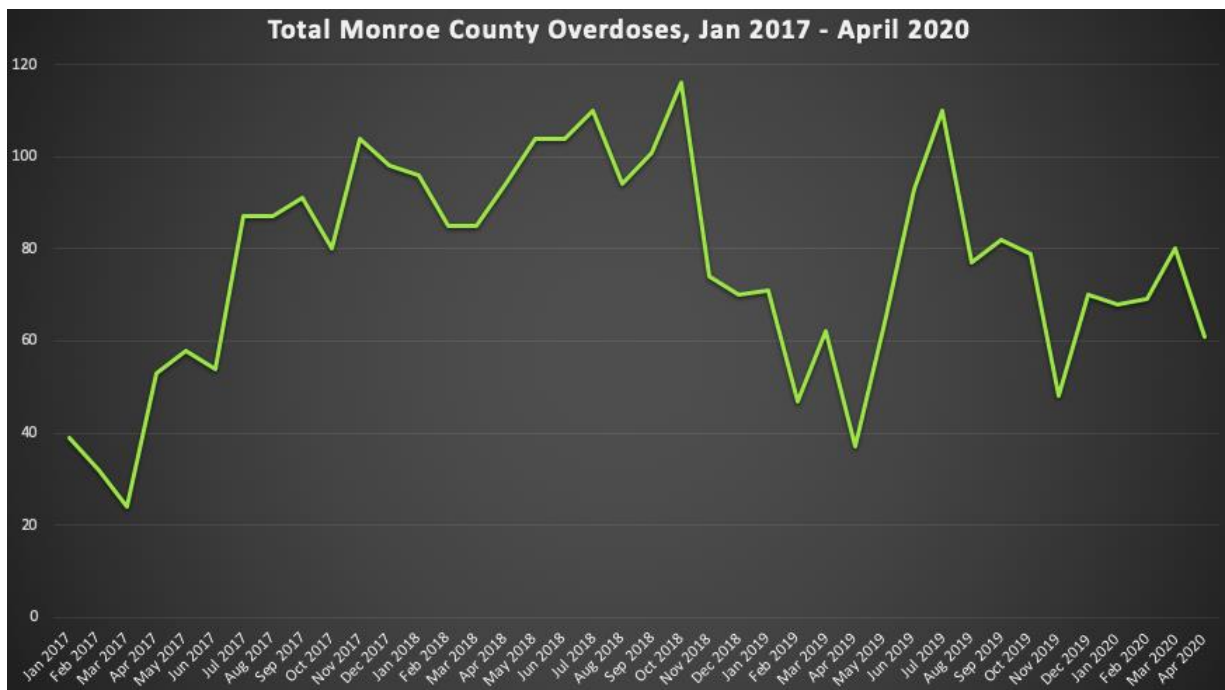Director *Emeritus*, Center for Public Safety Initiatives
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Introduction

This paper provides an overview of overdoses in Monroe County through April 2020, with a focus on comparing the first four months of 2020 to the same months in 2019 and 2018. The paper begins with monthly overdose data, January 2017 through April 2020. We breakout the data at the county level, then down to the city and town/village levels, followed by the Project CLEAN target area. Next, we compare overdose data during the four-month time periods, and then specifically look at fatal overdoses during these four months.

The year 2020 has been a year like no other, with the COVID-19 pandemic hitting communities hard. There is reason to believe that the pandemic is impacting overdoses both locally and nationally. CPSI published a paper highlighting these concerns in April 2020.
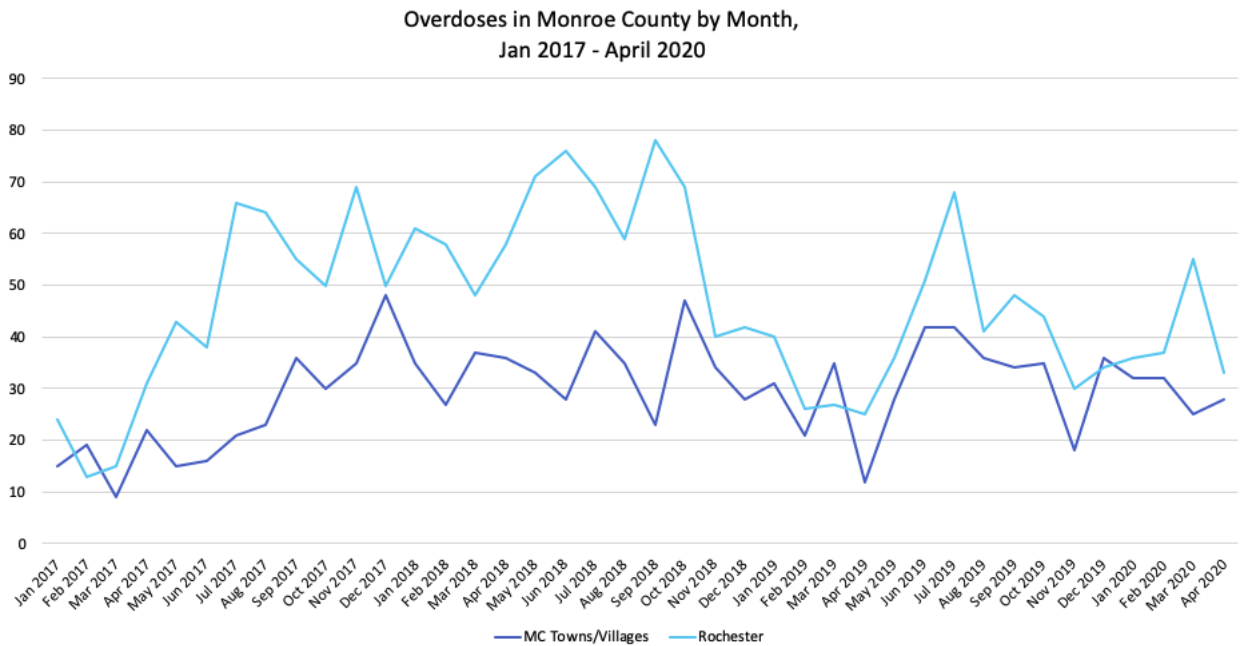
Monroe County Overdoses

The chart below shows the total number of overdoses known to law enforcement beginning January 2017 through to April 2020. The data indicate that while there was a significant decrease in overdoses that began in November 2018 (n =74) and continued through April 2019 (n= 37), during the summer of 2019, overdoses again increased, peaking in July (n = 110). Since January 2020, overdoses have been increasing, however the month of April again saw a decrease in overdoses (n = 61).
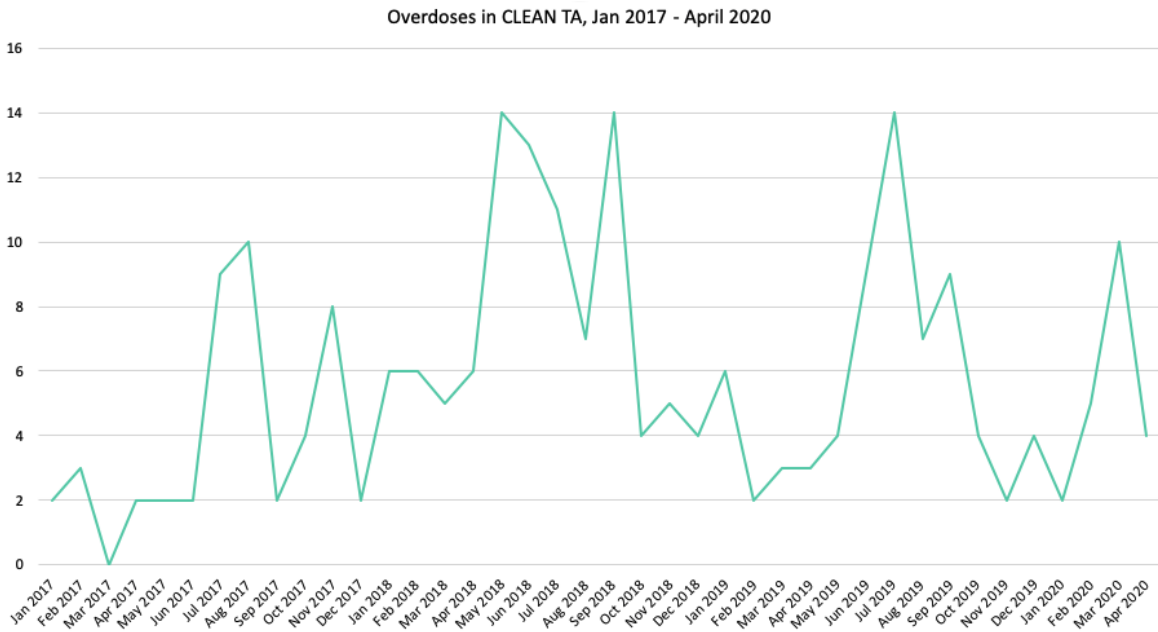

When specifically looking at overdose data comparing Rochester to Monroe County towns and villages, the two geographies generally share some similar patterns, but there are exceptions. For example, February through June 2019, overdoses increased and decreased together.

However, in the most recent months, overdoses in Rochester increased in March (n = 25) while decreasing in the towns and villages (n = 25).

Overdoses in Monroe County by Month,
Jan 2017 - April 2020

Next, we look at overdoses in the Project CLEAN target area over the same time period. Since January 2017, there have been at least 2 overdoses every single month in the target area with the exception of March 2017 (zero overdoses). Overdoses range from 2-14 each month. This area seems to follow a similar pattern to both the city and towns/villages, with a steady increase in overdoses through September 2018, followed by a decrease, then an increase again in June 2019, followed by a decrease and then again an increase in February 2020.

Overdoses in CLEAN TA, Jan 2017 - April 2020

Overdoses, January – April 2018, 2019, 2020

Next, we look specifically at the first four months of 2020. These four months were unique in that the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in NY State in the middle of March 2020, resulting in all but essential businesses closing on March 18th by order of NY State Governor Cuomo.
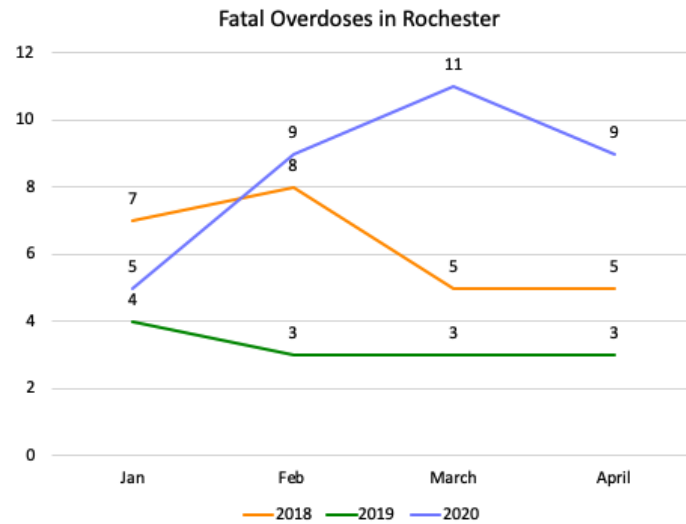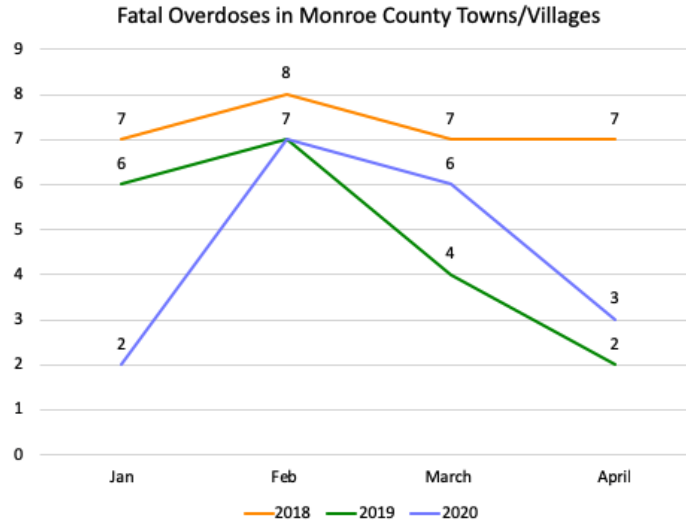
The data from the first four months indicate that there is an increase in overdoses in 2020 compared to 2019. While the numbers are not the same as the 2018 peak, the overdoses in the target area did increase from 2018 to 2020 by one (23 overdoses the first four months of 2018 and 24 in 2020). March was a particularly troublesome month for the target area. This was also the month when NY PAUSE began as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that the total Rochester overdoses include the overdoses in the CLEAN Target Area.

	Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
Fatal and Nonfatal Overdoses in Monroe County	2018	96	85	85	94	360
	2019	71	47	62	37	217
	2020	69	69	80	61	279
Fatal and Nonfatal Overdoses in Monroe County Towns/Villages		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	35	27	37	36	135
	2019	31	21	35	12	99
	2020	33	32	25	28	118
Fatal and Nonfatal Overdoses in Rochester		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	61	58	48	58	225
	2019	40	26	27	25	118
	2020	36	37	55	33	161
Fatal and Nonfatal Overdoses in CLEAN TA		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	6	6	5	6	23
	2019	6	2	3	3	14
	2020	5	5	10	4	24

Fatal overdoses, are showing a serious cause for concern, as they increased by 62% from 2019 (n = 32) to 2020 (n = 52) across the county, and were nearly the same as in 2018 (n = 54). It seems that this increasing trend is being driven by fatal overdoses in the city, as there were more than double the number of fatal overdoses in the city in 2020 (n = 34) compared to 2019 (n = 13) during January through April.

	Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
Fatal Overdoses in Monroe County	2018	14	16	12	12	54
	2019	10	10	7	5	32
	2020	7[1]	16	17	12	52
Fatal Overdoses in Monroe County Towns/Villages		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	7	8	7	7	29
	2019	6	7	4	2	19
	2020	2	7	6	3	18
Fatal Overdoses in Rochester		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	7	8	5	5	25
	2019	4	3	3	3	13
	2020	5	9	11	9	34
Fatal Overdoses in CLEAN TA		Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2019	1	0	0	0	1
	2020	1	1	3	1	6

[1] Note that while the Heroin Task Force reported 8 fatal overdoses in January 2020 across the County, the database we received only indicated 7 fatal overdoses in January 2020. We expect this number to change when we receive May and June's overdose data from the Heroin Task Force.

Fatal Overdoses in Monroe County Towns/Villages

Legend: 2018, 2019, 2020

Fatal Overdoses in Rochester

Legend: 2018, 2019, 2020

Conclusion

It is not clear what is contributing to the increase in overall overdoses, but, most striking, is that fatal overdoses are increasing at a high rate compared to the previous year. This could be related to COVID-19, which may have disrupted the drug trade, impacting the quality and cutting agents used, it could also be due to calls for isolation, with people more frequently using alone, without anyone present to administer Narcan if an overdose occurs. This data indicates that we have in not fully gotten in front of the opioid epidemic locally. Instead, it highlights the complicated nature of addiction and overdoses and the need for a sustained multi-pronged approach. We did make some important gains last year, but in order to return to those gains, the public health, safety, community, and treatment sectors cannot lose focus on opioid problem in Monroe County.