Death Investigation Guide

Detecting a Drug Overdose on Scene

**Limbs**
- Check for evidence of needle tracks, including fine needle punctures or bruising between fingers, under nails, toes, within the lines of tattoos, wrists, ankles, and backs of hands
- Check for evidence of burned fingertips or lips that may suggest smoking or drugs
- Check for transdermal patches that may indicate use of fentanyl

**Head**
- Check for the presence of foam cone in nose or mouth
- Check for the condition of teeth
- Check for the presence of patches or baggies in oral cavity
- Check for a perforated nasal septum

**Surroundings**
- Take pictures and document findings in your investigative reports!
- Check clothing for foreign objects, vials, or baggies
- Check drawers, cupboards, and medicine cabinets
- Check waste baskets and garbage bins outside
- Look for paraphernalia such as needles, tourniquets, powders, scales, cut straws, rolled up money or broken pens
- Count the number of pills. Record the number of prescriptions and who the prescription belongs to

**Completing the Drug Overdose Investigation off Scene**

**Check the PDMP**
- Check the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) for prescribed controlled substances: https://indiana.pmpaware.net/login
- Record your findings in the investigation report

**Collect Body Specimens**
- Blood (at least 10mL)
- Urine
- Vitreous
## Death Investigation Guide

*Circumstantial information is important for investigators. Consider collecting the following for the decedent:*

### Mental Health
- ✓ Current or past treatment for mental health
- ✓ Any known mental health diagnosis
- ✓ History of suicide ideation or attempts
- ✓ Physical evidence of self harm
- ✓ Left a letter, note, text or email of intent

### Medical History
- ✓ Full medical history if possible from primary care provider or psychiatrist
- ✓ Pain medications found on scene

### Recent Problems
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Alcohol
- ✓ Legal
- ✓ Physical health
- ✓ Job or financial
- ✓ Homelessness
- ✓ School
- ✓ Evictions
- ✓ Death in family or among friends
- ✓ Arguments or fights
- ✓ Bullying or harassment

### Demographics
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Height
- ✓ Sex
- ✓ Race
- ✓ Ethnicity
- ✓ Marital status
- ✓ Sex of partner
- ✓ Sexual orientation and pregnancy status
- ✓ Occupation and veteran status

### Recent Institution Release
- ✓ Incarcerated (jail, prison, probation and community corrections)
- ✓ Residential treatment or recovery program
- ✓ A medical care facility such as hospital or nursing home

### Childhood Trauma
- ✓ Physical abuse or neglect
- ✓ Sexual abuse or neglect
- ✓ Emotional abuse or neglect

**Parental history of:**
- ✓ Abuse
- ✓ Separation
- ✓ Substance misuse

### Homicide
- ✓ Previous victim of violence
- ✓ Physical fight, argument, brawl
- ✓ Stalking, prostitution
- ✓ Self-defense, bystander, random?
- ✓ Hate crime, lover's triangle

### Suicide
- ✓ Did victim leave a note?
- ✓ Did victim disclose intent to someone?
- ✓ Did victim experience a recent death of family or friend?
- ✓ Did victim have any previous attempt history?

### Substance Use History
- ✓ Evidence of prescription drugs such as type and name
- ✓ Evidence of injection or other route such as snorting, transdermal, smoking, or ingestion
- ✓ Evidence of illegal drugs such as powders, tar, crystal, or fake pills
- ✓ Evidence of morphine prescription
- ✓ Any bystanders present at overdose
- ✓ Any naloxone administration given by whom and how much
- ✓ Current or past substance use disorder such as opioids, alcohol, or other drug
- ✓ Last known use of substance such as days, weeks, or months
- ✓ Last known overdose such as month, years, or longer
- ✓ Recent relapse such as weeks, months, or longer
- ✓ Living with another with substance use disorder who is using

### If death included a firearm
- ✓ Firearm type such as rifle, pistol, and the caliber/gauge
- ✓ Firearm make, model, and serial number
- ✓ Firearm owner
- ✓ Check if the firearm was stored and locked up loaded