



## **OKLAHOMA COMMISSION ON OPIOID ABUSE**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT\***

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MIKE HUNTER**

**CHAIRMAN**

**DECEMBER 31, 2020**

\*Due to health concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the expiration of the amendments to the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act which allowed virtual meetings, the Commission was unable to assemble a quorum to meet in-person in December 2020 to conduct business. As a result, the Chairman submits this report only to document the meetings of the Commission for 2020. This report will be presented to the members in 2021 for approval and possible amendment. An adopted final report will be supplied as soon as the group is able to safely conduct business.

## **The Oklahoma Commission on Opioid Abuse**

The Oklahoma Commission on Opioid Abuse was created in response to the state's opioid crisis through Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 by Senator AJ Griffin and Representative Tim Downing in 2017. In 2019, the Commission was reauthorized by House Bill 2368, coauthored by Representative Chris Kannady and Senator Roger Thompson. The 13-member commission, chaired by Attorney General Mike Hunter, consists of members from law enforcement, the medical community, mental health and recovery, the private sector, and Oklahoma state agencies. The complete list of members is attached as Appendix "A." In order to comply with the Open Meeting Act, 25 O.S.Supp.2020, §§ 301 *et seq.*, my office has filed a notice of meetings for 2021 with the Oklahoma Secretary of State. A list of those meeting dates is attached as Appendix "B."

Due to health concerns created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the expiration of the amendments to the Open Meeting Act which allowed virtual meetings, the Commission was unable to convene a quorum of members in December in order to adopt a final report. As a result, I am submitting this document to report on the work of the Commission for 2020. It is my sincere hope that the Commission can meet in early 2021 to discuss and adopt this report and offer recommendations regarding legislation and other preventative and curative measures as we continue to address the opioid crisis in Oklahoma. Until then, this remains only a Chairman's Report.

### **Overview**

The Oklahoma Commission on Opioid Abuse held two public meetings in 2020. The unforeseen impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic affected the Commission and members, but the work continued. The Commission was able to meet in person in March, 2020. Due to changes in the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, the Commission was able to meet virtually in September, 2020. During these meetings, the group studied opioid use statistics, federal and state-wide legislation, mental health support, healthcare best practices, and scientific advancements. The following is a brief summary of the 2020 meetings.

### **March 10, 2020**

The Commission met and heard from numerous stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The first presentation was by Zach Stoycoff of the Healthy Minds Initiative. Mr. Stoycoff updated the group on the parity legislation, SB1718 by Senator Montgomery and Representative Echols, which was endorsed by the Commission. SB1718 covered mental health parity and increased transparency by mandating that a health benefit plan shall not impose a nonquantitative treatment limitation with respect to mental health and substance use disorders unless they are comparable to and applied no more stringently than to medical and surgical benefits. It requires all health benefit plans to meet the requirements of the federal Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and requires insurers that offer any individual or group health benefit plan providing mental health or substance use disorder benefits to submit annual reports to the Insurance Commissioner that includes a description of the medical necessity criteria, identification of nonquantitative treatment limitations, and an analysis showing that mental health and substance use disorder benefits are not applied more stringently than medical and surgical benefits. The bill passed and was signed by the governor on May 19, 2020.

Next, the Commission heard from Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (OBNDD) Chief Agent Craig Williams, who presented on the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) integration and opioid statistics and trends. He explained that the PMP integration would allow providers to immediately access PMP data thus removing hurdles and increasing workflow accessibility for physicians. Regarding opioid statistics, he informed the group that daily Morphine Milligram Equivalents (“MMEs”) have dropped 20% since 2018 and 40% since 2016. Total MMEs dropped similarly: 21% decrease since 2018 and over 40% decrease since 2016. The decreases in daily and total MMEs highlight the positive work that this commission and the state of Oklahoma are doing to combat the negative impacts of the opioid crisis.

Dr. Jason Beaman, chairman of the Opioid Overdose Fatality Review Board, presented to the Commission. He explained that the purpose of the Review Board is to reduce opioid overdose fatalities by analyzing data obtained through case reviews of persons who die due to licit or illicit opioid use and use such studies to develop recommendations to improve opioid policies, procedures, and practices in the state of Oklahoma. Dr. Beaman presented the Board’s final report and shared trends seen in case review. He explained that case reviews are showing an increased risk in heroin, fentanyl, and methamphetamine overdose deaths, as well as the increased risk associated with the co-prescribing of opioids and benzodiazepines. The report can be viewed at: [https://www.oag.ok.gov/sites/g/files/gmc766/f/documents/2020/final\\_fatality\\_review\\_board\\_report\\_1-31-2020\\_.pdf](https://www.oag.ok.gov/sites/g/files/gmc766/f/documents/2020/final_fatality_review_board_report_1-31-2020_.pdf).

Maressa Treat, State Outreach Director for U.S. Senator James Lankford, also presented to the Commission, updating the members on pending federal legislation aimed at curbing the negative impacts of opioids, including H.R.4739, which directs Customs and Border Protection to issue safety protocols, trainings, and personal protective equipment for the safe handling of potential synthetic opioids. H.R.4739 was placed on Senate General Order on June 1, 2020.

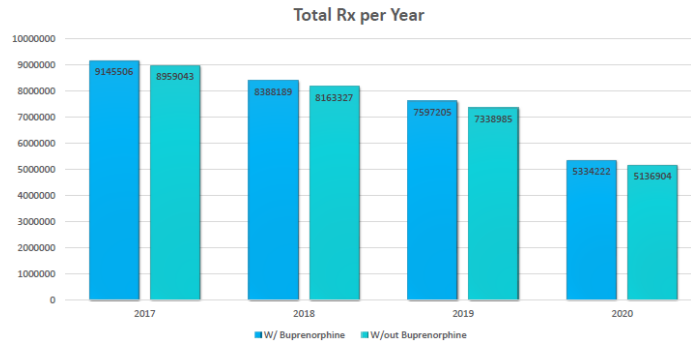
During sector announcements, Jessica Hawkins, Senior Director of Prevention Services for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS), shared the expansion plans for the distribution of naloxone to county jails. Dr. Scott Anthony emphasized the seamless integration of the PMP into the electronic prescribing system. Dr. Braly explained that the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry is teaching students to check the PMP every 180 days and is highlighting the importance of checking for benzodiazepines.

### **September 10, 2020**

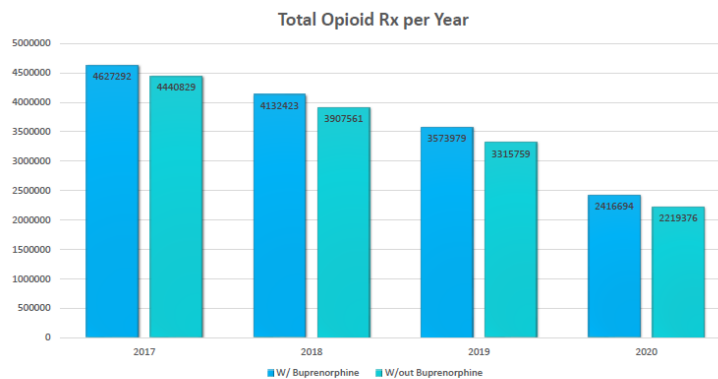
Commission members met virtually on September 10 via the WebEx virtual platform. Dr. Don Kyle, Executive Director of Biomedical Research, updated the Commission on research from the Oklahoma State University National Center for Wellness and Recovery. He explained that researchers are currently looking at a different type of molecule that activates opioid receptors while limiting or lessening side effects such as respiratory depression, while still delivering a minimally effective analgesic dose. In addition, certain research molecules have profiles that may lead to an effective alternative treatment for fentanyl overdose. Dr. Kyle believes science will eventually lead us to an ultimate cure for addiction and alternatives for chronic pain.

OBNDD Chief Agent Craig Williams returned to the group’s second meeting to provide an update on electronic prescribing and opioid trends. Because e-prescribing is now mandatory, 88% of prescriptions are submitted electronically while just 5.19% of prescriptions are written. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased e-prescribing and telemedicine practices. Notably, total prescriptions are trending downward per year since 2017, as are opioid prescriptions as seen in the charts below.<sup>1</sup>

## PMP Statistics



## Opioid Statistics



In 2017, opioid prescriptions (not including buprenorphine) totaled 8,959,403. In 2019, that number had decreased to 7,338,985. For the first three quarters of 2020, that number had dropped to 5,136,904. These preliminary numbers show a significant decrease in opioid prescriptions since our inception in 2017, and the numbers continue to trend downward in 2020.

During sector announcements, Ms. Hawkins shared that DMHSAS has continued to operate naloxone hubs and increase access to medication assisted treatment clients. They are also operating an online platform where the general public can request naloxone or pill disposal packs.

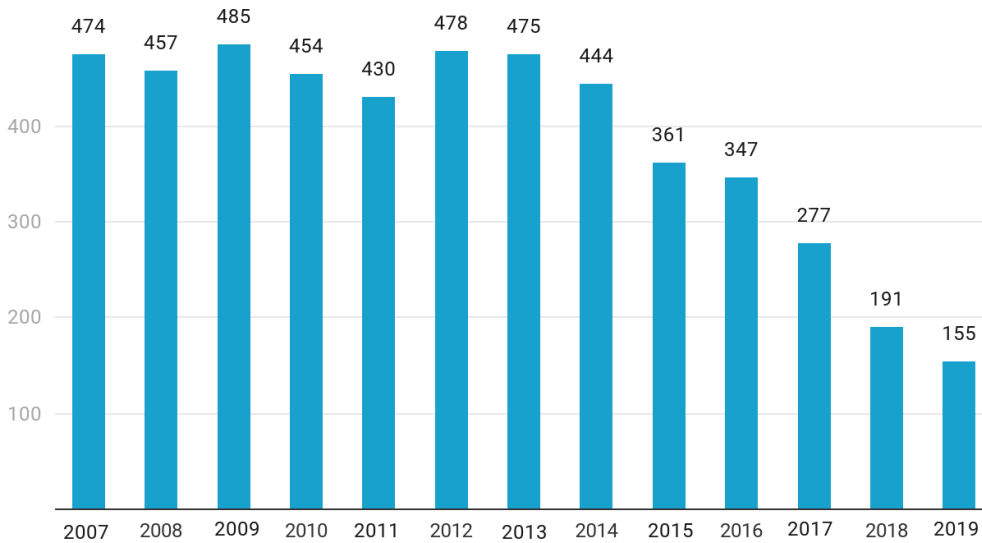
<sup>1</sup>The charts can be found in Appendix “C” and Appendix “D,” respectively.

Naloxone hubs and information on safe pill disposal can be found at <https://okimready.org/prevention/>.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Oklahoma Commission on Opioid Abuse by limiting in-person interactions and meeting opportunities, but the Commission persisted in its dedicated work to make Oklahoma a safer and healthier state. Since the work of this commission began, we have seen an 18% decline in total opioid prescriptions per year since 2019 and the numbers continue to decrease. In addition, data from the Oklahoma State Department of Health shows that prescription opioid deaths have decreased since 2009, with a steady decline from 2012 to 2019, as shown in the chart below.<sup>2</sup>

### Prescription Opioid Deaths 2007-2019



Source: Oklahoma State Department of Health • Created with Datawrapper

Our work continues as we refine legislative recommendations that will save lives and educate Oklahomans. I look forward to continuing this mission in 2021.

Mike Hunter  
Attorney General of Oklahoma

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<sup>2</sup>The chart can also be found in Appendix “E.”

## **Appendix A: Members**

Mike Hunter, Oklahoma Attorney General

Donnie Anderson, Director, Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs

Carrie Slatton-Hodges, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Glen Mulready, Commissioner, Oklahoma Insurance Department

Shonda Lassiter, D.Ph., PIC

Scott Anthony, D.O.

Edmund Braly, D.D.S., FACS, FAACS

Kevin Taubman, M.D., FACS

Jenny Schmitt, M.S., CRNA, APRN

Kevin Buchanan, District Attorney, District 11

Bob Howard, Owner, Bob Howard Auto Group

The Honorable Roger Thompson, Oklahoma Senate, District 8

The Honorable Chris Kannady, Oklahoma House of Representatives, District 91

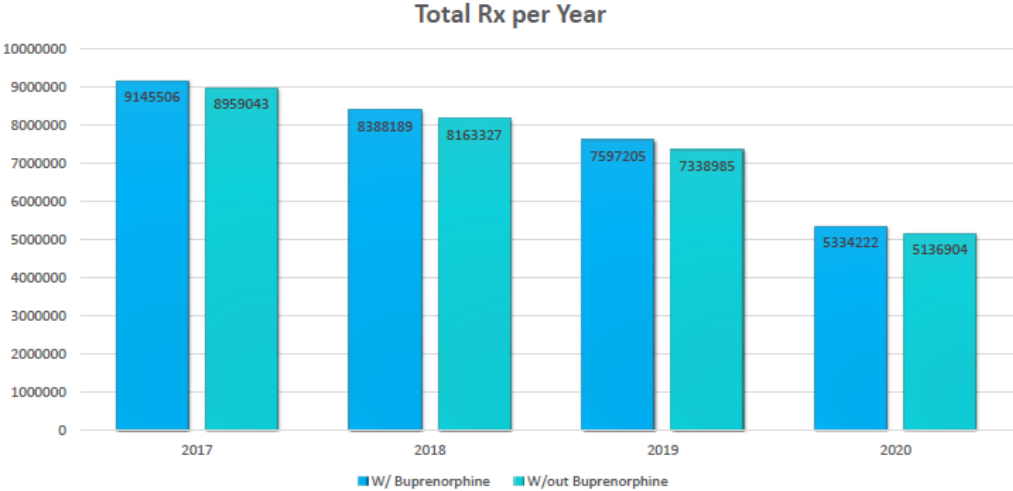
## **Appendix B: Meeting Dates**

The Commission is scheduled meet on the following dates and times. All meetings will be held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and published on the Secretary of State's website.

1. Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 1:30pm at Oklahoma Office of Attorney General
2. Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 1:30pm at Oklahoma Office of Attorney General
3. Thursday, September 9, 2021 at 1:30pm at Oklahoma Office of Attorney General
4. Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 1:30pm at Oklahoma Office of Attorney General

**Appendix C: Total Prescription Rates as Presented on September 10, 2020**

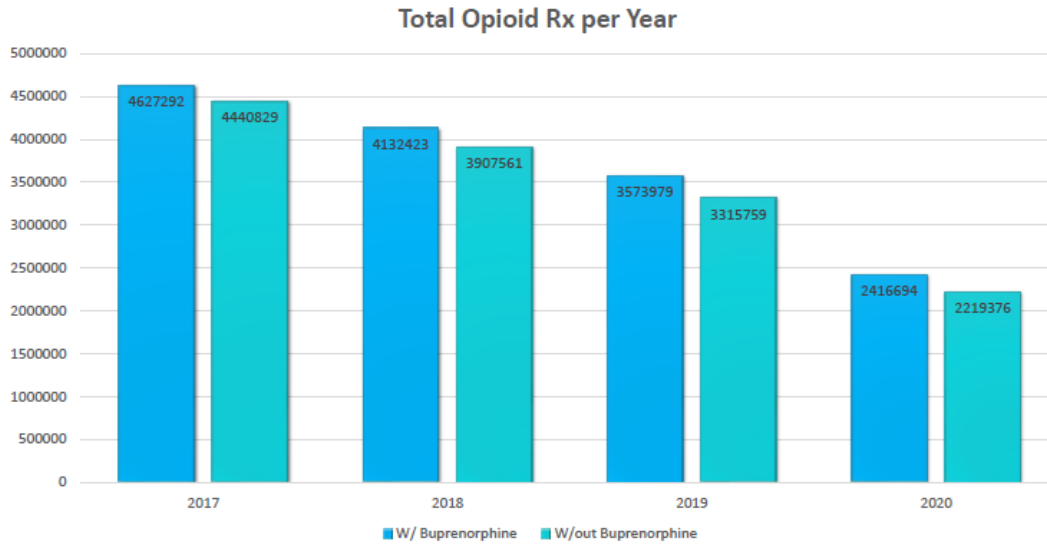
# PMP Statistics





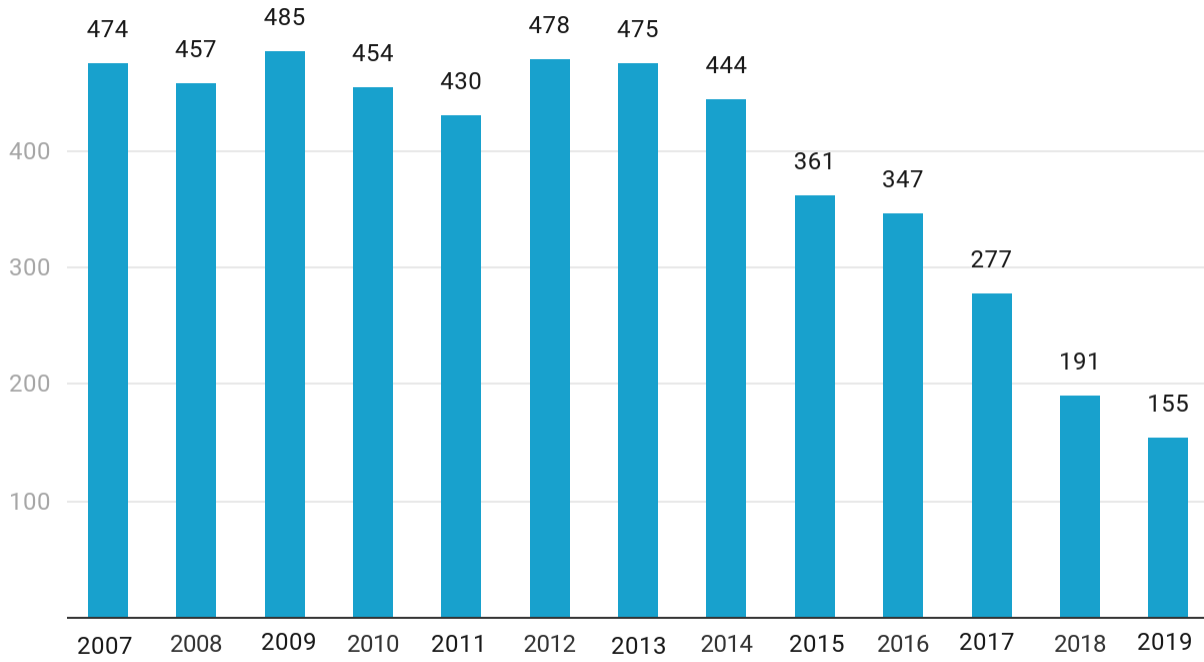
**Appendix D: Opioid Prescription Rates as Presented on September 10, 2020**

# Opioid Statistics



## Appendix E: Prescription Opioid Death Chart

### Prescription Opioid Deaths 2007-2019



Source: Oklahoma State Department of Health • Created with Datawrapper