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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody and Law Enforcement Leaders Sound the Alarm as Deadly Fentanyl Catapults Panhandle Counties to Top Spot for Per Capita Opioid Death Rate in Florida

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—As deadly fentanyl from Mexico continues to exacerbate the national opioid crisis claiming thousands of lives across the country, Florida is also suffering the effects. A recent report shows that the Pensacola Medical Examiner District now has the state's highest per capita opioid death rate. To warn Floridians in the four-county district, Attorney General Moody, FDLE, FHP and local law enforcement leaders today urged the media to help warn residents about the dangers of using illicit substances.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "The national opioid crisis, bolstered by deadly fentanyl from Mexico and China, continues to claim lives in Florida—with the Pensacola Medical Examiner District being hit the hardest on a per capita basis. Today, I joined local law enforcement leaders to urge everyone to never use illicit substances. We are also encouraging anyone struggling with addiction to seek help immediately. Resources can be found at DoseofRealityFL.com."

FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass said, "I thank Attorney General Moody for her commitment to law enforcement and the safety of our citizens. I've been to the Southern border and seen the drugs and crime that comes into our nation firsthand. I'm proud of our FDLE agents and analysts proactively investigating these crimes disrupting drug trafficking organizations and intercepting these drugs."

Escambia County Sheriff Chip Simmons said, "The opioid epidemic has hit every community in our country. We have been working tirelessly to create a plan of attack to address this deadly substance head-on. This plan combines a robust enforcement strategy and a partnership with our public health colleagues and Attorney General Moody in order to fully combat this epidemic. We look to reduce and disrupt the illicit supply chain while working with public health to provide services to those vulnerable to opioid effects."

Okaloosa County Sheriff Eric Aden said, "Right now every law enforcement community across America is dealing with the drug overdose opioid/fentanyl pandemic and none greater than right here in Florida. We are seeing record numbers of overdoses related mainly to fentanyl that is flowing from our Southern border and being distributed throughout our communities. We are experiencing cross-contamination of other illicit drugs such as methamphetamine and marijuana causing overdoses associated with those drugs as well. This is truly a national crisis affecting every community in Florida."

The per capita death rate hoisting the Pensacola Medical Examiner District to the top spot for opioid deaths is calculated from FDLE's just-released 2022 Florida Medical Examiners Interim Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons report. The district, that includes Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties, has a per capita death rate that doubles the state's average rate, according to the report. Data derived from the report shows that:

- The state average per capita opioid-related death rate is 21 deaths per 100,000 residents;
- The Pensacola District's per capita opioid-related death rate per 100,000 is 42 deaths per 100,000; and
- Of the 349 opioid-related deaths in the Pensacola Medical Examiner District, 60% involved fentanyl.

While the Pensacola Medical Examiner District ranks first in per capita opioid-related deaths, it is second only to Daytona Beach District in for fentanyl deaths per capita. Hydrocodone and morphine also pose threats to the Pensacola District with death rates propelling the panhandle counties to the top of those lists.

To read the report that covers the first six month of 2022, click here.

Anyone struggling with substance abuse issues should visit DoseOfRealityFL.com, a statewide resource with information combatting drug abuse.

Those struggling with addiction can find specific treatment options nearby at TreatmentAtlas.org .

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