

DATA BRIEF: NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION IN RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

OCTOBER 2023

HANDOUT F3

In response to the opioid epidemic, policies to expand access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone — e.g., allowing pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription or mandating naloxone and opioid co-prescriptions — have emerged across the country. In Arkansas, Act 651 of 2021, which went into effect on July 28, 2021, requires a co-prescription of naloxone in certain situations, including when the dosage for an opioid prescription is 50 or more morphine milligram equivalents (MME) per day, a benzodiazepine has been prescribed previously or will be prescribed at the same time as an opioid, or an individual has a history of opioid use disorder or drug overdose. In 2017, licensed pharmacists became authorized to dispense naloxone to individuals without a prescription under a state protocol.

Since 2020, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement has analyzed naloxone and opioid prescription fills for Medicaid and commercially insured enrollees. Data were obtained from the Arkansas All-Payer Claims Database, part of the Arkansas Healthcare Transparency Initiative, for state fiscal years (FY) 2017 to 2022. Previously reported data have also been updated, which may result in slight changes. Opioid doses of 50 or more MME per day or 90 or more MME per day are categorized as high-dose opioid prescriptions, consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's prescribing guidelines.

Key Findings

- From FY 2021 to FY 2022, there was a 366% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 340% increase in enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription.
- The number of enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions decreased overall from FY 2017 to FY 2022, while the number of enrollees who filled naloxone prescriptions increased.
- The percentages of enrollees who filled both naloxone and high-dose opioid prescriptions increased from FY 2017 to FY 2022.
 - Among enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions of 50 or more MME per day, the rate of fills from naloxone co-prescribing increased from 0.06% in FY 2017 to 17.58% in FY 2022.
 - Among enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions of 90 or more MME per day, the rate of fills from naloxone co-prescribing increased from 0.12% in FY 2017 to 24.93% in FY 2022.
- The ratio of naloxone prescription fills to the number of enrollees receiving high-dose opioid prescriptions improved from FY 2021 to FY 2022.
 - In FY 2022, one naloxone prescription was filled for every six enrollees with opioid prescriptions of 50 or more MME per day, an improvement from one naloxone prescription fill per 19 enrollees in FY 2021.
 - In FY 2022, one naloxone prescription was filled for every four enrollees with opioid prescriptions of 90 or more MME per day, an improvement from one naloxone prescription fill per 11 enrollees in FY 2021.
- In FY 2022, 2,533 out of 25,987 naloxone prescription fills, or 9.7%, were by pharmacists under state protocol.

ENROLLEES WITH OPIOID PRESCRIPTION FILLS BY AMOUNT AND ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE, FY 2017 TO 2022

	All Enrollees With Opioid Prescription Fills	≥ 50 MME per Day	≥ 90 MME per Day
FY 2017	367,702	113,608	40,380
FY 2018	319,784 (-13.0%)	89,577 (-21.2%)	31,551 (-21.9%)
FY 2019	278,870 (-12.8%)	60,600 (-32.3%)	22,404 (-29.0%)
FY 2020	249,883 (-10.4%)	56,820 (-6.2%)	22,714 (1.4%)
FY 2021	241,851 (-3.2%)	54,143 (-4.7%)	22,243 (-2.1%)
FY 2022	238,440 (-1.4%)	54,667 (1.0%)	23,104 (3.9%)



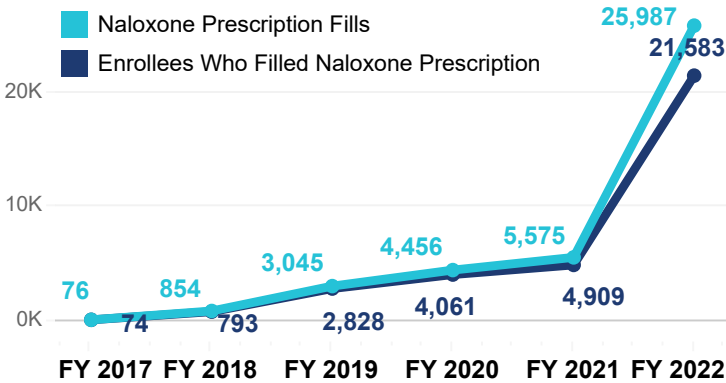
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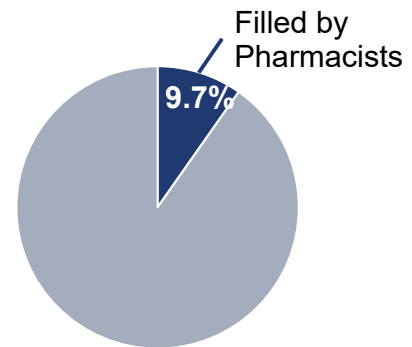
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From FY 2021 to FY 2022, there was a 366% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 340% increase in enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription. The considerable increase in naloxone dispensations in FY 2022 followed the implementation of Act 651. Approximately 10% of naloxone prescription fills were by pharmacists under state protocol in FY 2022.

NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS AND ENROLLEES WHO FILLED A NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION

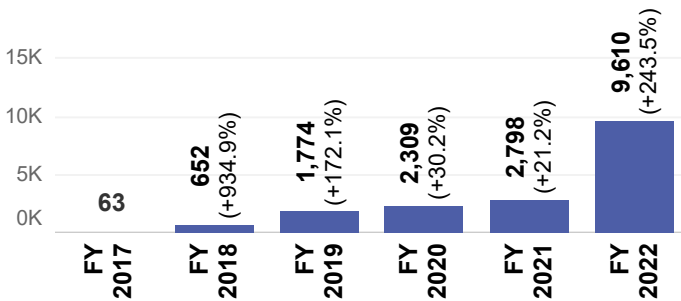


FY 2022 PERCENTAGE OF NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS BY PHARMACISTS UNDER STATE PROTOCOL

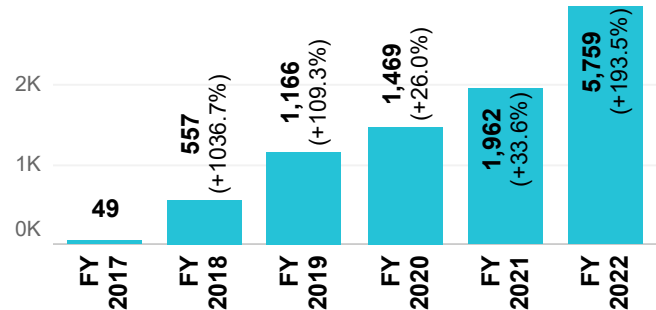


Each state fiscal year, the number of enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions increased. From FY 2021 to FY 2022, the number of enrollees increased by 243.5% among those with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and by 193.5% among those with 90 or more MME per day.

ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 50 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS

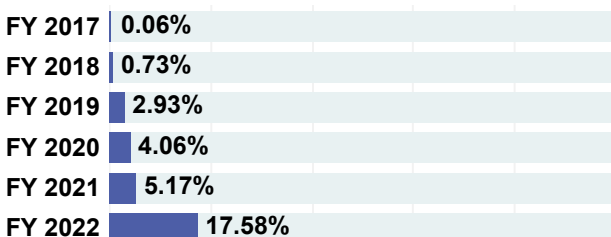


ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS



In FY 2022, the percentage of enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions was 17.58% for enrollees with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and 24.93% among enrollees with 90 or more MME per day.

PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 50 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION



PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION

