

## Increase in Carfentanil Detected in Marion County

August 13, 2024

We are writing to inform you of an increase in Carfentanil detected through our syringe surveillance program. It was detected at multiple SSP sites across Marion County. In addition, there have been two accidental overdose deaths involving carfentanil.

### Background:

Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid, in the same class as fentanyl. It is commonly used in veterinary medicine to anesthetize large animals, such as elephants. Carfentanil is reported 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl.<sup>4</sup> In recent news, it has also been detected in East Coast states, such as Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut.<sup>1-3</sup>

### Summary of Syringe Surveillance Data:

From June to July, Marion County saw an **increase of 153%** of syringes containing Carfentanil. In July, syringes tested positive for Carfentanil also contained 4-ANPP, Fentanyl, Xylazine, Cocaine, and Methamphetamine. The latest syringes (July) were collected from Safe Access and Support sites located in 46201, 46203, and 46227 zip codes.

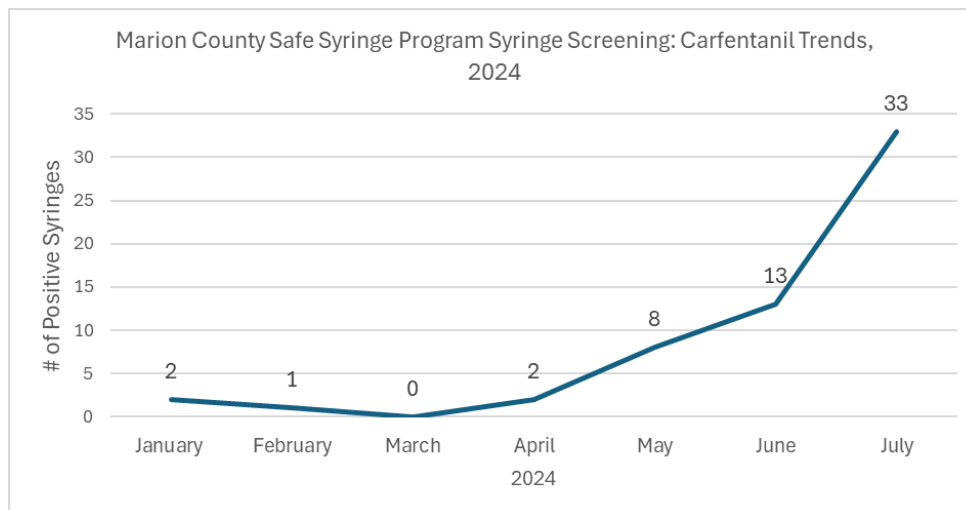


Figure 1: Carfentanil Trends, Source: IDOHL Syringe Surveillance Data

*\*Please note: Zip codes represent the SSP's location and do not represent where the client lives.*

### Summary of MCCO Data:

According to the [2023 MCCO Annual Report](#), Marion County saw no deaths in 2023 involving carfentanil. From May to July 2024, there were 2 accidental overdose deaths involving carfentanil. Carfentanil was found in combination with fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and levomethorphan.

*\*Please note: Not all toxicology reports are completed for July, so this number is subject to change*

## Health Impacts:

Carfentanil can produce the following side effects: disorientation, drowsiness, pinpoint pupils, and itchy skin. Due to its potency, there is an increased risk for overdose, especially among people with low opioid tolerance<sup>2</sup>.

## Recommendations:

- **Give Naloxone.** Due to smaller amounts typically present, fentanyl test strips may be unable to detect the presence of carfentanil, therefore education and access to naloxone is critical<sup>2</sup>. It is important to keep naloxone in hand and administer.
- **Utilize Fentanyl Test Strips.** Testing can assist in detecting the presence of fentanyl in drug samples. Testing strips are still encouraged, as carfentanil is often seen in combination with fentanyl, and fentanyl analogs.
- **Rescue Breaths.** Perform rescue breathing, preferably using a mouth shield.
- **Utilize the rescue position.** Lay the person on their side, bend their knee, and turn their face to the side to open airway and prevent choking. More information can be found here: <https://harmreduction.org/issues/overdose-prevention/overview/overdose-basics/responding-to-opioid-overdose/>
- **Inform us** if you notice any unusual overdose cases or other information that should be shared with partners.

## References:

1. Fenster, J. (2024, August 8). *Deaths in CT rising from “Elephant tranquilizer” carfentanil; 100 times more potent than fentanyl.* Deaths in CT rising from “elephant tranquilizer” carfentanil; 100 times more potent than fentanyl. <https://www.ctinsider.com/connecticut/article/ct-opioid-fentanyl-carfentanil-overdose-up-19620787.php>
2. Franklin, F., Teixeira de Silva, D., & Best, A. (2024, March 14). *Health Alert.* Philadelphia Department of Public Health Division of Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction. <https://hip.phila.gov/document/4281/PDPH-HAN-0440A-03.14.24-1.pdf/>
3. Linn-Walton, R., & Mantha, S. (2024, July 25). *2024 Health Advisory #20: Carfentanil and Medetomidine in the NYC Drug Supply.* NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/han/advisory/2024/han-advisory-20.pdf>
4. United States Drug Enforcement Administration. (2016, September 22). *DEA issues Carfentanil Warning to police and public.* DEA. <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2016/09/22/dea-issues-carfentanil-warning-police-and-public>