

# Overdose in Passaic County

Data for **No More Dead Ends on the Road to Recovery Conference**

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# NJDOH Overdose Surveillance Activities

NJDOH is funded to track fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses as part of CDC's **Overdose Data to Action in States (OD2A-S)**. Abstracted data goes back to 2012.

**New Jersey's State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS)** links

- death certificates,
- medical examiner reports, and
- post-mortem toxicology reports

and enters de-identified data into a CDC-hosted data entry system.

The most recent national data can be found on the dashboards at the  
CDC, Division of Overdose Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

# NJDOH Overdose Surveillance Activities

Trained data abstractors review source documents and materials, following CDC's standardized coding guidance to code incident characteristics such as:

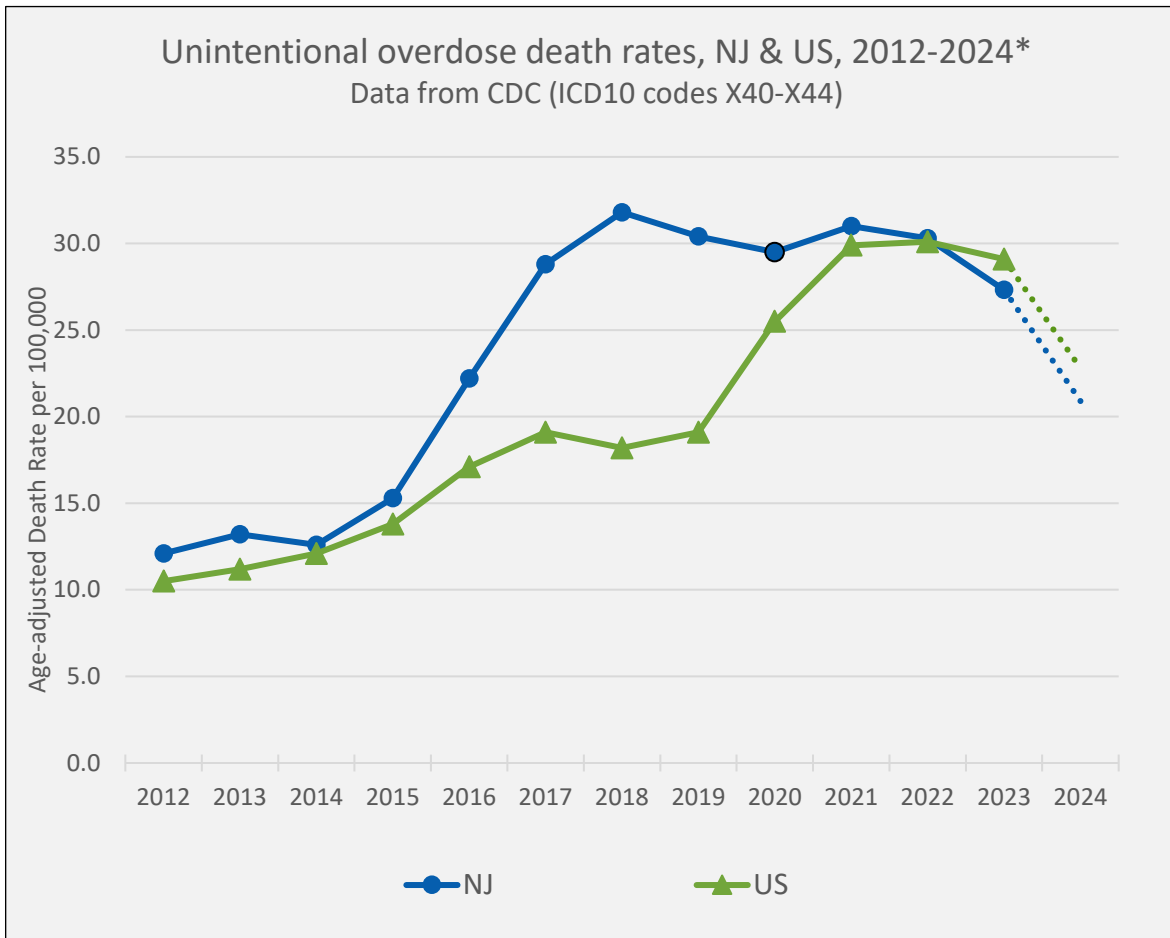
- Basic and enhanced demographics
- Death scene information, including location of injury and emergency aid rendered
- Detailed toxicology results that allows tracking of emerging substances in the environment
- Decedent circumstances and situations, including
  - reported history of treatment for mental health problems, substance and/or alcohol use disorders;
  - recent conflicts, crisis situations, interactions with authorities or health care;
  - reported treatment for chronic pain and other health conditions; and
  - reported history of prior overdoses

# Data collection highly dependent on sources

## How do we know what we know about mortality among at-risk populations?

- NJ SUDORS capable to collect information *if it is in the existing record*
- NJ SUDORS does not substitute for an Overdose Fatality Review Team, but can act as a sentinel for assessing trends in mortality, emerging threats
- Information on usage patterns often missing in the death records.
- This **amplifies** the importance of NJ SUDORS data abstractors and the standardization offered by the NJ SUDORS program. Most information sought is “knowable”, it just needs to be added to the record.

**Reliance on surveys, resource utilization data, anecdotal information from the living to guide interpretation of mortality data**



Source: 2012-2023: CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS. \*2024: CDC Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence Dashboard (Provisional data for "2024" Dec 2023 to Nov 2024) (Accessed 7/23/2025).

NOTE: Census data from 2010 to 2019 are **not** updated intercensal estimates. Rates may be slightly over-estimated for New Jersey for those years; use caution when trending across the Census year 2020.

# Overdose Declines in NJ

## National, NJ trends differ until 2022...

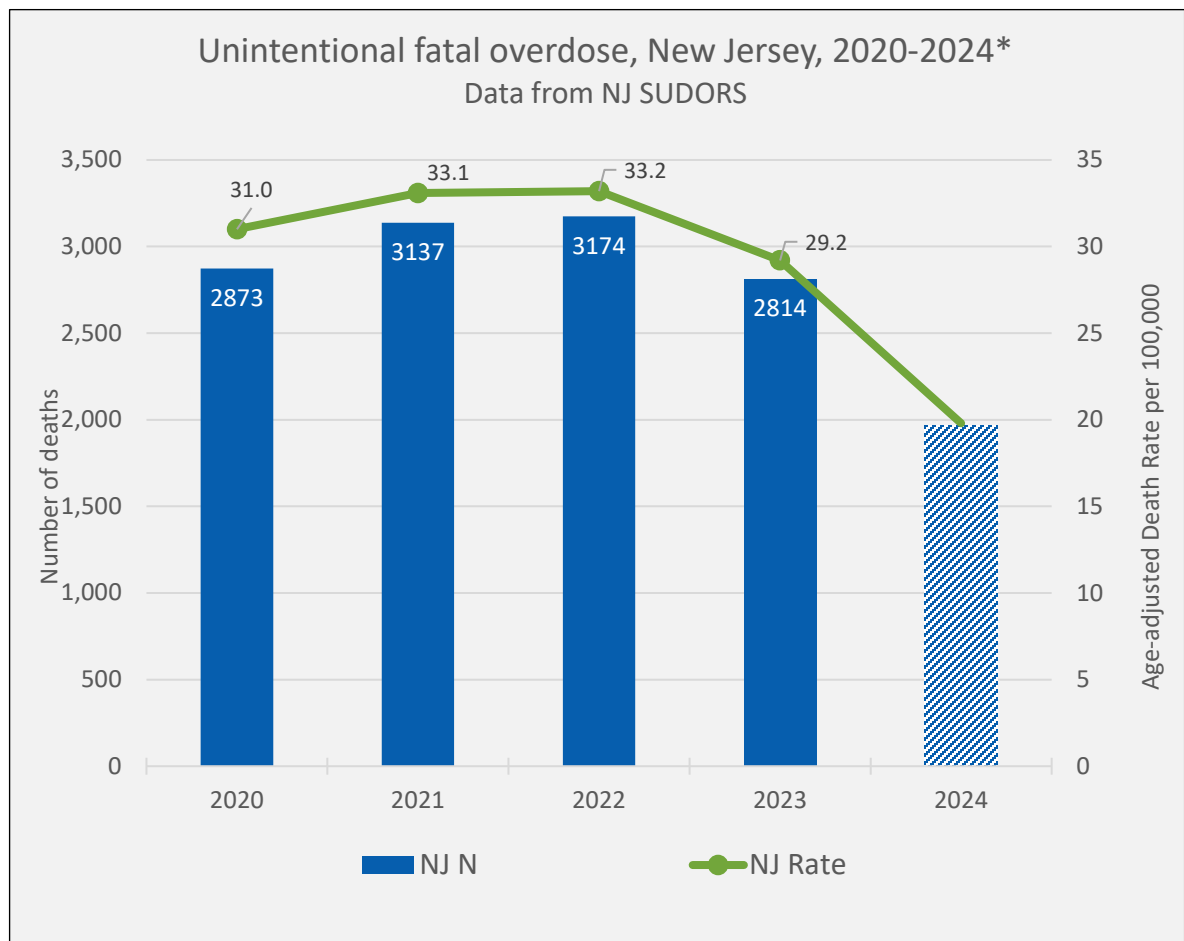
New Jersey's overdose death rate climbed earlier and faster than the national rate, until the pandemic. Annual fatal overdose rates in NJ stayed "relatively" flat compared to the dramatic increase nationally from 2019-2021. A recent paper in JAMA concluded in their abstract:

"...[the] shift may reflect changes in drug markets, treatment access, harm reduction efforts, and population-level risk. Although the decline is encouraging, persistent disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions and improved understanding of the underlying drivers."<sup>1</sup>

## National, NJ rates drop, starting in 2023

According to preliminary data from CDC, Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence Dashboard, the Northeast Region including New Jersey is experiencing this kind of decline through November 2024.

1 JAMA Netw Open. 2025;8(6):e2514997. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.14997



Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.

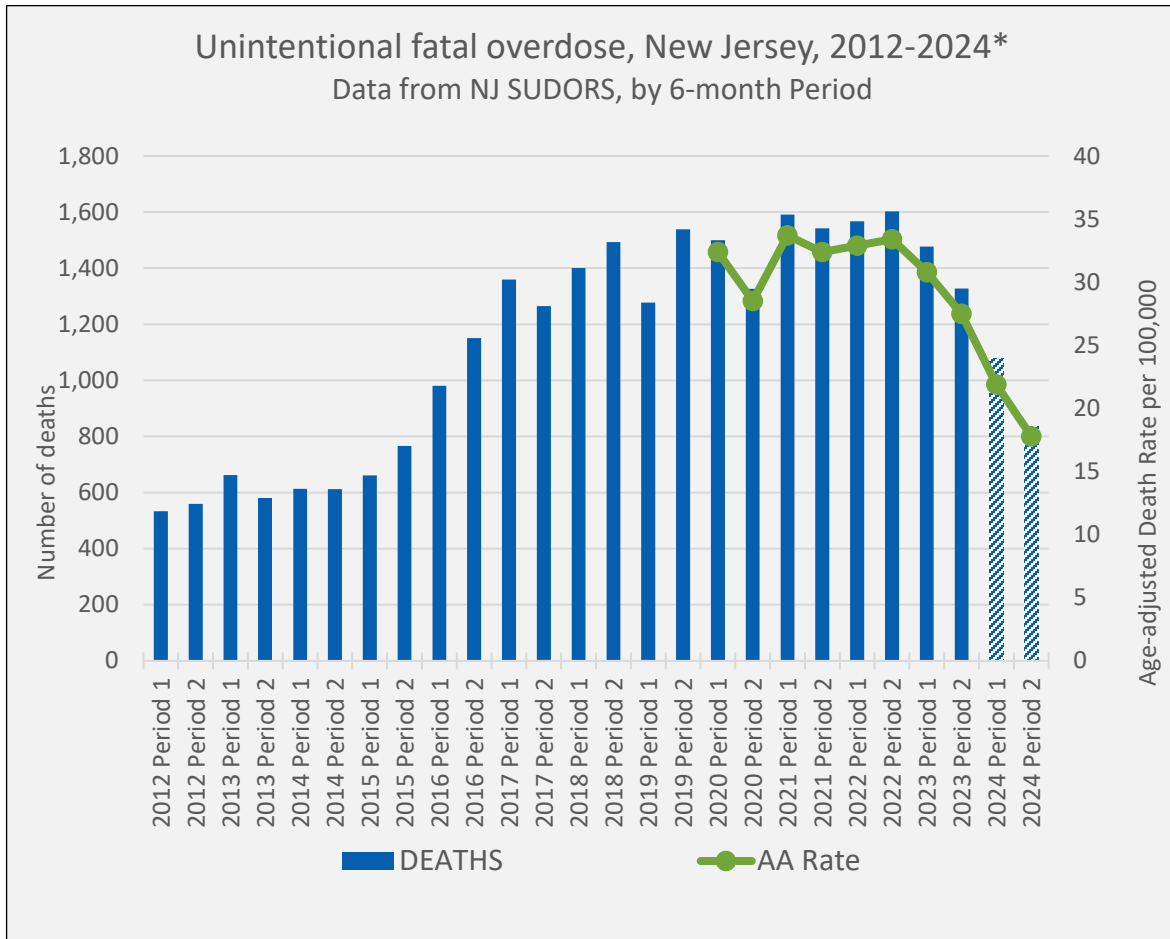
# Overdose in New Jersey

## Deaths from overdose rose, then a dramatic decline

Despite a leveling trend in fatal overdose leading into and including the pandemic year (2020), deaths from unintentional drug overdoses resumed an alarming climb in the post-pandemic years, coinciding with the continuing trends in polysubstance use and increased levels of adulterants like xylazine and emerging substances in the environment. It is difficult to quantify their effects in fatal overdoses, in part because there is often a delay in adding these drugs to the enhanced post-mortem toxicology drug panels.

Until we actively look for them, they are invisible, so NJ SUDORS maintains communication with OCSME and the State Tox Lab and resources at NMS Labs.

Overdoses have become more medically complex to manage, and other effects like skin lesions from xylazine use can further compromise an individual's care.



# Overdose in New Jersey

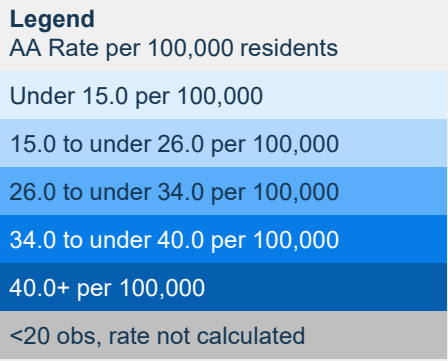
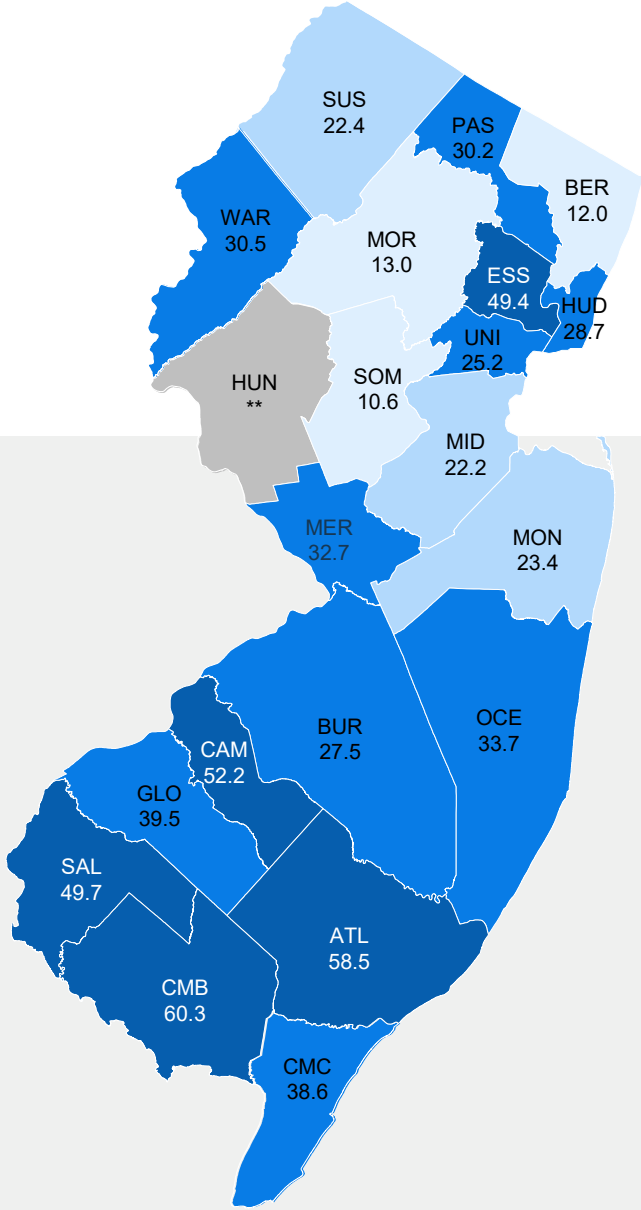
## A closer look by 6-month periods

When looking at the trend in more detail, the steady decline is much clearer, really starting in the second quarter of 2023.

Statewide counts and rates are now closer to 2015 levels.

Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.

# Overdose by county, 2023



Overdose *counts* generally follow population density patterns. High overdose *rates* often occur in lower-population density counties, particularly in South Jersey.

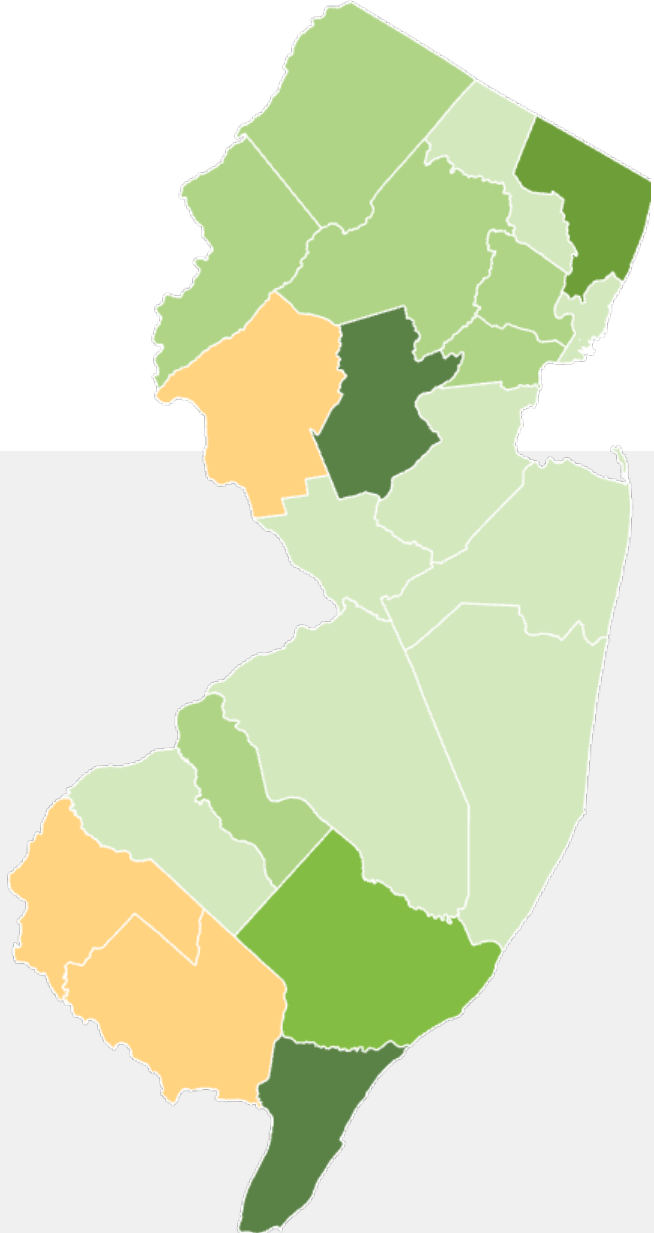
Statewide in 2023, there were 2,814 fatal overdoses among residents, down from 3,174 the year before. Passaic County had 154 resident overdose deaths, down from 167 in 2022.

Passaic County, like neighboring Essex, Hudson, and Union, has a mix of suburbs and more densely populated urban areas which tend to drive county-level rates.

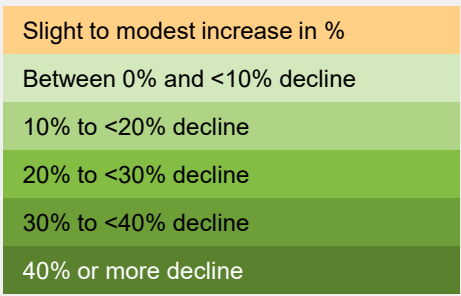
In 2022, **four municipalities** accounted for **80.8%** of all fatal drug overdoses among Passaic County residents: Clifton, Passaic, Paterson, and Wayne Township. In 2023, those 4 municipalities accounted for **83.8%** of Passaic County resident overdose deaths.

Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ

# Fatal overdose declines from 2022 to 2023



**Legend**  
% change from 2022-2023



## Overdose declines have occurred unevenly across the state.

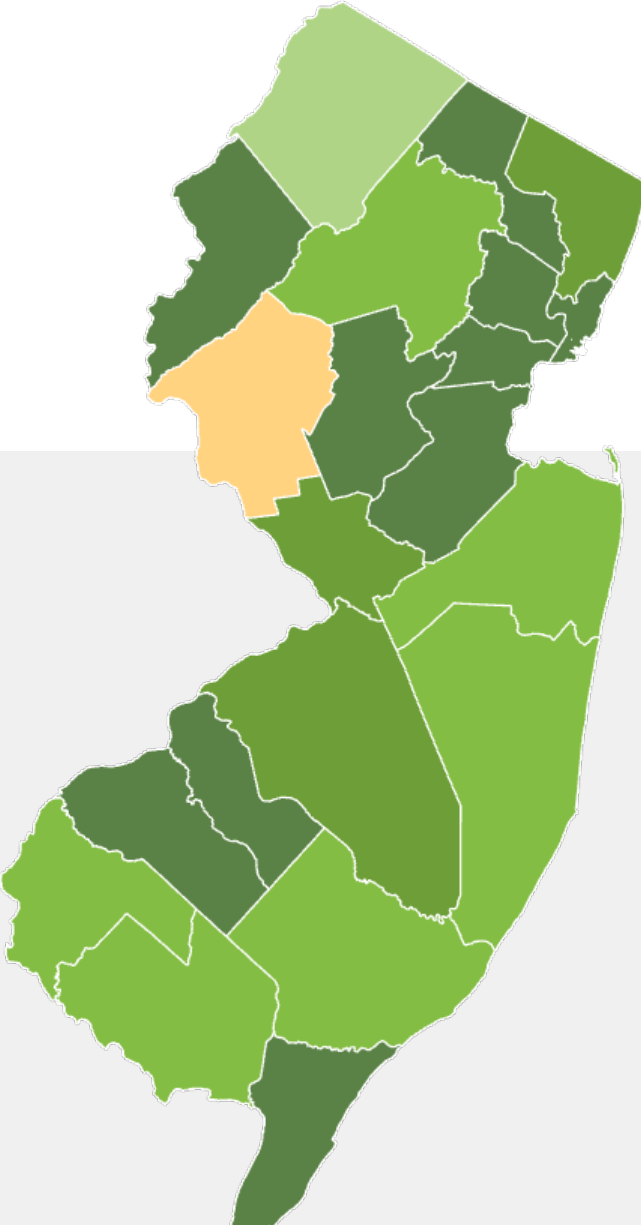
Hunterdon, Salem, and Cumberland counties all exhibited slight to modest increases in overdose rates from 2022 to 2023.

Every other county in New Jersey experienced declines in fatal overdose rates for residents for the same time period, with the largest declines among residents in Bergen, Somerset, and Cape May counties.

Passaic County experienced a 5.5% decline in the resident fatal overdose rate from 2022 to 2023.

Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ

# Fatal overdose declines from 2022 to 2024



**Legend**  
% change from 2022-2024\*

Slight to modest increase in %
Between 0% and <10% decline
10% to <20% decline
20% to <30% decline
30% to <40% decline
40% or more decline

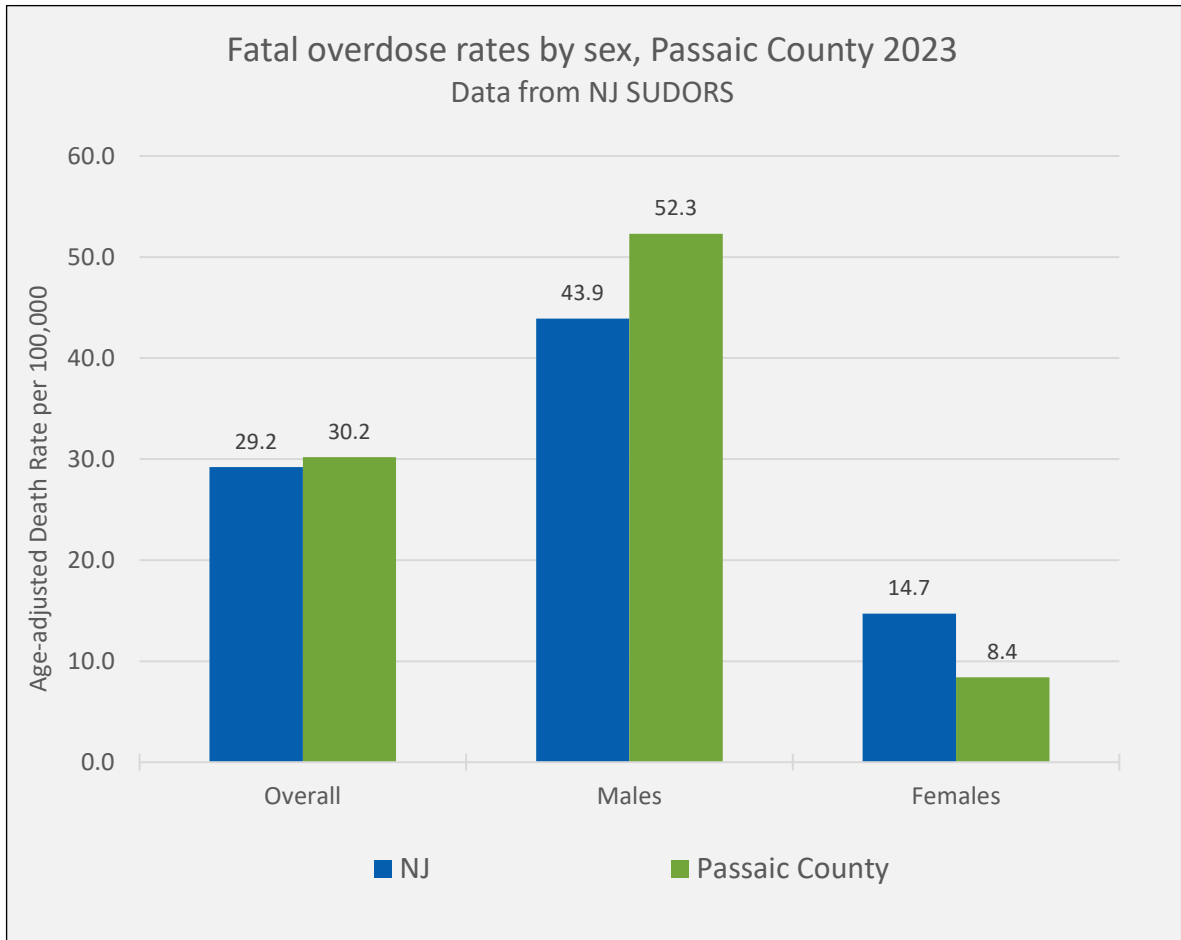
## Overdose declines have occurred unevenly across the state.

Using preliminary NJ SUDORS data for 2024, the decrease in fatal overdose from 2022 to 2024 is even more dramatic across the state, with the highest % rate decreases in counties in North/Central New Jersey.

While 2024 data are subject to change, it is anticipated that the decline in fatal overdose will continue through 2024 and into this year, with nearly all counties having net decreased mortality rates from 2022 to 2024.

Passaic County's decrease in fatal overdose rates from 2022 to 2024 is expected to be more than 40%, among the largest drops in the state.

Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.



Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ

# Males drive rates

## Passaic County male to female overdose ratio 6:1

The overall fatal overdose rate among Passaic County residents is similar to the statewide rate of 29.2 deaths per 100,00 residents.

Males have been at higher risk of overdose death than females for decades. In New Jersey, the 2023 statewide ratio of male to female fatal overdose is 3:1, but in Passaic County that ratio is doubled at more than 6:1.

# The toll of overdose in Black and Hispanic communities

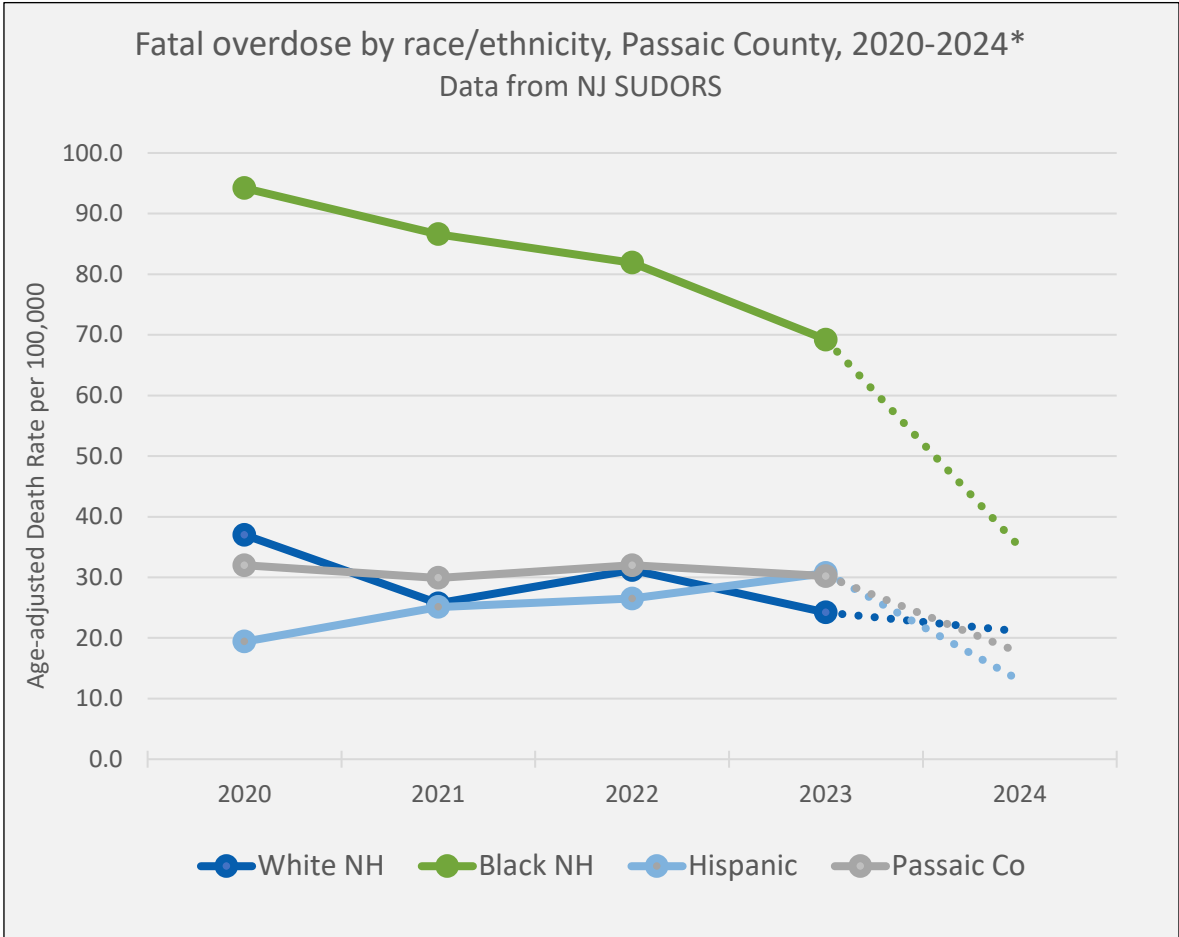
## Peak rate in 2020 for Black residents

Leading into 2020, the Black and Hispanic populations of Passaic County were on an upward trajectory in fatal overdose even as rates among White non-Hispanics in the county and statewide had begun to decline. Since then, the fatal overdose rate among Black Passaic County residents has fallen from 94.2 in 2020 to 69.2 in 2023, an overall decrease of nearly 27%. Preliminary 2024 data suggests a continuation of this trend.

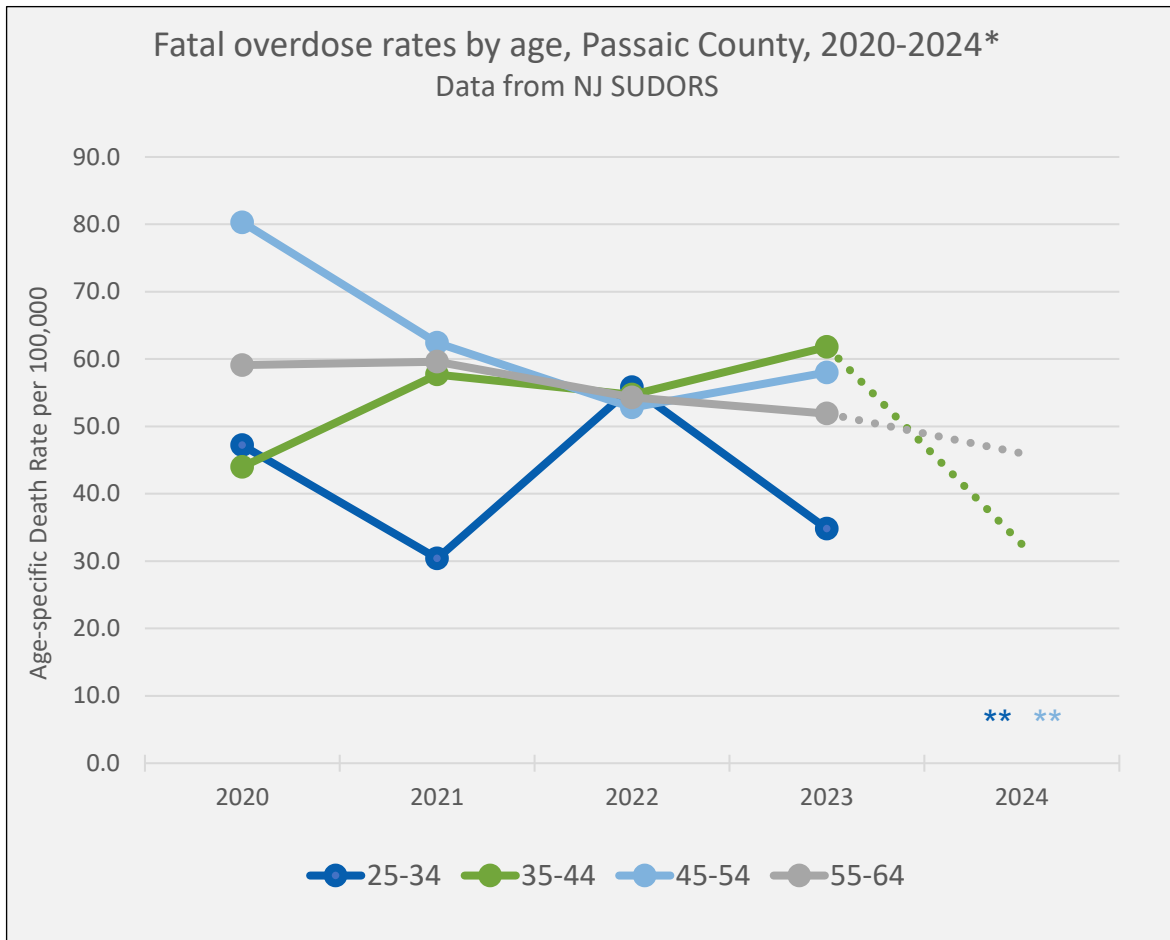
## Hispanic resident rate did not peak until 2023

Overdose mortality rate for Hispanics rose nearly 60% from 2020 to 2023 (2020, 19.4; 2023, 30.7) but are expected to also decline in 2024 to at or below pre-pandemic levels.

The death rate for White non-Hispanic residents in 2020 was slightly higher than the overall state average (37.0 vs 31.0), and they have followed the state trend with a 35% drop in fatal overdose rate.



Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.



# Variation by age groups

## Fatal overdose declines in most age groups

In Passaic County, resident deaths from overdose were more likely to be seen among middle age groups than in youth or among those over 65 years of age. In 2020, the highest rates for overdose were among those 45-54 and 55-64 years old, echoing some specific trends in overdose mortality in the cohort of middle-aged Black males in other urban areas across the region.<sup>2</sup> By 2024, the rate among Passaic County residents 55-64 years old is anticipated to have declined about 22% while other age groups had more substantial declines.

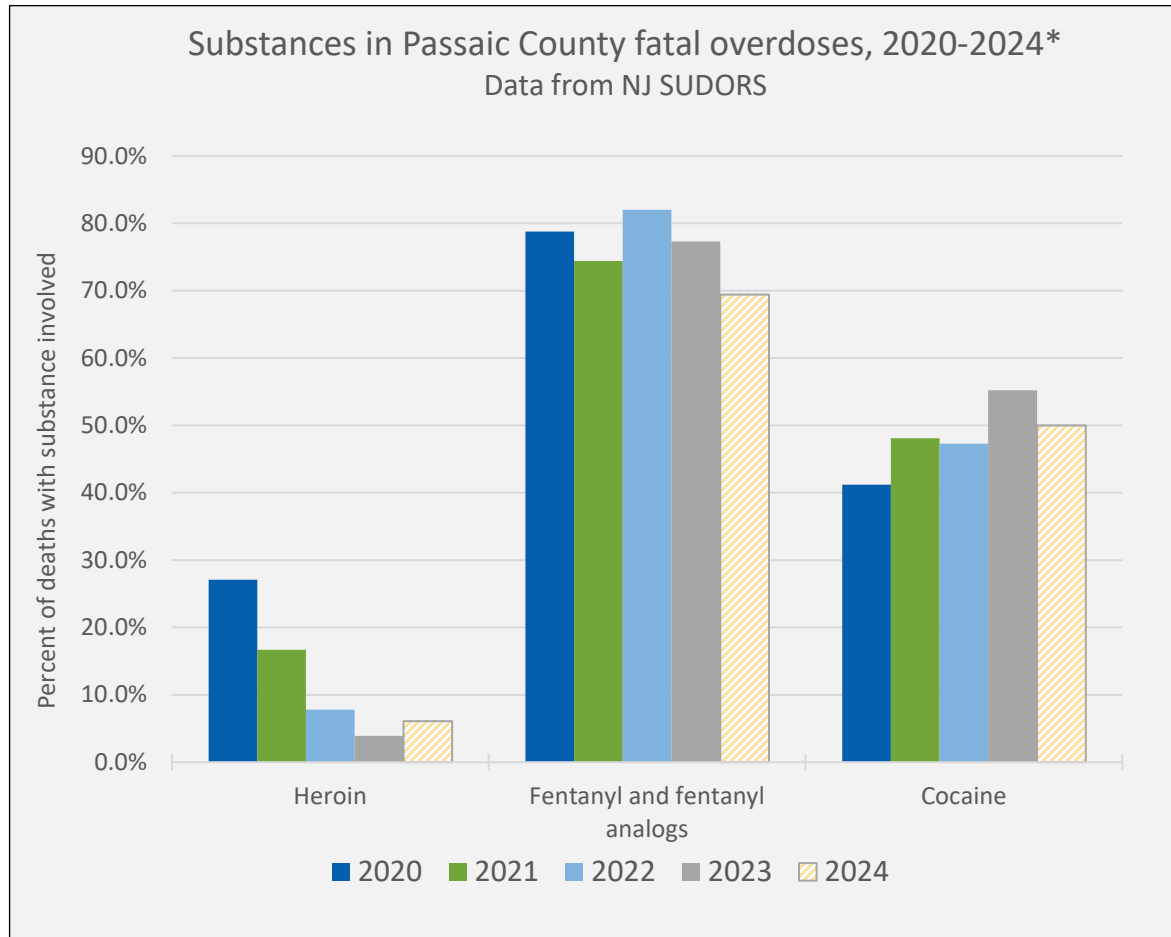
Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.  
\*\* Rates not calculated for fewer than 20 observations.

# Focus: Substances

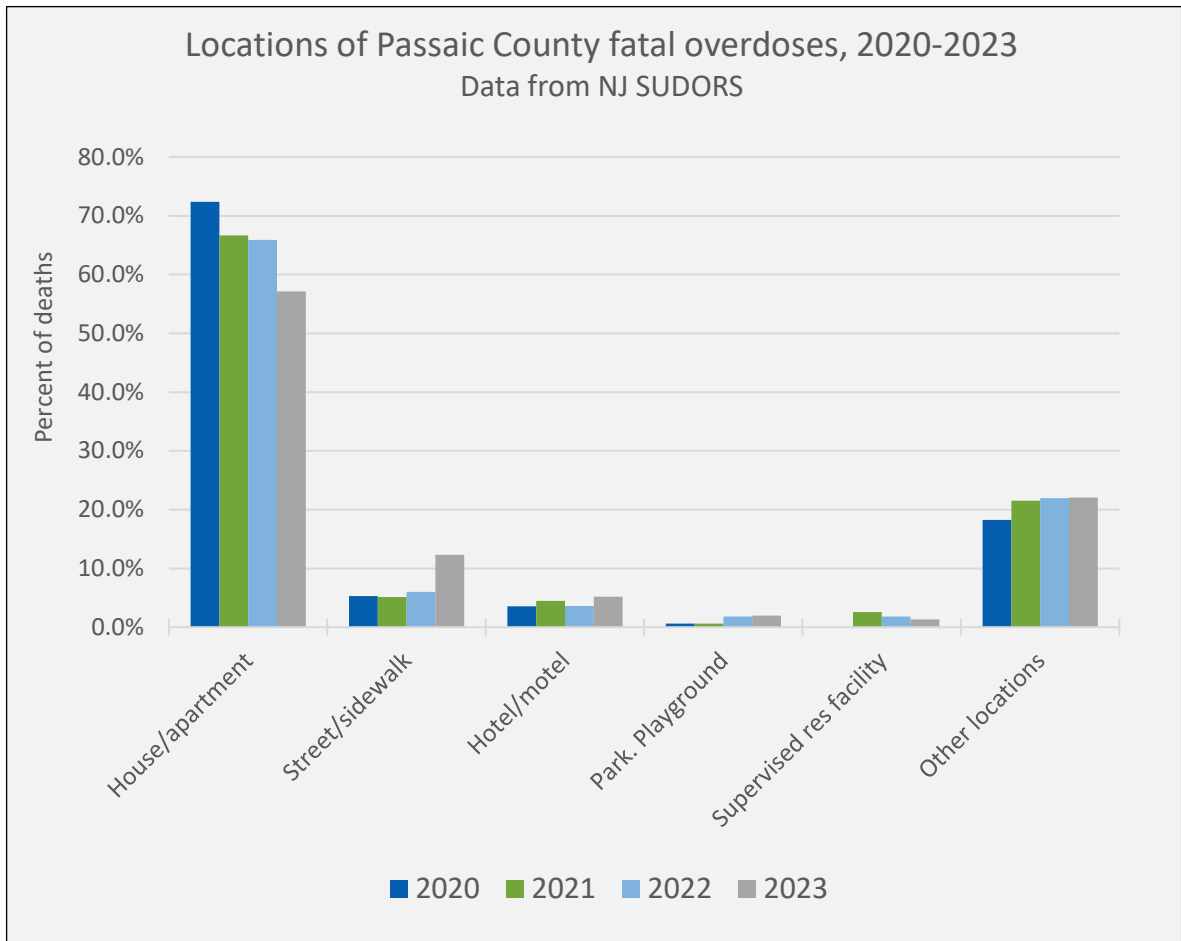
## Presence of heroin, fentanyl+, and cocaine

The presence of fentanyl and its synthetic analogs dominates fatal overdoses in New Jersey and Passaic County, with around 70-80% of fatal overdoses among county residents in the past 5 years involving fentanyl and/or synthetic analogs. However, the NUMBER of resident deaths involving fentanyl in 2024 was almost half that in 2020 (2020, 134; 2024, 68).

Xylazine and methamphetamine do not play as large a role in fatal overdoses among Passaic County residents as it does in other counties in New Jersey, especially South Jersey. In Passaic County, methamphetamine was reported to have been involved in less than 5% of resident overdose deaths annually from 2020 to 2024; xylazine was involved in less than 2% of fatalities each year.



Source: NJDOH, New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS) v.07162025, Trenton, NJ. \*2024 NJ SUDORS data are preliminary and subject to change.



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# Focus: Locations

## Locations as part of the risk, part of the protection?

Using the NJDOH Overdose Data Dashboard, Drug-related Hospital Visits dashboard, the number and rate of Passaic County residents who were admitted for treatment for an acute drug overdose did not change substantially from 2020 to 2023 (2020, 184.3 per 100,000 (937); 2023, 192.4 per 100,000 (987)). The ratio of non-fatal, admitted: fatal went from 5.5:1 in 2020 to 14.5:1 in 2023, suggesting that people were still overdosing but now survive the encounter. (This also excludes those treated and released from the ED and people who overdosed and treatment was not sought or transport was declined.)

Harm reduction strategies include encouraging the carrying and use of naloxone to assist a person experiencing an overdose, hopefully buying enough time for EMS to arrive and bring the person to care alive. In fatal overdoses, often the person overdosing is at home, either alone or with people who do not realize they need help.

# Progress made in prevention, data collection, standardization, and dissemination

- **PREVENTION WORK:** Since at least 2022, NJ has focused on policy and investments that could contribute to decreases in fatal overdoses
  - Increased number of Harm Reduction Centers from 7 to 50+ authorized centers; **1 in every county**
  - Substantial increase in community distribution of and access to naloxone
  - Regulatory/policy changes that enable and encourage the use of Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD); additional investment in “low barrier” medication efforts using Opioid Settlement funds and other resources
  - Broader shift in approach, from overdose treated as a criminal justice issue to a public health issue, helps reduce stigma and encourages partnership and coordination between health, human services, and law enforcement
  - Investment in people by prioritizing diversion/deflection programs, decriminalizing harm reduction supplies, use of MOUD while incarcerated, and providing linkage to care assistance during re-entry

# Progress made in prevention, data collection, standardization, and dissemination

- **DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES:** More complete and timely data can help target resources and evaluate progress made.
  - Dedicated funds to County Medical Examiners from CDC's Overdose Data to Action in States (OD2A-S) to bolster post-mortem toxicology testing, aid in better surveillance of substances and combinations involved in fatal overdoses, suicides, and undetermined intent deaths involving drugs
  - Continuing data collection of drug supply changes (introduction of new adulterants such as xylazine and medetomidine, and declining fentanyl purity)
  - Continuing epidemiological analysis of data, recognizing shifting patterns in populations and situations, including changes in the most at-risk cohorts for fatal overdose
  - Continuing and expanding data made publicly available through data products, query systems such as NJSHAD, and data visualization tools like the NJ SUDORS Data Explorer.

New Jersey State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (NJ SUDORS)

Center for Health Statistics, NJDOH

Website:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/populationhealth/opioid/sudors.shtml>

Email: [SUDORS@doh.nj.gov](mailto:SUDORS@doh.nj.gov)



# THANK YOU



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