

# Santa Cruz County's Opioid Use

2020

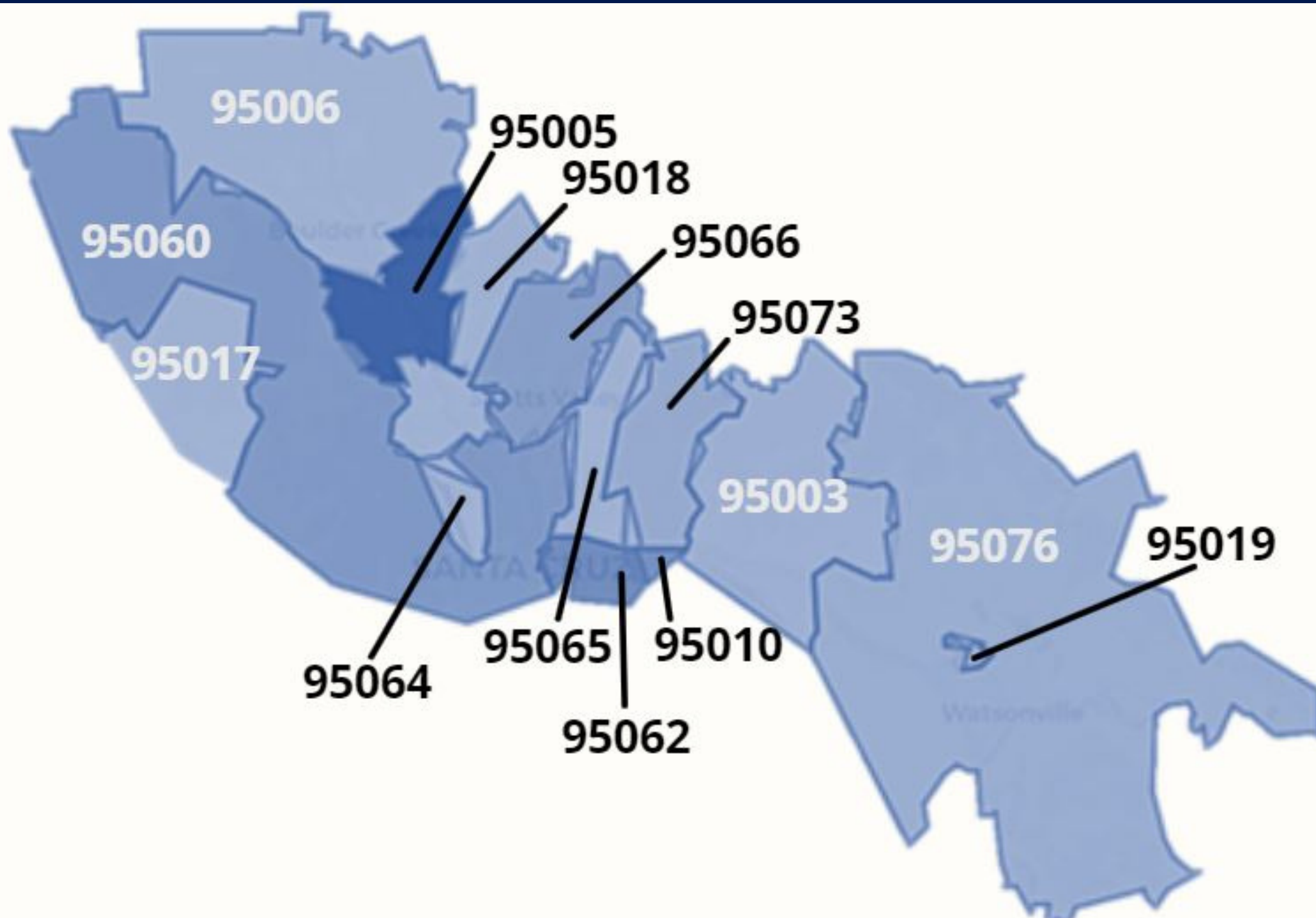


SafeRx Santa Cruz County



Despite countless headlines persistently underscoring the opioid epidemic, little information is shared about what is being done to stop it. Santa Cruz County is on a mission to change that, actively working in collaboration with clinical providers, pharmacists, and local community champions on prevention methods to turn the tide. We effectively use evidence-based methods including changing prescribing practices, providing alternatives for long-term pain management, reinforcing safe storage of medications, and encouraging the proper disposal of medications that remain unused. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic however, as feared, we have experienced a tragic increase in opioid overdoses. Between April of 2020 and April of 2021, preliminary data reveals over 100,000 overdose deaths nationwide (CDC). Sadly, our communities have not remained immune to another recently emerging trend - the concerning rise in overdoses directly caused by surges in illicitly manufactured fentanyl hitting our streets. Bringing together local and regional partners, Santa Cruz County is dedicated to counteract this by promoting awareness of fentanyl and its dangers to our community, increasing our distribution of Narcan - a life-saving overdose reversal medication - and we are in the initial phases of developing a mass overdose strike plan.

This map demonstrates the prescription opioid distribution throughout Santa Cruz County in 2020. Zip codes 95010 and 95006 had the highest rate of opioid prescriptions, with each having more than 400 prescriptions per 1K residents. Conversely, zip codes 95064 and 95003 had the lowest rate of prescribed opioids with each having less than 300 prescriptions per 1K residents.

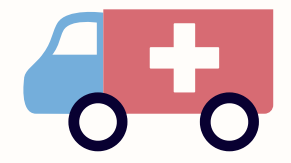


## in 2020...



**107,556**

Opioid prescriptions were written in Santa Cruz County



**26**

Residents of Santa Cruz County died from an opioid overdose



**6\***

Of the 26 overdose deaths were related to prescription opioids

\*This number excludes synthetic opioids

250 450

Opioid prescription rate per 1K resident



# What are opioids?

Opioids are natural and synthetic forms of opium that are widely used as pain relievers. Opioids include heroin and prescription medications such as morphine, hydrocodone (Vicodin or Norco), oxycodone (Percocet or OxyContin), fentanyl, codeine, and methadone.

Even when taken as directed, prescription opioids can lead to heightened tolerance, causing a person to take more of the medication to achieve the same pain relief. Consuming too many opioids can stop a person's breathing and lead to death.

# How is Santa Cruz taking action?

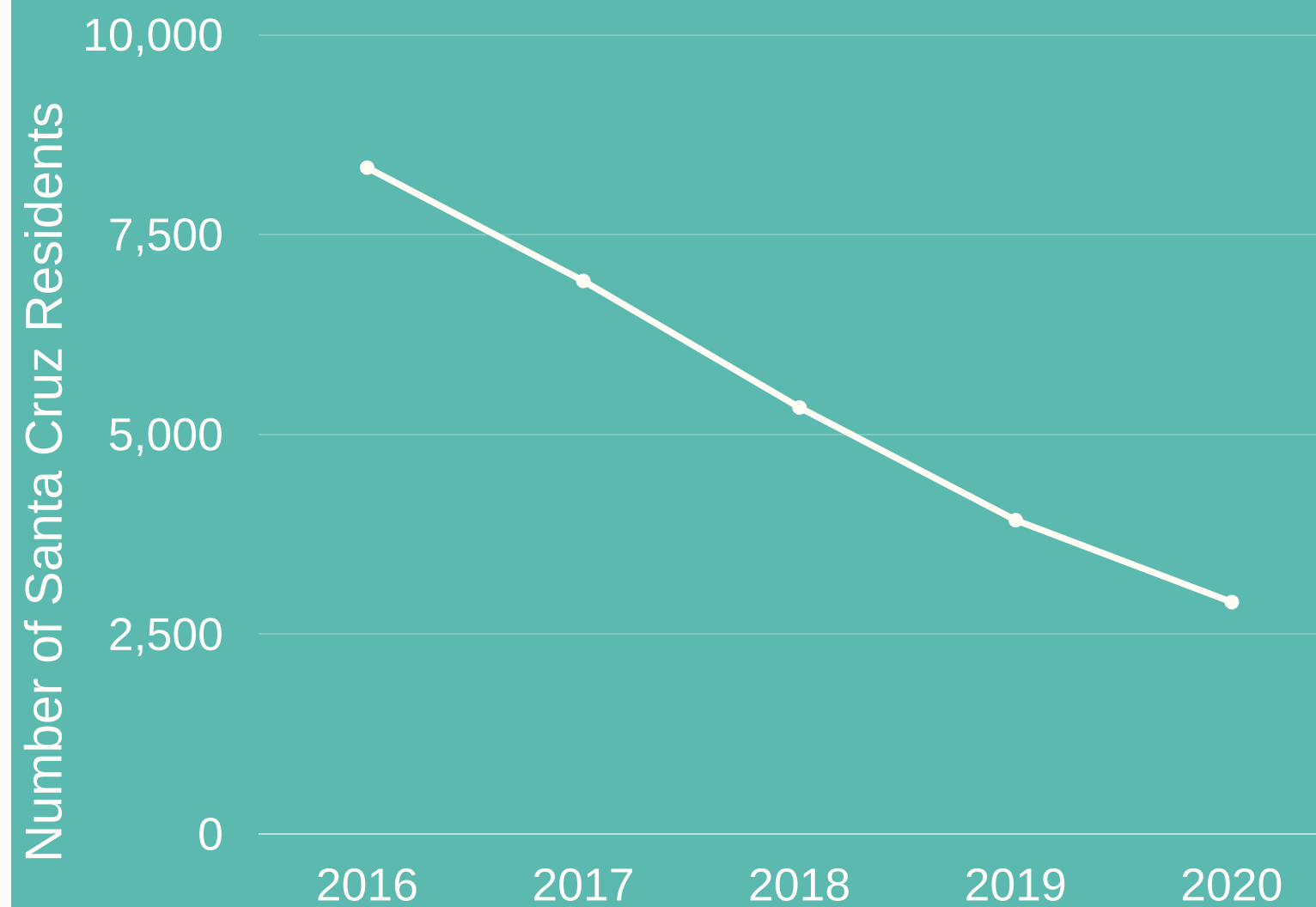
Santa Cruz County requires pharmaceutical companies to fund proper medication disposal sites throughout the county. Local pain management guidelines are being written to aid healthcare providers to safely prescribe opioids. More and more healthcare providers are becoming licensed to prescribe buprenorphine, a treatment medication for opioid dependency proven to help patients decrease opioid use by diminishing the effects of dependency (including withdrawal symptoms and cravings).

# Where do you come in?

There are many things you can do every day to help make a positive impact on the opioid crisis in Santa Cruz.

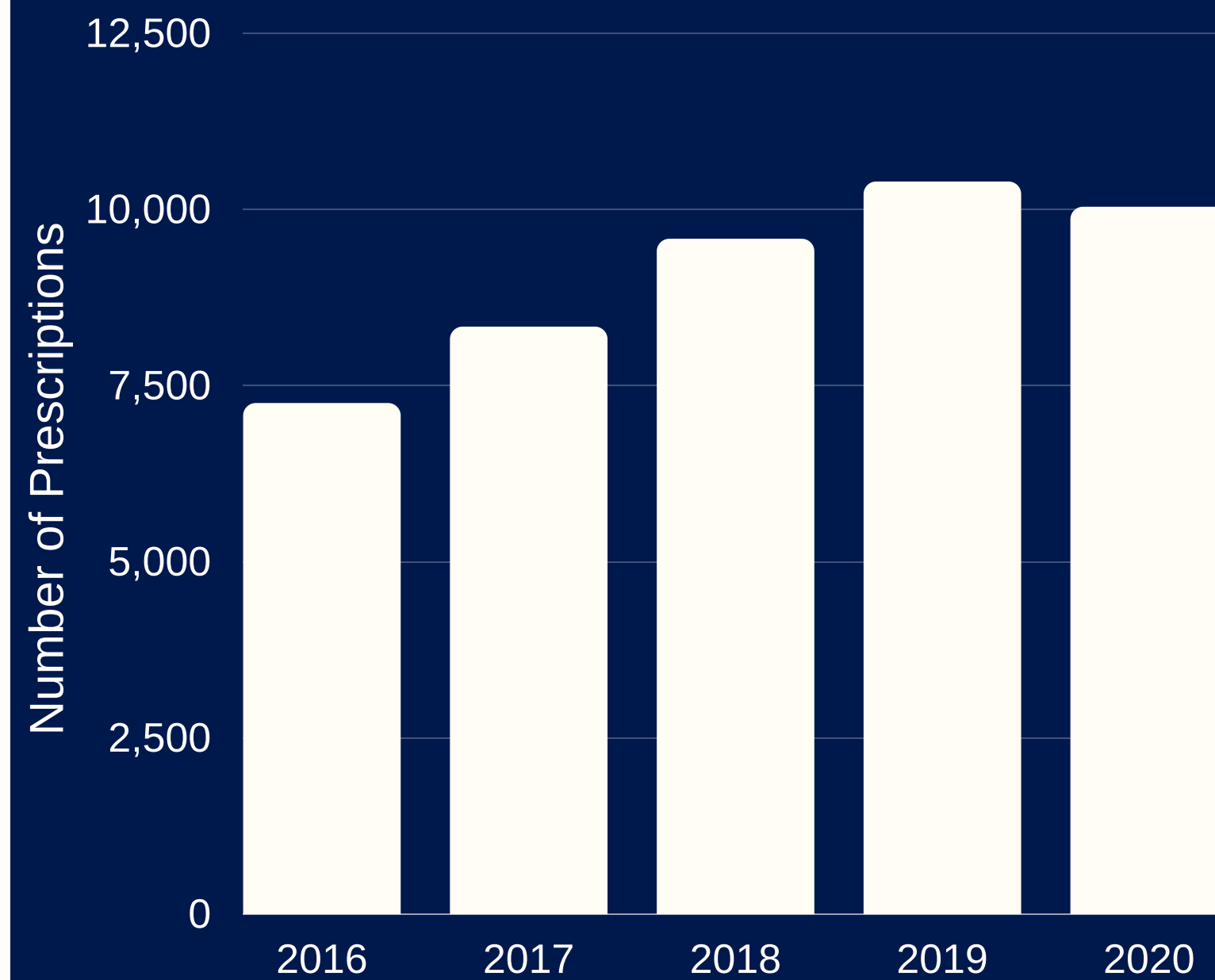
- Know which medicines are opioids. You may be surprised by what you didn't know.
- Always monitor, secure, and properly dispose of medications. Learn more at [med-project.org](http://med-project.org)
- Learn about Naloxone, a lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medication. Get training on how to administer it and keep some with you at all times. You never know whose life you might save. Learn more at [pharmacy.ca.gov](http://pharmacy.ca.gov).

## Santa Cruz County Residents on High Doses of Opioids\*



\*more than 90 mg MME daily

## Buprenorphine Prescriptions



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