

# Santa Cruz County's Opioid Use

2021



HEALTH IMPROVEMENT  
PARTNERSHIP  
of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

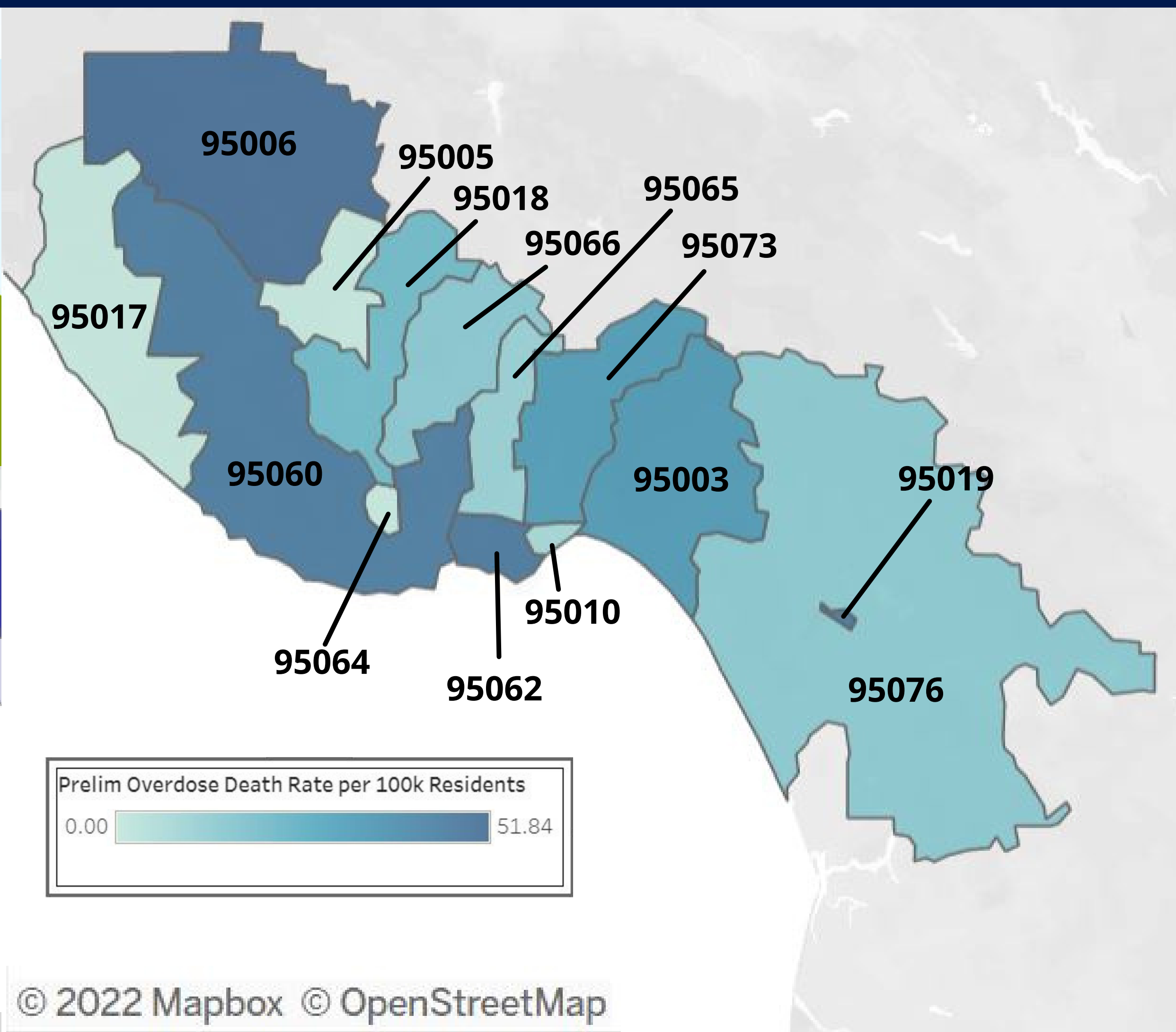


SafeRx Santa Cruz County

In collaboration with clinical providers, pharmacists, and local community champions, SafeRx Santa Cruz County actively works to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic by using evidence-based methods, including changing opioid prescribing practices and increasing access to Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT). Unfortunately, our communities have not remained immune to the rise in overdoses nationwide from illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Provisional data from the CDC indicate there have been an estimated 107,622 drug overdose deaths in the United States during 2021. Bringing together regional partners, SafeRx Santa Cruz County is dedicated to counteracting this trend by promoting awareness of fentanyl and its dangers to our community, especially youth. We are also increasing our distribution of naloxone (Narcan®) - a life-saving overdose reversal medication - and we are in the initial phases of developing a mass overdose response plan.

## 2021 All Drug-Related Overdose Deaths by Zip Code (Preliminary)

Age-Adjusted Rate per 100k Residents  
(source: CDPH Overdose Dashboard)



## in 2021...



**105,558**

Opioid prescriptions  
were written in Santa  
Cruz County



**57**

Residents of Santa Cruz  
County died from  
an opioid  
overdose/  
poisoning



**7\***

Of the 57  
overdose/poisoning  
deaths were related to  
prescription  
opioids

\*This  
number  
excludes  
synthetic  
opioids



**42**

Of the 57 opioid  
overdose/poisoning  
deaths were related  
to fentanyl

# What are opioids?

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

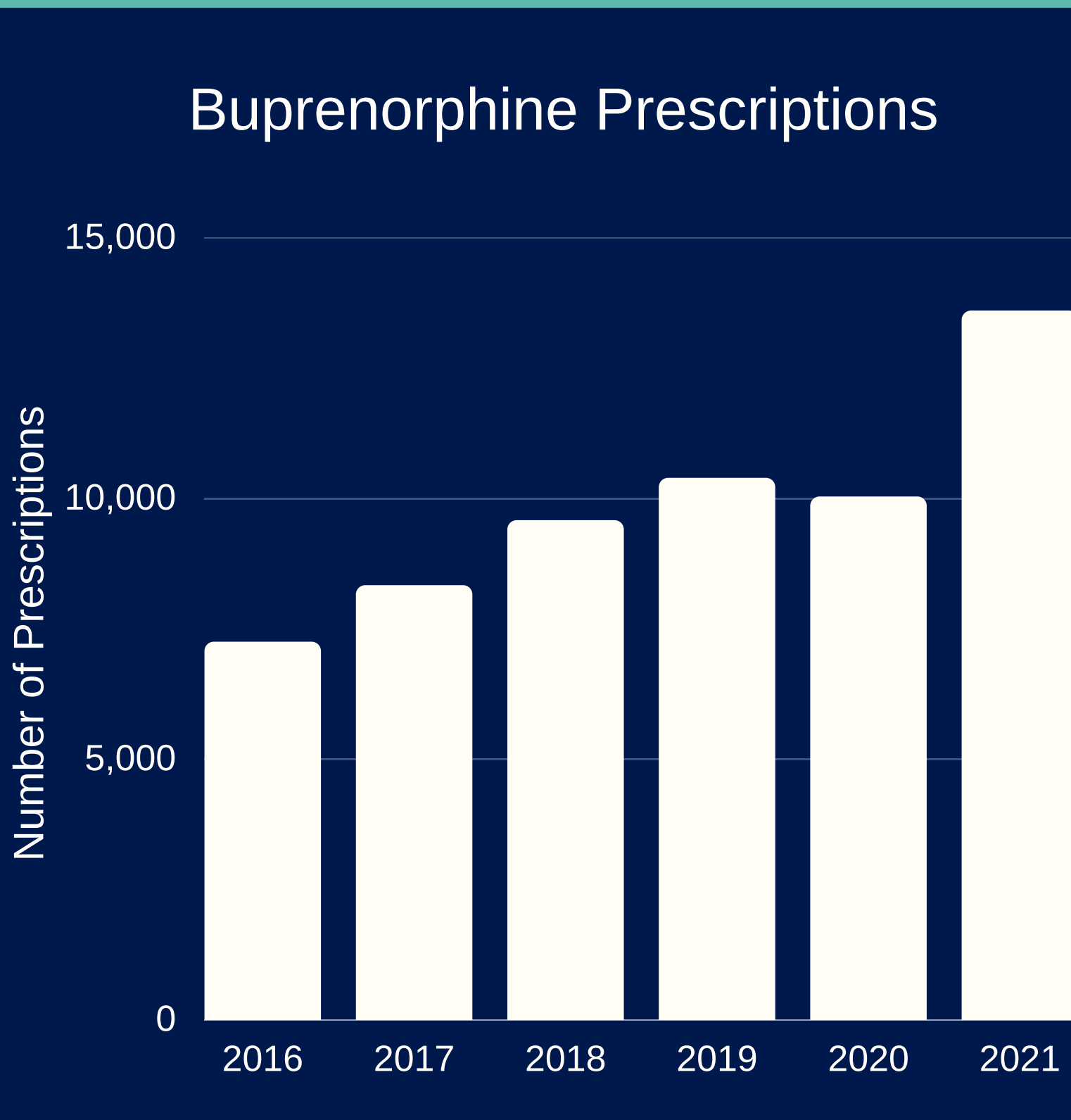
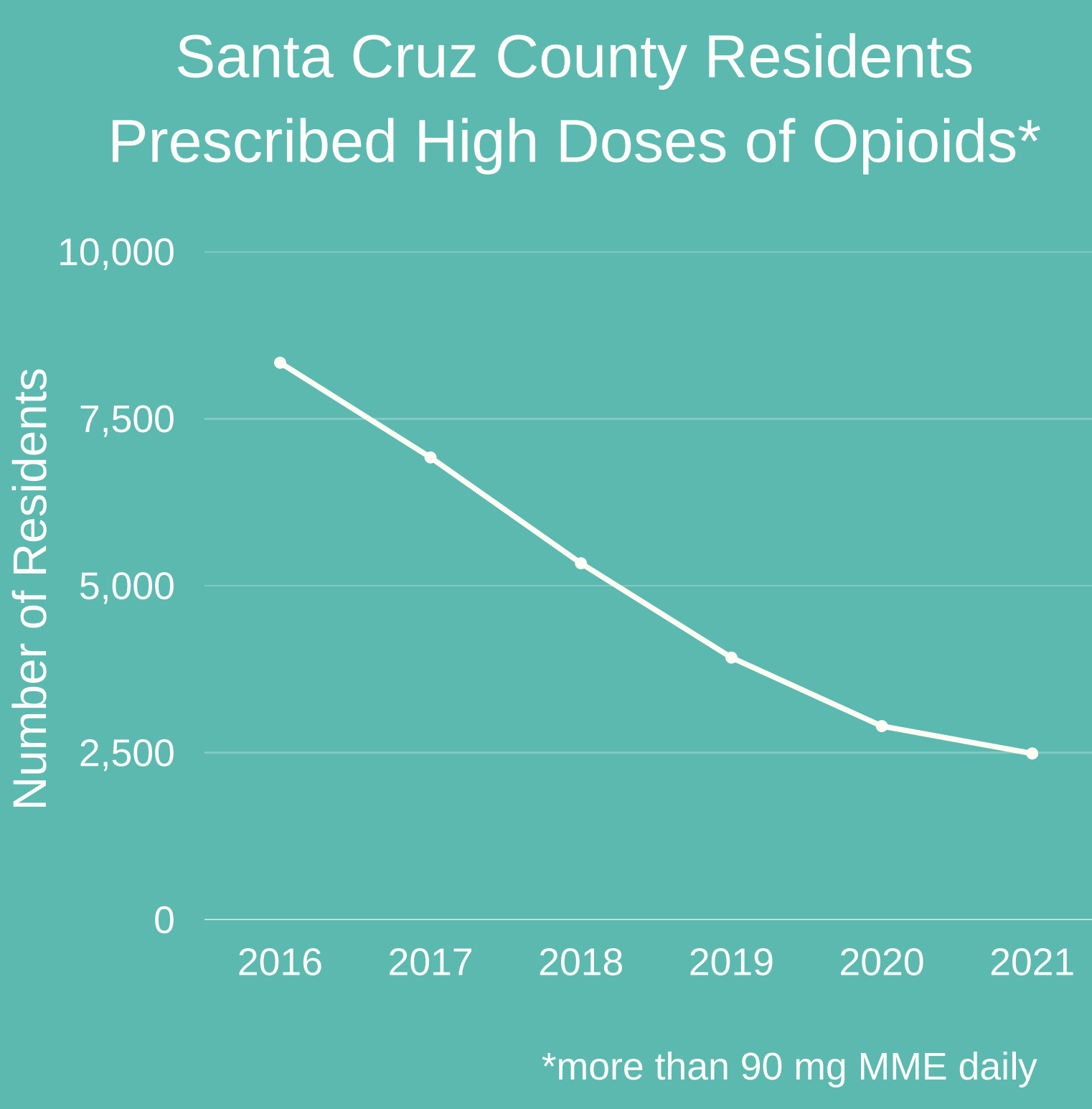
Opioid use can lead to heightened tolerance, causing a person to take more of the medication to achieve the same pain relief. A person can develop tolerance even if opioids are prescribed and taken as directed. Consuming too many opioids can stop a person's breathing and lead to death.


# How is SafeRx Santa Cruz County taking action?

SafeRx continues to update our locally published Prescriber Practice Guidelines biennially to reduce opioid prescriptions in our county. We have increased access to buprenorphine, an evidence-based medication for managing opioid withdrawal symptoms and cravings. And finally, SafeRx knows that enduring change cannot happen without equitably empowering our community – especially youth – with reliable information and resources. With this awareness, we regularly lead educational town halls, school presentations, and pop-up events in addition to maintaining a strong social media and website presence about the risks of fentanyl and steps they can take to reduce harm, including carrying and knowing how to administer Narcan®.


# 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 County.
- Know which medicines are opioids and always monitor, secure, and properly dispose of medications. Learn more at: [www.med-project.org](http://www.med-project.org)
  - Learn about naloxone (Narcan®), 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: [www.hipscc.org/naloxone](http://www.hipscc.org/naloxone)







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Developed from reports released by the CDC, SAMHSA, CDPH Overdose Dashboard, and the Santa Cruz County Coroner