

The Economic Cost of the Opioid Epidemic in Washington State

The cost and breadth of the opioid epidemic across the country continues to grow; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently found the epidemic is only getting worse as the number of opioid-related overdoses continue to rise. This report adapts the methodology employed by a November 2017 report by the Council for Economic Advisers (CEA), which found that previous analyses of the economic cost of opioids significantly underestimate the total costs of the epidemic. CEA found that in 2015, the economic cost of the opioid crisis nationwide was over \$500 billion – as much as six times larger than previous estimates.

In 2016, the economic cost of the opioid epidemic in Washington State was over \$9.19 billion.

Type of Cost	Cost (in millions)
Opioid-related Fatalities	\$7,177.37
Health Care Spending	\$922.72
Addiction Treatment	\$99.79
Criminal Justice	\$270.85
Lost Productivity	\$723.35
Total	\$9,194.09

The number of opioid-related overdose deaths has steadily increased in recent years, with deaths doubling in the past 10 years and quadrupling over the past sixteen years. Using the methodology adapted from the CEA report, this report estimates the total economic cost of overdose-related fatalities for each year from 2012 to 2016.

From 2012-2016, the total economic cost of opioid-related fatalities in Washington State was over \$34 billion.

