

# OPEN

Overdose Prevention & Education  
Network of Niagara  
Newsletter

**June 2022**

## **NEMS Street Outreach—Kathy Malcolm**

Beginning in January 2021, this program was developed to support vulnerable community members in the Niagara region. Not everyone has access to equitable healthcare, the goal is to bridge the gap in care for those living rough and “meet people where they are.”



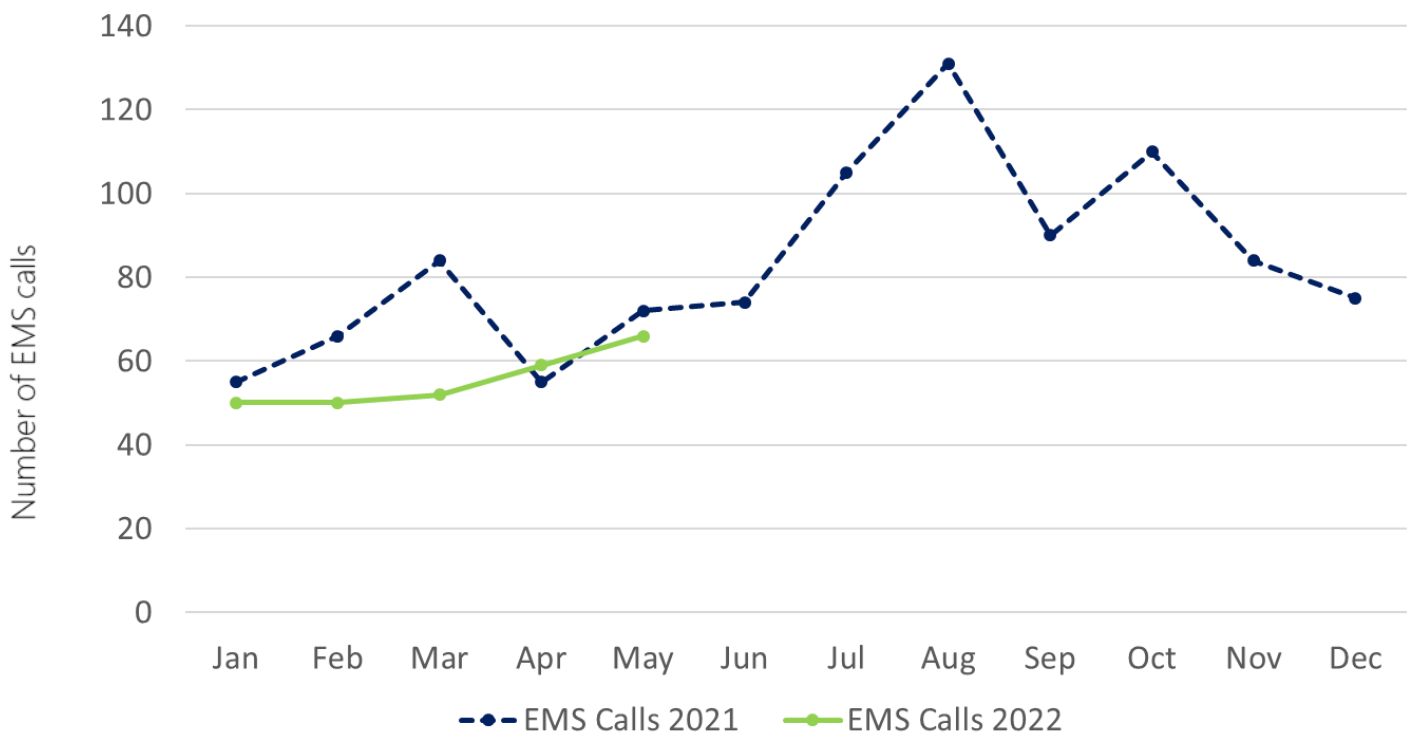
Housing uncertainty and the accompanying daily stressors and obstacles that arise for the community means that health and wellness is rarely prioritized, further heightening health concerns. Through this program, clients are connected to services, can be assessed and receive follow-up care when possible.

# Data Updates



## EMS Calls for Suspected Opioid Overdoses

- ◆ From January to May 2022 there were 277 EMS calls , this is approximately 56 calls per month
- ◆ In 2021, there were 1001 EMS calls, this is approximately 84 calls per month
- ◆ There were 631 EMS calls reported in 2020, this is an average of approximately 53 calls per month

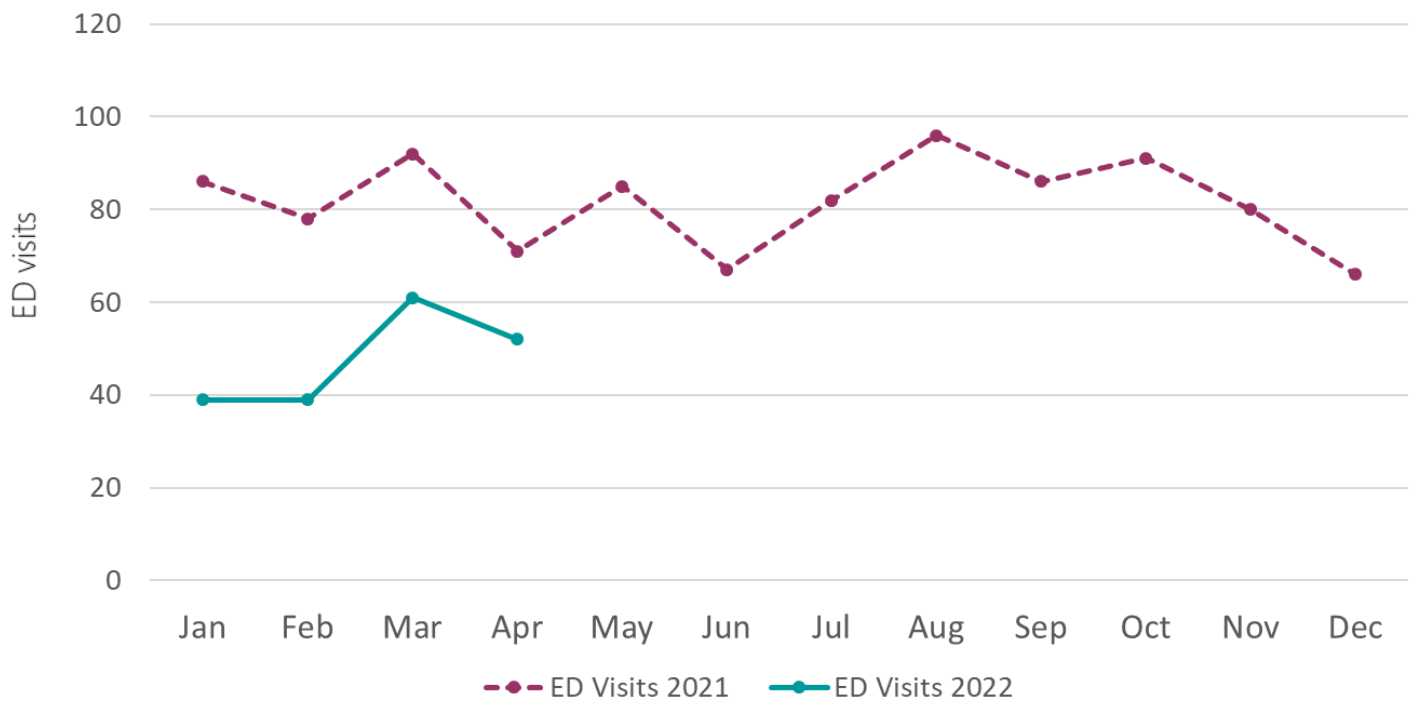


Data Source: Niagara Region Emergency Medical Services, 2021-2022



## ED Visits for Opioid Overdoses

- ◆ From January to April 2022 there were 191 ED visits for opioid overdoses, this is approximately 48 ED visits per month
- ◆ In 2021, there were 980 ED visits for opioid overdoses, this is approximately 82 ED visits per month. 2021 set a new record high for ED visits (previous high was 719 in 2018)
- ◆ ED visit data is considered preliminary and subject to change

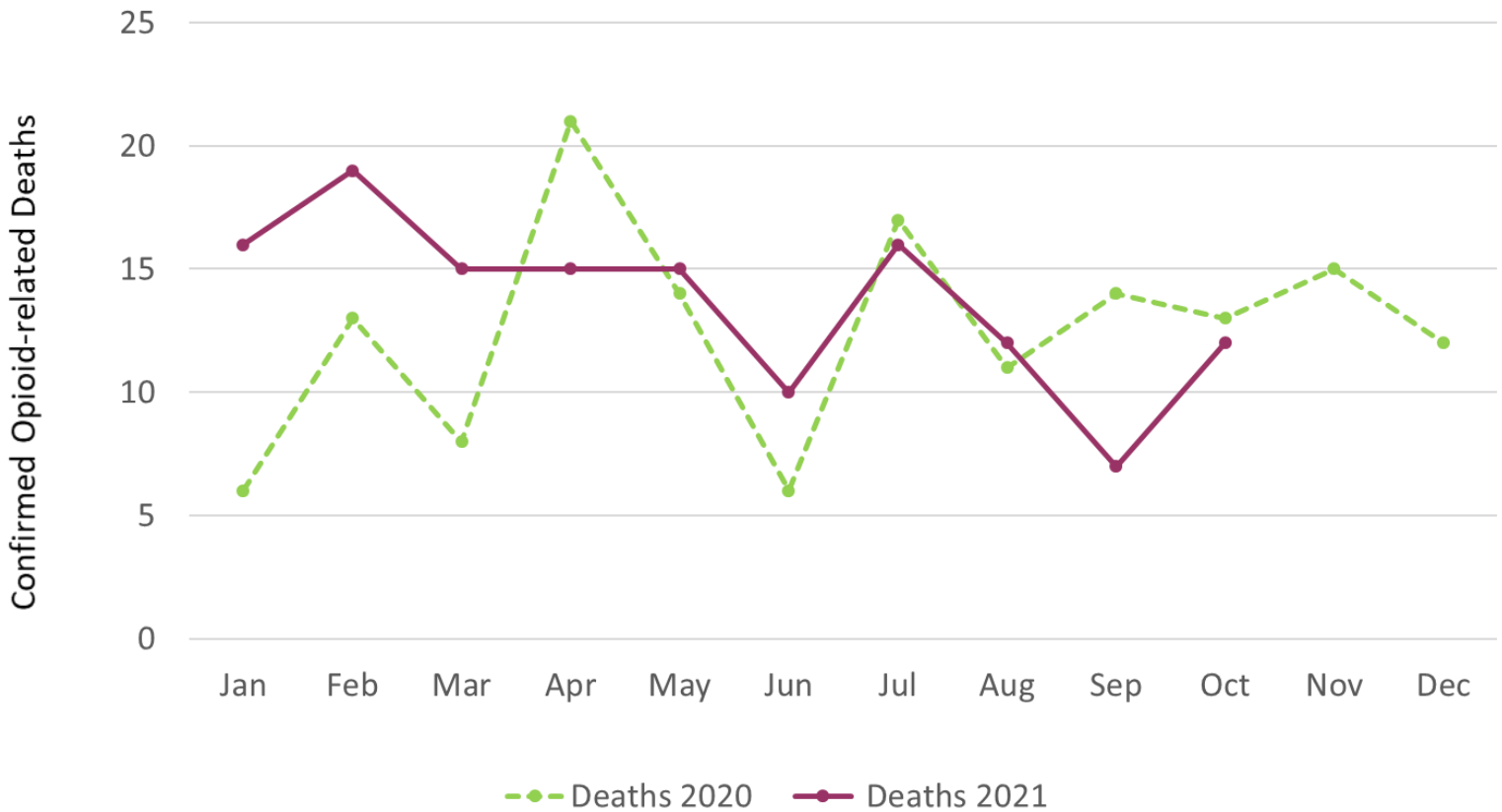


Data Source: National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, 2020-2022



## Opioid-related Deaths in Niagara

- ◆ From January to December 2021, there were 137 opioid-related deaths in Niagara, this does not include probable opioid overdose deaths and therefore is subject to change
- ◆ In 2020 there were 149 deaths (vs. 93 in 2019)[60% increase], the majority of deaths occurred in Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catharines
- ◆ Opioid-related death data is preliminary and subject to change



Data Source: Coroner's Opioid Investigative Aid, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2020-2021



## Summary

- ◆ Since the beginning of 2021, Niagara EMS responses to suspected opioid overdoses have been increasing monthly
- ◆ From January to April 2022, there have been 191 ED visits for suspected opioid overdose (vs. 327 in January to April 2021)[42% decrease]
- ◆ Opioid-related deaths in 2021 may reach a record high in the Niagara Region once the remaining probable cases for the year are confirmed (data only includes confirmed cases; probable cases have been excluded)

## Advocacy Update

Members of the group attended the Ontario Safer Supply Meeting of the National Safer Supply Community of Practice, on June 10 in Toronto. Niagara was well represented with 9 people attending.



## Advocacy Working Group

The group came together to give input on the Simcoe Muskoka PHU letter that Dr. Hirji will recommend to the Region to endorse this and follow-up with the Chair writing to the Minister of Health stressing the urgency of the drug poisoning crisis in Niagara. OPENN Co-Chairs will be presenting as a delegation at the next PHSSC meeting June 14th at 1 p.m.

The group met June 7th to discuss the defeat of the NDP private members Bill C-216 (decriminalization of personal amounts of illicit substances). Members will be reaching out to the 4 Niagara MPs who voted against the bill, to set up meetings to discuss the reasons why they voted that way and offer support on how to move forward.

If anyone is interested in joining the Advocacy Working Group and have harm reduction issues you feel passionate about and feel we can make a difference, please connect with Rhonda or the OPENN Chairs

[Rhonda.Thompson@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Rhonda.Thompson@niagararegion.ca)

# Knowledge Exchange



There were 188 visitors to the six prescription drug drop off sites. 8.05 kilograms of Opioid and other prescription narcotics were collected, as well as 108.3 kilograms of Non-Opioid prescription medications and 118.4 kilograms of over the counter, other miscellaneous medications and supplements.

The total weight of the collection was 234.75 kilograms. Additionally 8.6 kilograms of used and unused loaded/unloaded “sharps” were collected.



## Network Meeting– Programs/Services Updates

Would you like to provide an update on a program or service you are providing? Some examples of past presentations are:

- Stigma and Anti-Stigma Campaigns-What has been and what could be presentation by Scott Neufeld
- Jeff Sinclair on Homelessness
- Chief of Police on Decriminalization
- Brandon Agnew & Alexis Higginbotham– Queenston Roundtable and Welland’s Downtown Community Watch Meeting
- Kathy Malcolm, NEMS Outreach

Connect with Tracy, [tracy.haley@niagararegion.ca](mailto:tracy.haley@niagararegion.ca)

## International Harm Reduction Day

For more information, contact Claire Laurie,  
[claurie@positivelivingniagara.com](mailto:claurie@positivelivingniagara.com)



## Silicone Wristbands



## People with Lived/Living Experience

The survey results are not yet complete. The group is working on transcribing the collected data and coding framework is being developed. There is discussion around the best way to present the results to various stakeholders, including those who responded to the survey.

## OPENN Substance Use Prevention Strategy

### Stakeholder Chats/Interviews



- ◆ Expect to hear from us in the coming days to set up a time to chat about work being done on substance use prevention recommendation activities
- ◆ Interview questions focus on:
  1. Goal of programs/services
  2. Target audience
  3. Geographic reach of services + method of delivery
  4. Partnerships/collaborations
  5. How do you measure progress/success

<https://211centralsouth.ca/openn/>