

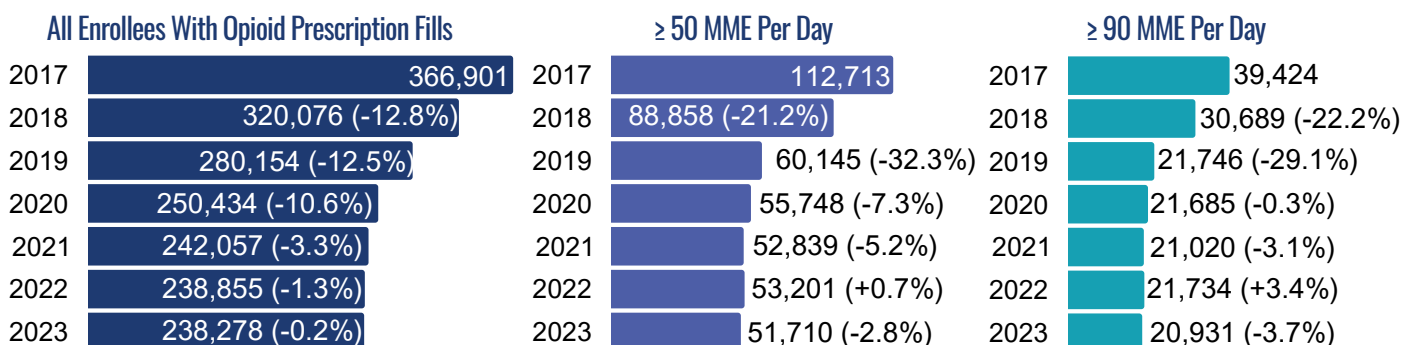
In response to the opioid epidemic, policies to expand access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone — e.g., allowing pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription or mandating naloxone and opioid co-prescriptions — have emerged across the country. In Arkansas, Act 651 of 2021, which went into effect on July 28, 2021, requires a co-prescription of naloxone in certain situations, including when the dosage for an opioid prescription is 50 or more morphine milligram equivalents (MME) per day, a benzodiazepine has been prescribed previously or will be prescribed at the same time as an opioid, or an individual has a history of opioid use disorder or drug overdose. In 2017, licensed pharmacists became authorized to dispense naloxone to individuals without a prescription under a state protocol.

Since 2020, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement has analyzed naloxone and opioid prescription fills for Medicaid and commercially insured enrollees. Data were obtained from the Arkansas Healthcare Transparency Initiative’s All-Payer Claims Database for state fiscal years (FY) 2017 to 2023. Previously reported data have also been updated, which may result in slight changes. Opioid doses of 50 or more MME per day or 90 or more MME per day are categorized as high-dose opioid prescriptions, consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s prescribing guidelines.

Key Findings

- From FY 2022 to FY 2023, there was a 2.2% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 2.2% increase in enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription.
- The number of enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions decreased overall from FY 2017 to FY 2023, while the number of enrollees who filled naloxone prescriptions increased.
 - Among enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions of 50 or more MME per day, the rate of fills from naloxone co-prescribing increased from 0.06% in FY 2017 to 16.17% in FY 2023.
 - Among enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions of 90 or more MME per day, the rate of fills from naloxone co-prescribing increased from 0.13% in FY 2017 to 21.82% in FY 2023.
- The ratio of naloxone prescription fills to the number of enrollees receiving high-dose opioid prescriptions remained stable from FY 2022 to FY 2023.
 - In FY 2023, one naloxone prescription was filled for every six enrollees with opioid prescriptions of 50 or more MME per day, the same ratio seen in FY 2022.
 - In FY 2023, one naloxone prescription was filled for every five enrollees with opioid prescriptions of 90 or more MME per day, a decrease from one naloxone prescription fill per four enrollees in FY 2022.
- In FY 2023, 3,807 out of 26,613 naloxone prescription fills, or 14.3%, were initiated by pharmacists.^a

FIGURE 1: ENROLLEES WITH OPIOID PRESCRIPTION FILLS BY AMOUNT AND ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE, FY 2017 TO FY 2023



DATA WATCH: NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION IN RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN ARKANSAS

NOVEMBER 2024

From FY 2022 to FY 2023, there was a 2.2% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 2.2% increase in enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription. These small increases followed large increases in the previous fiscal year, which were attributable to Act 651 taking effect. Of the naloxone prescriptions filled in FY 2023, 14.3% were initiated by pharmacists.

FIGURE 2: NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS AND ENROLLEES WHO FILLED A NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION

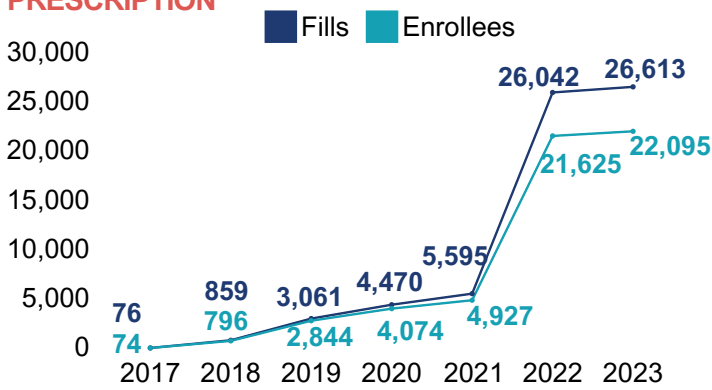
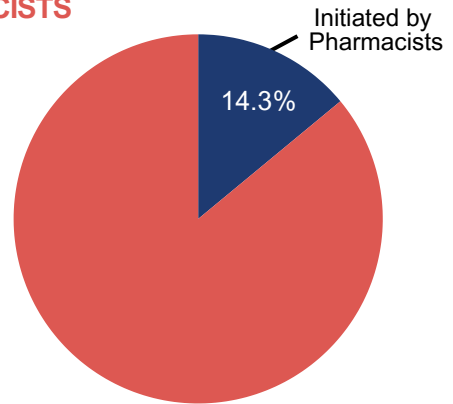


FIGURE 3: FY 2023 PERCENTAGE OF NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS INITIATED BY PHARMACISTS



From FY 2017 through FY 2022, the number of enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions increased each state fiscal year. From FY 2022 to FY 2023, the number of enrollees who filled prescriptions for both drugs decreased by 12.5% among those with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and by 19.4% among those with 90 or more MME per day.

FIGURE 4: ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 50 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS

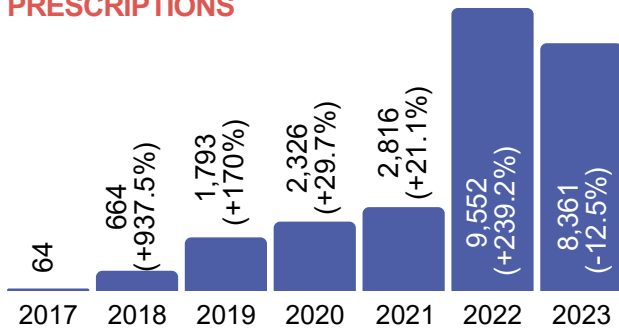
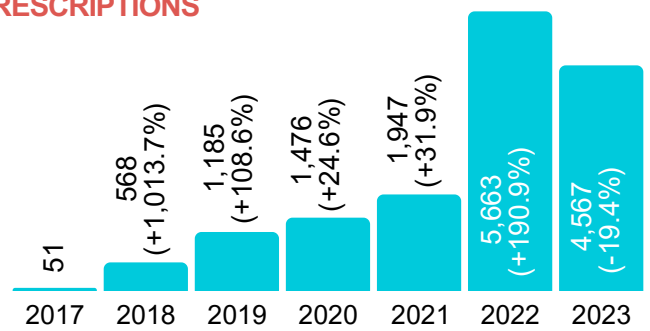


FIGURE 5: ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS



In FY 2023, the percentage of enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions was 16.17% for enrollees with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and 21.82% among enrollees with 90 or more MME per day.

FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 50 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS

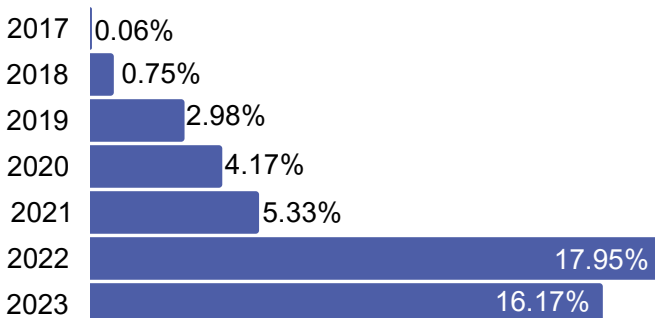


FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS

