

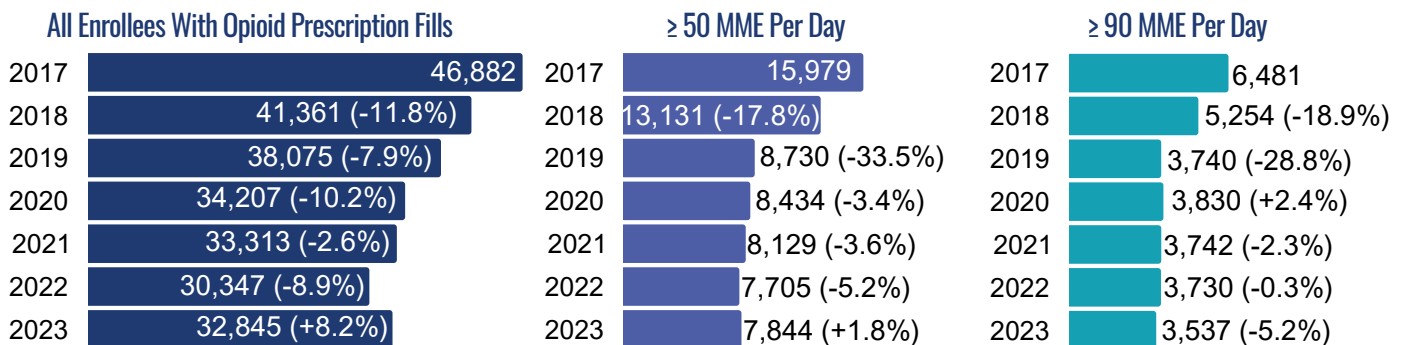
In response to the opioid epidemic, policies to expand access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone — e.g., allowing pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription or mandating naloxone and opioid co-prescriptions — have emerged across the country. In Arkansas, Act 651 of 2021, which went into 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.

The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement has analyzed naloxone and opioid prescription fills for Medicaid and commercially insured enrollees in Northwest Arkansas.^a 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 10.2% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 12.8% increase in Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription.
- The number of Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled opioid prescriptions decreased overall from FY 2018^b 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 1.98% in FY 2018 to 18.43% 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 4.42% in FY 2018 to 23.83% in FY 2023.
- From FY 2022 to FY 2023, there was an 8.2% increase in opioid prescription fills among all Northwest Arkansas enrollees.
- The ratio of naloxone prescription fills to the number of Northwest Arkansas enrollees receiving high-dose opioid prescriptions remained stable from FY 2022 to FY 2023.
 - In FY 2023, one naloxone prescription was filled for every five 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 four enrollees with opioid prescriptions of 90 or more MME per day, the same ratio seen in FY 2022.
- In FY 2023, 421 out of 4,100 naloxone prescription fills, or 10.3%, were initiated by pharmacists.^c

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



^a “Northwest Arkansas” includes Benton, Washington, Carroll, and Madison counties.

^b 2017 data are omitted for some measures due to small numbers.

^c In 9.9% of these fills, the pharmacists who initiated the fills listed a physician with the Arkansas Department of Health as the prescriber of record, as authorized under the state protocol.

From FY 2022 to FY 2023, there was a 10.2% increase in naloxone prescription fills and a 12.8% increase in Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled a naloxone prescription. These increases followed much larger increases in the previous fiscal year, which were attributable to Act 651 taking effect. Of the naloxone prescriptions filled in FY 2023, 10.3% were initiated by pharmacists.

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

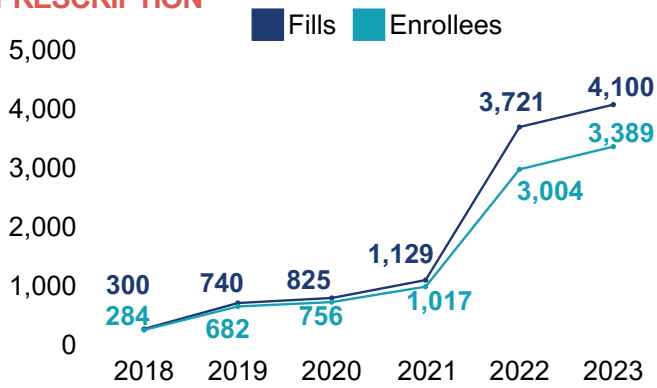
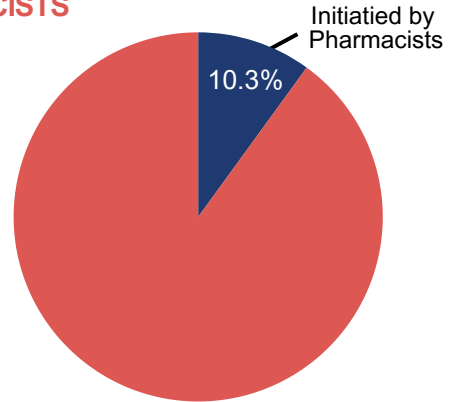


FIGURE 3: FY 2023 PERCENTAGE OF NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS INITIATED BY PHARMACISTS



From FY 2018 through FY 2022, the number of Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions increased, with the exception of FY 2020, when there was a slight decrease. From FY 2022 to FY 2023, the number of Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled prescriptions for both drugs decreased by 5.2% among those with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and by 17.2% among those with 90 or more MME per day.

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

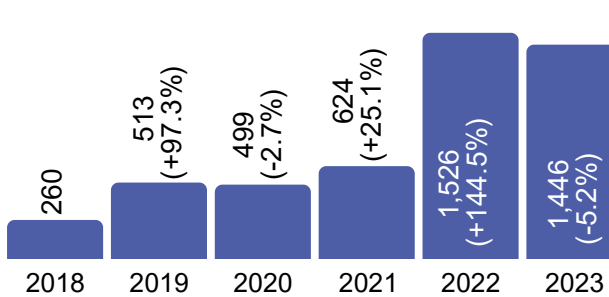
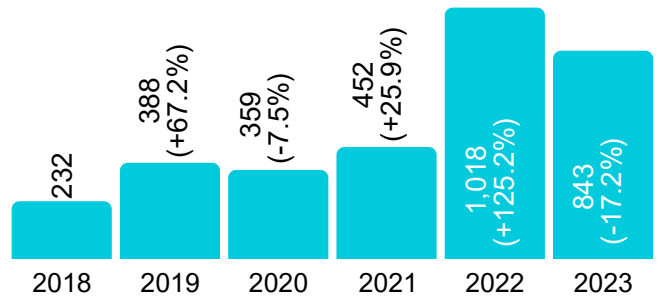


FIGURE 5: ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS



In FY 2023, the percentage of Northwest Arkansas enrollees who filled both high-dose opioid and naloxone prescriptions was 18.43% for enrollees with opioid prescription fills of 50 or more MME per day and 23.83% among enrollees with 90 or more MME per day.

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

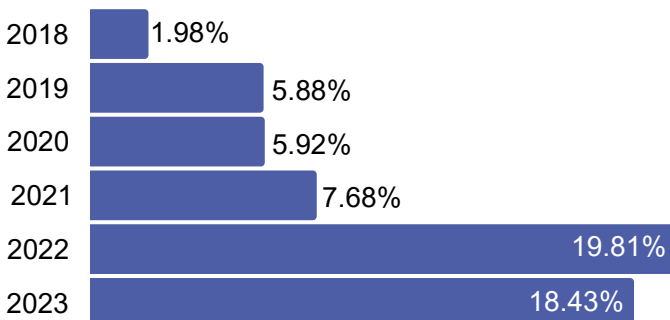


FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WHO FILLED ≥ 90 MME PER DAY OPIOID AND NALOXONE PRESCRIPTIONS

