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Mayor's proposed budget includes funding for real-time mapping of drug overdoses to identify spikes

By **JOE SONKA** | May 22, 2017 3:35 pm



A syringe exchange van of the Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness | Photo by Joe Sonka

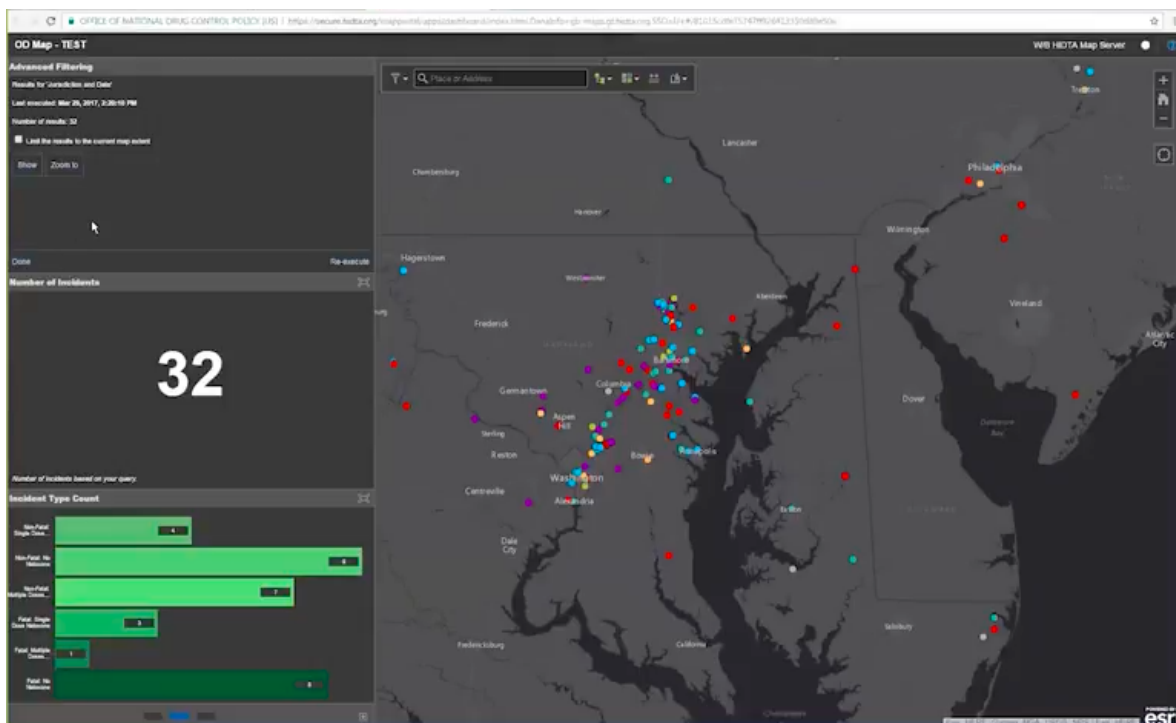
The \$200,000 in Mayor Greg Fischer's **proposed budget** slated for the Metro Office of Addiction Services will fund a health educator focused on prevention and a data analyst to help implement a system that maps in real time where drug overdoses occur, city officials tell IL.

According to mayoral spokeswoman Jean Porter, these two new positions — in addition to the city's recent partnership with Volunteers of America to expand addiction and recovery services in West Louisville — are what Fischer was referring to in his budget address last

month when he said his administration would “**triple our efforts** to help people fight and beat addiction.”

In early May, Dr. Joann Schulte — director of the Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, under which the Office of Addiction Services operates — shared her hopes that some of this \$200,000 in the budget would go toward implementing such a system to monitor the city’s **rapidly increasing overdoses** in real time. In fact, her department was about to be briefed that week on such a mapping system that recently was implemented in the federal High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) of Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

The system first implemented in that region’s HIDTA is called the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (**ODMAP**), in which first responders to overdose incidents use an app that is accessible by smartphones and computers to input data on the location, time and type of overdose. This data provides real-time surveillance of overdose incidents for public health and safety officials so they can improve their ability to identify sudden spikes in overdoses and respond to them quickly.



Screenshot from webinar on the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA’s new smartphone app, the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP)

Louisville has withstood two particularly deadly spikes in opioid overdoses over the past year — one **last Summer** and another in **February of this year**, when heroin supplies were likely increasingly cut with the more potent fentanyl — but in both cases, Schulte said, “we were halfway into it before we could really see what was going on.” She added that being able to locate such overdose spikes and quickly react to them — either through first-responder strategies and or warning drug users and their family members about the presence of drug supplies that are laced with fentanyl — is “one of the things that we really need to be able to get a handle on.”

Schulte said local agencies will be able to demo the mapping program with the help of local U.S. Attorney John Kuhn and Vic Brown, the acting director of the Appalachia HIDTA, which includes Louisville.

The Office of Addiction Services currently has two staffers and is responsible for overseeing the **MORE Center** — the city-run methadone clinic providing medication-assisted treatment to those with an addiction to opioids — and the **syringe exchanges** throughout the city. Director Wayne Crabtree told IL in early May that he expected the additional funding in the budget would provide two new positions for his department — one dealing with prevention and the other with outreach — but could not yet reveal their exact job duties.

According to the Office of Addiction Services website, the department also has plans to combat the opioid epidemic that include creating a clearinghouse website that lists all available drug treatment services in the area, a “treatment advisory group” to facilitate collaboration among local treatment providers and remove barriers to treatment, and an “outreach team” to engage providers in emergency rooms and hospitals to steer overdose patients into the path of recovery and treatment.

Crabtree says the treatment advisory group already has met four times, calling the dedication of the providers attending those meetings “very encouraging.” Health department spokesman Dave Langdon says these meetings have included treatment providers from Centerstone Kentucky, Volunteers of America, Our Lady of Peace, Morton Center, Greater Louisville Counseling Center and the Beacon House, in addition to the Jeffersontown Police Department and the University of Louisville.

Langdon added that the department is “laying the groundwork” on each of these efforts and will hopefully have more to announce on their progress in the coming months.

Metro Council is expected to pass a budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year on June 22, which could include changes from Fischer’s initial proposal. The funding for each city department is being discussed by the council’s budget committee, with the health department’s scheduled for June 12. Councilwoman Angela Leet, R-7, has called for **additional city funds** to be devoted to expanding access to treatment, calling the amount within Fischer’s budget “unacceptable.”