

Opioid Settlement Committee
Thursday, June 12th, 2025

Date: Thursday, June 12th, 2025

Members Present: Commissioner Kathy Bryant, Beth McCall, Judge Robert Landt, Chief Mike Balken, Rich Bianculli, Councilman Ire Bethea Sr, Christy Jergens, Mayor Ben Marciano, Captain Jesse Blaire

Additional Attendees: Cheryl Martin, Charles Rich, Lauren Blaugh, Kendall Stephens, Brittian Schulz, Sarah Ostreicher, Crystal Pfriendr, Robin Lanier, Alina Stoothoff, Tom Schwartz, Jim Hilty, Todd Hockert, James Davis

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
Call to Order	Commissioner Kathy Bryant called the meeting to order at 11:00AM.
Pledge	Commissioner Bryant led the Committee on the Pledge of Allegiance.
Public Notice	Lauren Blaugh announces the meeting was advertised on June 10 th 2025 in accordance to Florida Sunshine Law.
Roll Call	The clerk completed a Roll Call for attendance and to establish a quorum. Quorum established.
1. Approval of Minutes	Approval of April 16th Minutes Motion: Councilman Bethea Second: Mayor Ben Marciano Action: Approved
2. Request Approval of the 2025 – 2026 Marion County Regional Opioid Abatement Plan: Cheryl Martin	Cheryl announces that the priorities have remained the same, but the format has been updated to align with new state requirements. Attendees were directed to page 3 to review background information on previously approved priorities and related successes with the new women’s residential facility. On page 5, it was clarified that the strategy formerly titled "transitional housing" is now labeled "recovery/supportive housing". A correction was also made under Total Funding Distribution—the Schedule A allocation should reflect \$2,800,000, not \$3,280,000. The available funds for existing priorities total \$1,608,396. Commissioner Bryant reiterated that, while the format has changed to comply with state guidelines, the priorities themselves remain the same. Motion: Beth McCall Second: Judge Robert Landt Action: Approved

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3. Priority Updates: Marion County Hospital District

3.1 Priority Updates

Women's Residential Treatment Center Ribbon Cutting:

Deb Velez provided an update on the new women's residential treatment center located in Marion Oaks, a repurposed two-story assisted living facility. The upper floor will serve single women, while the lower floor will accommodate women with children undergoing treatment. This is the only facility of its kind in Marion County.

The center will be operated by SMA Healthcare and includes 45 beds, with 29 beds donated by Lutheran Services. Opioid settlement funds contributed \$500,000 toward the project, and the Marion County Hospital District is funding a portion of the services provided.

Land adjacent to the building has been purchased for a playground and fencing. The facility is expected to open soon, pending licensure approval and a final inspection.

Robin Lanier (SMA) reported that 24 women currently in the program will transition from the 60th Avenue facility to the new women's residential center. This move will also allow individuals from the waiting list to be admitted.

Once the transition is complete, the existing facility will be repurposed to expand the men's program to 45 beds.

Initially, the new center will accept infants only, with plans to accommodate children up to six years old. SMA is working to identify and partner with local daycare providers near the new facility.

Residential treatment will have a minimum and maximum duration of six months. Primary care services, including physicals, will be provided at the Airport Road campus prior to admission, with transportation arranged as needed for other medical appointments. A transporter position has been created to support this effort.

Central Receiving Facility:

The project is currently 30% complete, with an estimated completion date of May/June 2026. Construction is being carried out in phases.

Phase 1 includes the Children's Unit and Emergency Services Unit. Once operational, law enforcement will be able to transfer individuals directly to the facility with proper Baker Act documentation.

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	<u>3.2 CORE Partner Update</u> Marion County Hospital District (HD) is in discussions with LSF to ensure that CORE in Marion County operates as a single, comprehensive program. The HD has reviewed CORE funding applications from Marion County Fire Rescue, Ocala Fire Rescue, and SMA Healthcare, noting significant overlap and lack of coordination. To address this, a meeting has been scheduled to develop a single application process for opioid abatement funding, as DCF funding is expected to decline annually. A more sustainable, coordinated model is needed for long-term program viability.
4. Financial Update: Cheryl Martin	Cheryl directed attendees to the financial summary in their packets. The Regional Opioid Fund currently totals \$5,935,865, with no significant changes since the last meeting. Approximately \$3.7 million has been allocated to the Marion County Hospital District, covering the central receiving facility, CORE, and transitional housing line items. Approximately \$1.6 million remains available for allocation to the remaining priorities.
5. Announcements: Cheryl Martin	Cheryl announced that the state has approved Fentanyl Awareness and Education Day for August 21st. A proclamation is being planned for the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting, and all will be invited to attend. A Recovery Festival is scheduled for September 13, with additional details forthcoming.
6. Public Comment	No public comment.
7. Committee Comments	Christy Jergens shared a copy of the Department of Health's Overdose Data to Action: Data Report for the Marion County Opioid Settlement Committee. Kathy Bryant announced that Rich Bianculli will be transitioning off of the Marion County Hospital District board and therefore will be transitioning off of the Regional Opioid Settlement Committee. Rich was recognized for all of his hard work and commitment to both groups.
Adjournment	Kathy Bryant announces the next meeting will be September 11th, 2025 and adjourned the meeting at 11:32am.



OPIOID SETTLEMENT

Agenda



Committee Members:

Kathy Bryant, Marion County Government
Judge Robert Landt, Fifth Judicial Circuit
Rich Bianculli, Marion County Hospital District
Capt. Jesse Blaire, Ocala Fire Dept.
Christy Jergens, Marion County Health Dept.
Sheriff Billy Woods, Marion County Sheriff's Dept.

Beth McCall, Marion County Children's Alliance
Chief Mike Balken, Ocala Police Dept.
Ire Bethea Sr., City of Ocala
Dep. Chief Robert Kruger, Marion County Fire Dept.
Ben Marciano, Active Recovery Representative

Wednesday, June 12, 2025 at 11 a.m. Location: 2710 E Silver Springs Blvd. Ocala, FL 34470

CALL TO ORDER PLEDGE PUBLIC NOTICE ROLL CALL

1. Request Approval of the April 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes – Commissioner Bryant
2. Request Approval of the 2025-2026 Marion County Regional Opioid Abatement Plan - Cheryl Martin
3. Priority Updates – Marion County Hospital District
 - 3.1 Project Updates
 - Women's Residential Treatment Center Ribbon Cutting
 - Central Receiving Facility
 - 3.2 CORE Partner Update
4. Financial Update – Cheryl Martin
5. Announcements – Cheryl Martin
 - 5.1 Fentanyl Awareness & Education Day (August 21st)
 - 5.2 Recovery Festival (September 13th)
6. Public Comment
7. Committee Comments

ADJOURNMENT

The next scheduled meeting is on September 11, 2025, located at 2710 E Silver Springs Blvd. Ocala, FL 34470 (Growth Services Training Room).

Opioid Settlement Committee
Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

Date: Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

Members Present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, Councilman Ire Bethea, Captain Jesse Blair, Christy Jergens, Beth McCall, Rich Bianculli, Chief Mike Balken, Chief Robert Kruger

Excused: Judge Robert Landt, Sheriff Billy Woods, Mayor Ben Marciano

Additional Attendees: Cheryl Martin, Kendall Stephens, Deborah Lambcke, Charles Rich, Robin Lanier, Curt Bromund, Debra Velez, Crystal Pfriendr, Hilary Jackson, Sarah Ostreicher, Will Sexton, Pete Lee

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
Call to Order	Chairman Kathy Bryant called the meeting to order at 10:30am.
Quorum	Chairman Kathy Bryant stated there was a Quorum present.
Agenda	
1. Request Approval of January 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes	Chairman Kathy Bryant asked the board to review the previous meeting minutes from January 9th 2025. Motion: Beth McCall Second: Chief Robert Kruger Action: Approved
2. Emerging Drug Trends: Kratom (Presentation) – Hilary Jackson	Hilary Jackson from the Marion County Children’s Alliance presented on the rising use of Kratom, a federally legal herbal substance (<i>Mitragyna</i>) with opioid-like effects, commonly sold in gas stations and smoke shops. New pill forms and continued availability have raised public health concerns, along with similar risks from Kava. Emerging drug trends from 2020 to the present show increasing misuse, with Florida investigating 600 overdoses in 2023. A TikTok video was referenced to illustrate usage and accessibility. Chairman Kathy Bryant asked where the support was coming from? Hilary stated through recovery communities. There was discussion from the group about legislation holding different standards than House Bill 1489 in regards to point of sale and safety within the youth community. At the County level, there is currently no synthetic drug ordinance in place. There was a City of Ocala ordinance created in 2012 but it does not include Kratom. The product is said to be regulated for age 21 and over but enforcement is questionable. There was additional discussion about creating an ordinance at the local level. Chairman Kathy Bryant explained that recent legislation allows businesses to sue if local ordinances harm their sales, advising against local regulations and emphasizing that action should come from the state level instead.
3. Substance Use & Behavioral Health	Debra Velez from Marion County Hospital District (MCHD) presented on school-based prevention efforts, including mental health training and opioid treatment programs implemented across both public and private schools. The SADD program supports substance abuse and mental health prevention. Outreach efforts included the Kimberly

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Programming (presentation) – Debra Velez	Center, which reached 30,279 students, and the Children’s Alliance, which reached 3,279 students last year. Additional initiatives included the "Lock Your Meds" campaign and previous youth mental health training programs. The Supportive Enforcement Program, a new alternative disciplinary initiative, was introduced to help youth avoid formal disciplinary records. To date, 242 students have been placed in the program, with a total of 4,777 students targeted for support. Chairman Kathy Bryant requested the average age of students. Debra clarified the program was for high school age students. It was also asked what the typical drug of choice was for the students in the program. It was clarified that marijuana was the drug of choice. And the success rates? Last school year was 90% and this year was 66% due to school referring habitual attendees differently. Chief Robert Kruger asked what a “level 3” was on campus? It was clarified that a “level 3” was when a student was found with drugs or alcohol on the school campus. Chairman Kathy Bryant asked if the County was still participating in Red Ribbon Week and Hilary Jackson clarified that the Marion County Children’s Alliance was helping to lead that effort and that they hold a kickoff at the Ocala Drive-In Theater. (13 schools to participate)
4. Current Funding & Application Updates – Debra Velez	Debra Velez presented on the construction projects currently being funded and shared that the Central Receiving Facility is under construction and should be completed September 2026. The Women’s Residential Building is wrapping up construction and will be open May 2025. Debra also shared that 2 new applications were submitted for funding. MCHD is working with applicants to decide whether the projects outlined in their applications meet the core strategies decided upon by the Opioid Settlement Committee. MCHD is also working to schedule a meeting with all CORE providers to discuss how to obtain the funding that has been allocated for this priority.

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5. Opioid Settlement Updates – Cheryl Martin	Cheryl Martin provided an update that additional funding of \$1.6 million was received in January which was an addition \$200K more than originally projected. Cheryl suggested that we keep the latest deposit of \$1.6 million undesignated until new applications are received and voted on by the Opioid Settlement Committee. Cheryl also shared that the Implementation Plan 2025-2026 will be rolled out at the next meeting for the committee to provide input. It was also shared that HB 259 (Fentanyl Awareness & Education Day) was passed by the House unanimously on 4/3/2025 but was referred to the Rules Committee. The Community Services team is keeping an eye out to watch what happens with the bill and if passed, the Opioid Settlement Committee can decide how to acknowledge the day and help raise awareness.
General Discussion/ Next Meeting Topics	An update was shared by Chief Mike Balken that there were 3 overdoses within 48 hours. Ire Bethea also shared, "Never give up on youth. There is always a possibility they can turn around. Alternative processes do work." Action Items from this discussion: - The 2025-2026 Implementation Plan that will be reviewed at the next meeting - Keeping an eye out on social channels to promote more drug preventions initiatives (ex. Red Ribbon Week) on the County's social media page - Looking into the D.A.R.E. program and why it may no longer exist in Marion County - MCHD will bring additional data showing who MCPS is targeting from alternative school programs to enter into the MCPS Supportive Enforcement Program - MCDH to schedule a meeting with the CORE partners to discuss the funding that has been allocated from the regional fund Chairman Kathy Bryant then offered Public Comment on various items discussed during the meeting. No public comments were given. Next Meeting will be on June 12th, 2025 at 11am.
Adjournment	Chairman Kathy Bryant adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.

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<u>Opioid Funding Projections</u>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total Received Through Years 1-3
Regional Funding	\$ 2,882,761.00	\$ 1,361,107.00	\$ 1,691,997.00	\$ 5,935,865.00

<u>Approved Projects</u>	Total (\$5,935,866)	Total Expended	Remaining	% Spent
Centralized Receiving Facility	\$ 2,300,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,300,000.00	0%
CORE and Peer Programs	\$ 750,000.00	\$ -	\$ 750,000.00	0%
SENP Transitional Housing	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	\$ -	100%
Additional Transitional Housing	\$ 480,676.00	\$ -	\$ 480,676.00	0%
Admin	\$ 296,793.00	\$ 43,250.00	\$ 253,543.00	15%
Remaining for Additional Priorities	\$ 1,608,396.00	\$ -	\$ 1,608,396.00	0%





Florida Department of Health

Overdose Data to Action: Data Report for the Marion County Opioid Settlement Committee

**Florida
HEALTH**

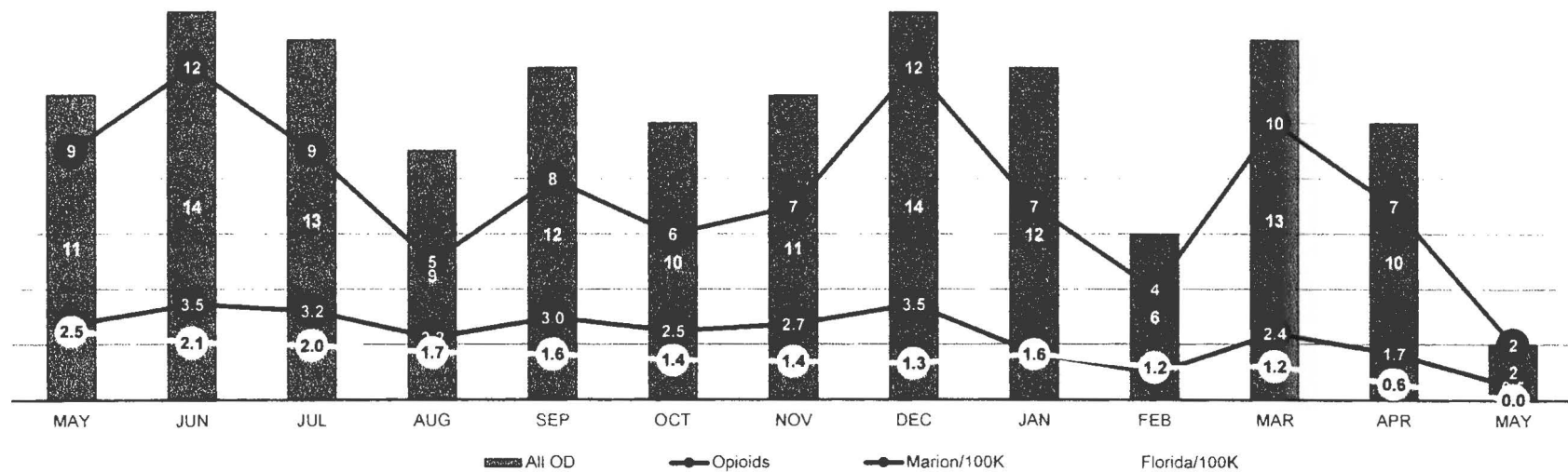
June 2025

Data Disclaimer

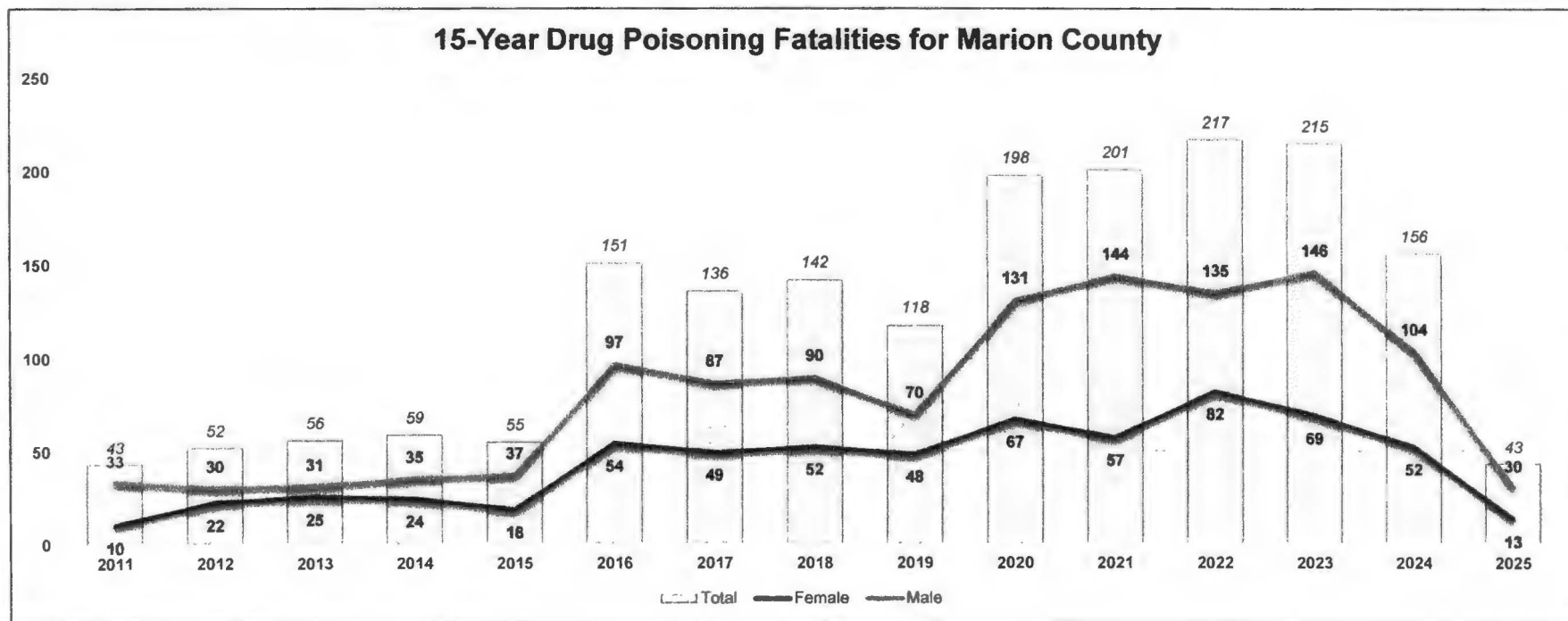
Consider all data presented as provisional data and is subject to change. The information is current at the time of presentation.

Marion Co Substance Related Fatalities

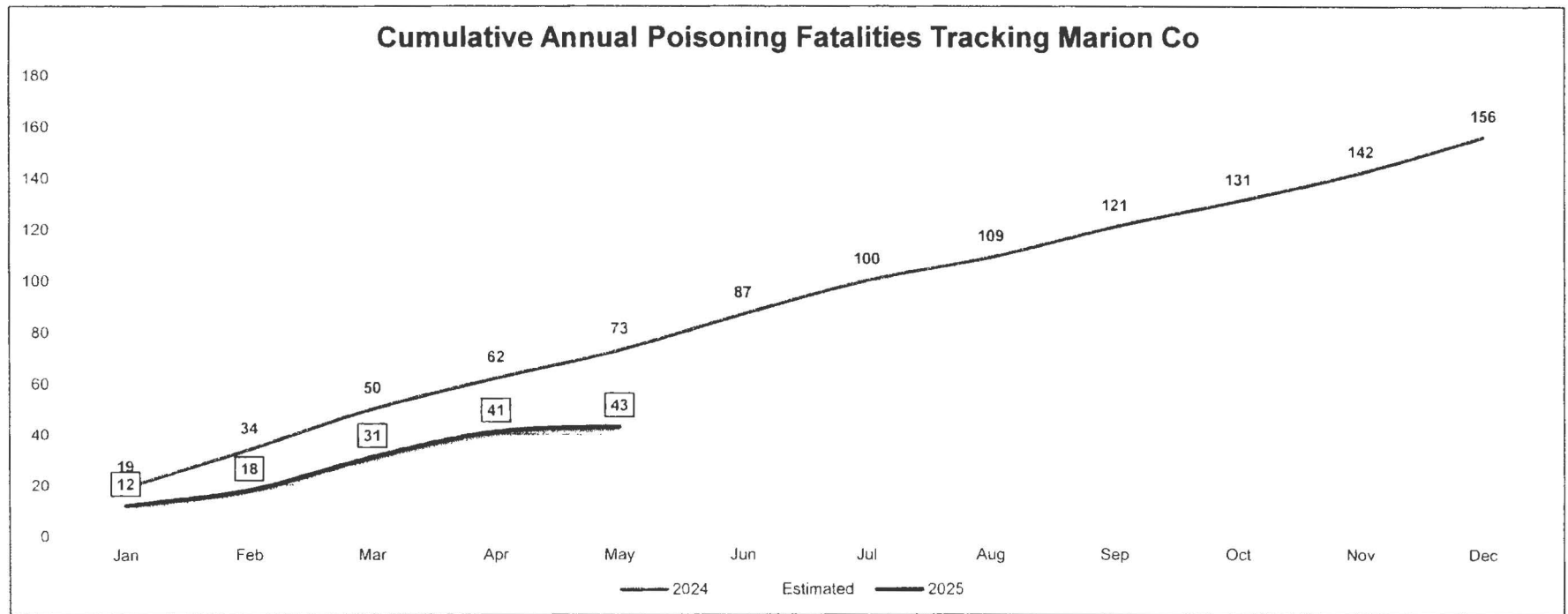
13-Month Marion Co Poisoning Fatalities



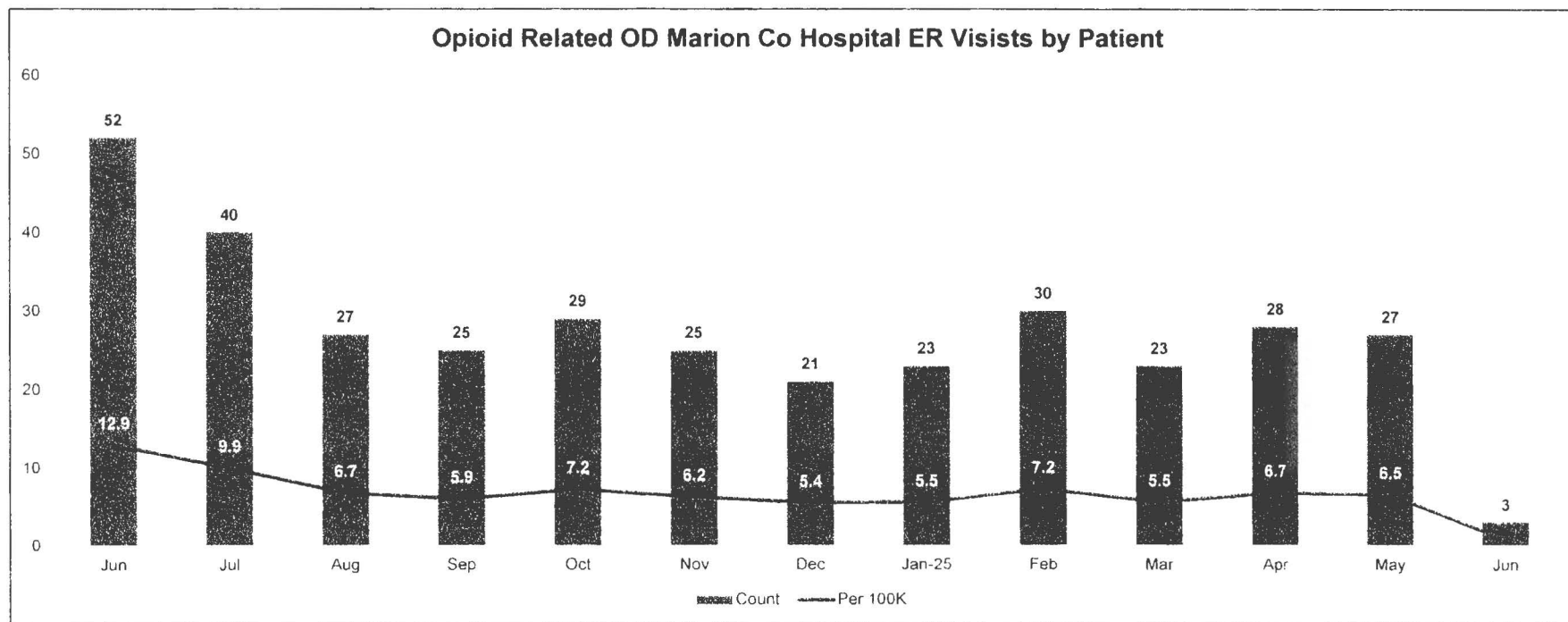
Marion Co Drug OD Fatalities by Gender



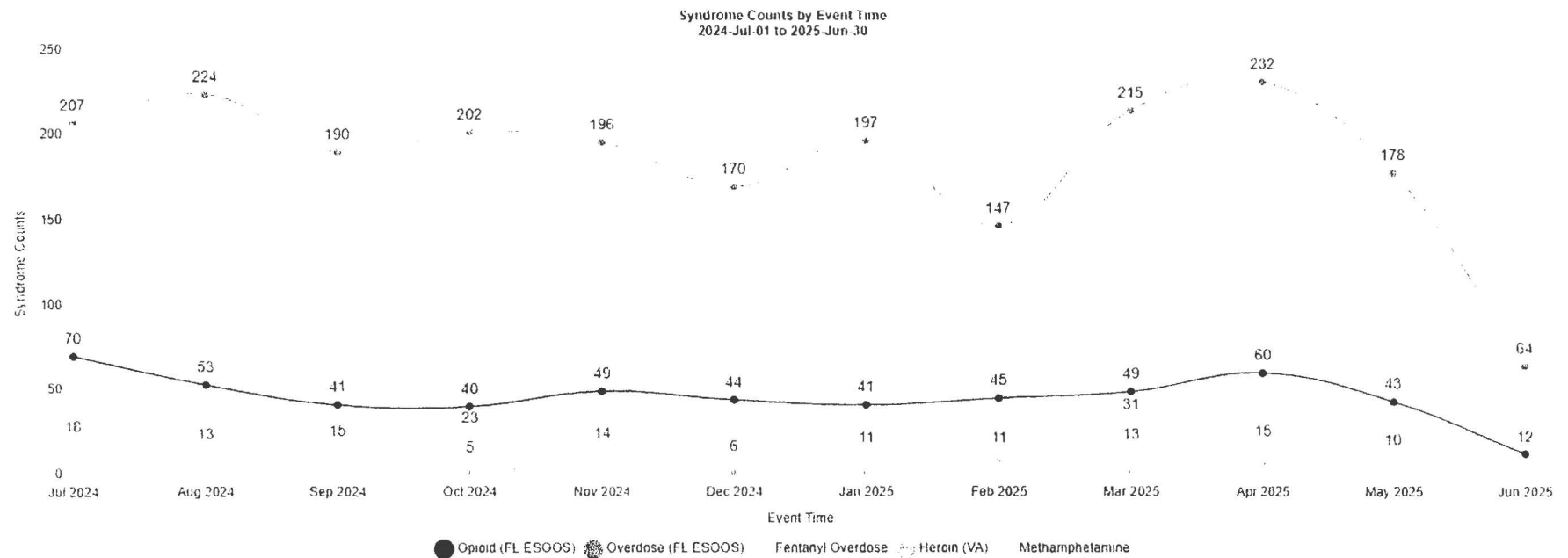
Cumulative Drug OD Fatalities Estimate



Marion Co Drug OD ER Visits



EMS Calls for Overdose



Marion County Heatmap of Overdoses

