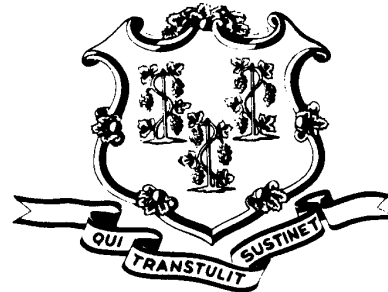


Criminal Justice

Policy & Planning Division



Women in Jail Interview Notes



Presented by

The Research and Evaluation Unit, CJPPD

April 2019

Women in Jail in CT

The Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center

October 2018

OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division

Women in Jail in CT

Highlights

- Approximately 2,000 women were admitted to the CT DOC as pre-trial detainees in both 2014 and 2017. Of the women who bonded out from prison, 76% did so within a week of being admitted to prison.
- Sixty percent (60%) of women admitted as pre-trial detainees in 2017 had been incarcerated at least once in the past. A third had been admitted to prison at least three times.
- Violation of Probation and Failure-to-Appear were the most common charges to appear in the criminal-arrest histories of pre-trial women. According to the analysis, 79% of women had at one time or another been charged with either one or both of these offenses.
- Less than a quarter of women transitioned directly from pre-trial status to sentenced status. Almost 50% of women admitted as pre-trial detainees were released after an appearance at court.
- The population of pre-trial women has in the past been described as a high-needs population. DOC assessments in 2017 found that 63% had at least a mild to moderate mental health issue; 66% required treatment for serious to severe substance abuse.
- Interviews conducted at York CI in 2018 revealed the female pre-trial population to be surprisingly diverse with high needs. Almost 90% had children, 86% reported a history of sexual abuse, and 66% reported being homeless at some point in the past.

Female prisoners on pre-trial status

Connecticut is one of only six U.S. states with a unified prison system. In the majority of other states, prisoners who are incarcerated while awaiting trial, i.e., on pre-trial status, are generally held at the county-level in jails, until their cases are resolved at court. Prisons in those states are generally reserved for offenders who have been convicted and sentenced to longer terms of incarceration. In CT, the Department of Correction incarcerates both sentenced prisoners and pre-trial detainees. On July 1, 2018, among the 930 female prisoners at York CI, the state's only prison facility for women, 345, over a third were awaiting trial.

Most people who are arrested in CT are released by the police on a Promise-to-Appear (PTA) summons. With a PTA, the accused agrees to appear at court on a designated date. The arresting agency may also set a bond in lieu of a PTA and if the defendant can meet the bond they are released at the police station. If bond cannot be arranged, the defendant is held until they can be interviewed by a Bail Commissioner from the Judicial Branch. Bail Commissioners review the arrest charges and employ a risk assessment screen to set a new bond amount. If the defendant cannot meet the terms of that bond, they are transported to the local court lock-up to await arraignment. At arraignment, judges may choose to follow the Bail Commissioner's recommendation or set their own conditions for release. In Connecticut, defendants who cannot meet their bonds are transferred to the Department of Correction.

This report is intended to provide readers with an overview of the characteristics and circumstances of women who have been admitted to the CT DOC on pre-trial status in recent years. While the number of pre-trial women incarcerated at York CI has fluctuated considerably over the last decade, the average daily population for pre-trial women has hovered between 320 and 340 in recent years.

It is commonly assumed that every pre-trial detainee in CT remains incarcerated because of their inability to meet their bond. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that other factors are also at play. Jail credit, i.e., the days spent in jail that are credited against a future prison sentence, appears to be a significant factor. We believe that a sizable portion of both men and women, who are held on pre-trial status are, in-effect, serving de facto sentence time prior to an impending conviction. By sitting in jail, some defendants appear motivated by an understanding that they will be released at an upcoming court date after pleading guilty and receiving a sentence of time served.

Using data supplied by the CT DOC, OPM reviewed the records of over 4,000 women who were admitted to York CI on pre-trial status. The 2014 admit cohort had 2,236 women. The 2017 cohort had 2,196 women. These cohorts proved to be remarkably similar in composition and in the manner they moved through the system. To supplement this analysis, OPM also conducted interviews with 34 pre-trial women during 2018, hoping to gain deeper insight into the conditions, circumstances and life-trajectories of the state's female jail population.

Women in Jail in CT Report

Published October 2018

- Pretrial Outcomes
- Time to Release
- Prior Admissions to DOC
- Prior Arrest Histories
- Prior Prison Sentences
- DOC Classification Scores
- Case Histories
- Demographics
- *Interviews at York**

Women in Jail Interview Notes

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March 2019

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Women in Jail Interview Notes

Preview

- This publication is atypical of the reports that are generally published by the Research Unit at OPM's Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division. In that it is a compilation of observations and findings from a series of interviews conducted with female, pre-trial detainees at York CI, CT's sole women's-only prison.
- In October 2018, the Research Unit at CJPPD published *Women in Jail in CT* an analysis on the status and circumstances of women held on pre-trial status at York CI. As that report was being prepared a series of interviews at York CI were arranged in order to test the findings in the initial report and to investigate whether there were other dynamics at play that were being overlooked in the broader report. The interviews uncovered a range of troubling issues experienced by pre-trial women – on a scale that we had not anticipated – relating to childhood trauma, pregnancy, sexual trauma, mental health issues, drug use, economic and family issues and violence.
- This report is intended to capture and present to an interested readership some of the major observations of the project's principal investigator, Kendall Bobula. The Research Unit at CJPPD is generally focused on quantitative work. In the few cases where we have undertaken qualitative research projects, we have struggled with how to present our findings. In this report we have chosen to loosely organize the findings into broad thematic areas. We leave it to the reader to make use of this material and contact the unit for any clarification.

Purpose and Methodology

Between March 3, 2018 and August 23, 2018, the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division at the Office of Policy and Management, performed a series of one-on-one, open-ended interviews with 33 incarcerated women who were awaiting adjudication at York Correctional Institution, the state's only prison for women.

These interviews were intended as part of a broader OPM investigation into the dynamics that appeared to be driving the state's, female pre-trial prison population (*Women in Jail in CT, 2018*). The interviews at York CI provided an often-sobering look at the issues and circumstances confronting a large portion of the state's female pre-trial population. A majority of the women who were interviewed exhibited a complex constellation of issues and concerns that included economic and family instability, chronic substance abuse, mental and physical health issues, and histories of childhood and sexual trauma.

Access to inmates at York CI was granted by former-DOC Commissioner Scott Semple. The women that were interviewed were selected at random by OPM from the DOC's inmate management system. Staff at York CI were informed of the names of the women to be interviewed in advance and correctional officers accompanied each woman to a private interview room where they were informed about the purpose of the interviews. The women were then given the opportunity to opt out and return to their housing units or to sign a consent agreement. In the consent agreement, each interviewee was informed that she was not required to discuss or reveal anything that she did not feel comfortable sharing, and that she could end the interview at any time.

Only one caveat was placed on OPM by York CI staff: interviews were only allowed with women who had been admitted to the facility at least one week prior to the date of the interview. This was done, we were told, to ensure that none of the women were undergoing 'detox' at the time of the interview. The DOC staff's decision to restrict interviews to pre-trial women held for more than one week certainly affected the composition of the interview cohort. In the report *Women in Jail in CT*, we discovered that among women who were able to bond out from jail, 76% were able to do so within the first week. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the women who are able to leave prison within 7 days of admission have greater access to economic assets and social and family support than the women who remain incarcerated past one week. Given this constraint we assume that the interview cohort was slightly more likely to be experiencing more difficult circumstances than the average pre-trial admittee.

The following pages are an attempt to present the information gleaned from the interviews in a general way in the hope that they might be useful to future researchers interested in incarcerated women.

- Kendall Bobula, Principal Investigator

Women in Jail Interview Notes

Published March 2019

- York CI
- 33 Pretrial Women
- May – August 2018
- After 7 days, to detox
- Comparable to York pretrial total
- Consented
- Themes, co-occurring issues

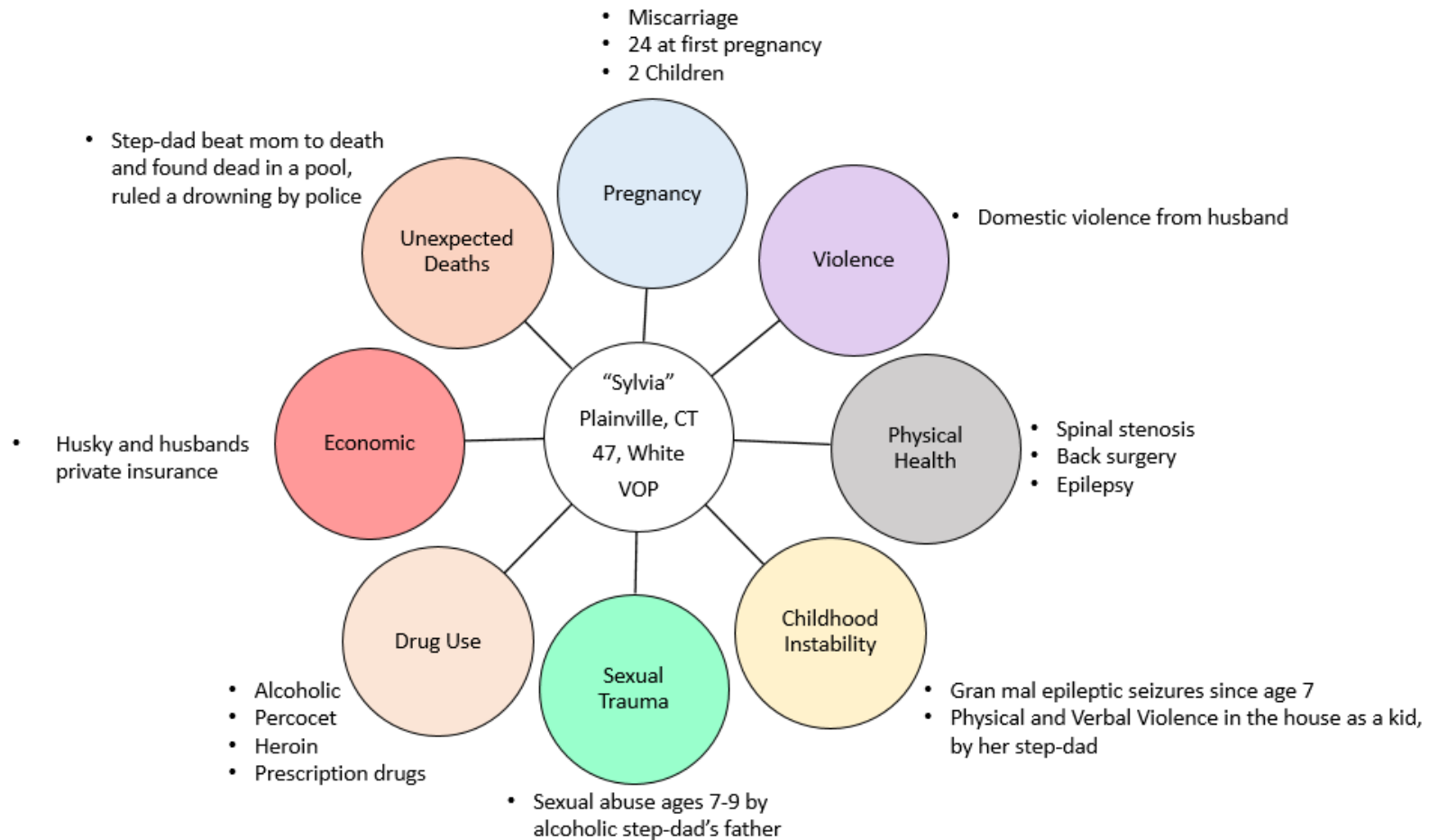
Major Themes

- **Childhood Trauma**
 - 21% (4 of 19) woman said they did not have enough food to eat as a child
- **Pregnancy**
 - 97% (29 of 30) women reported having had been pregnant
 - The most frequently occurring age for a first pregnancy was age 17 (8 women)
- **Sexual Trauma**
 - 86% (24 of 28) women said they had been sexually assaulted and of those 24 women, 18 were 16 years old or younger
- **Mental Health Issues**
 - 82% (21 of 26) of the women said they had a mental health condition or multiple
- **Drug Abuse**
 - 44% (12 of 27) women said they had used heroine in any form
- **Family and Economic Instability**
 - 64% (16 of 25) said they had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives
- **Violence**
 - 75% (21 of 28) said they were physically abused
- **Health Emergencies**
 - 15 women mentioned they were in a serious car accident and 13 women recalled having a traumatic brain injury, brain surgery or a serious concussion

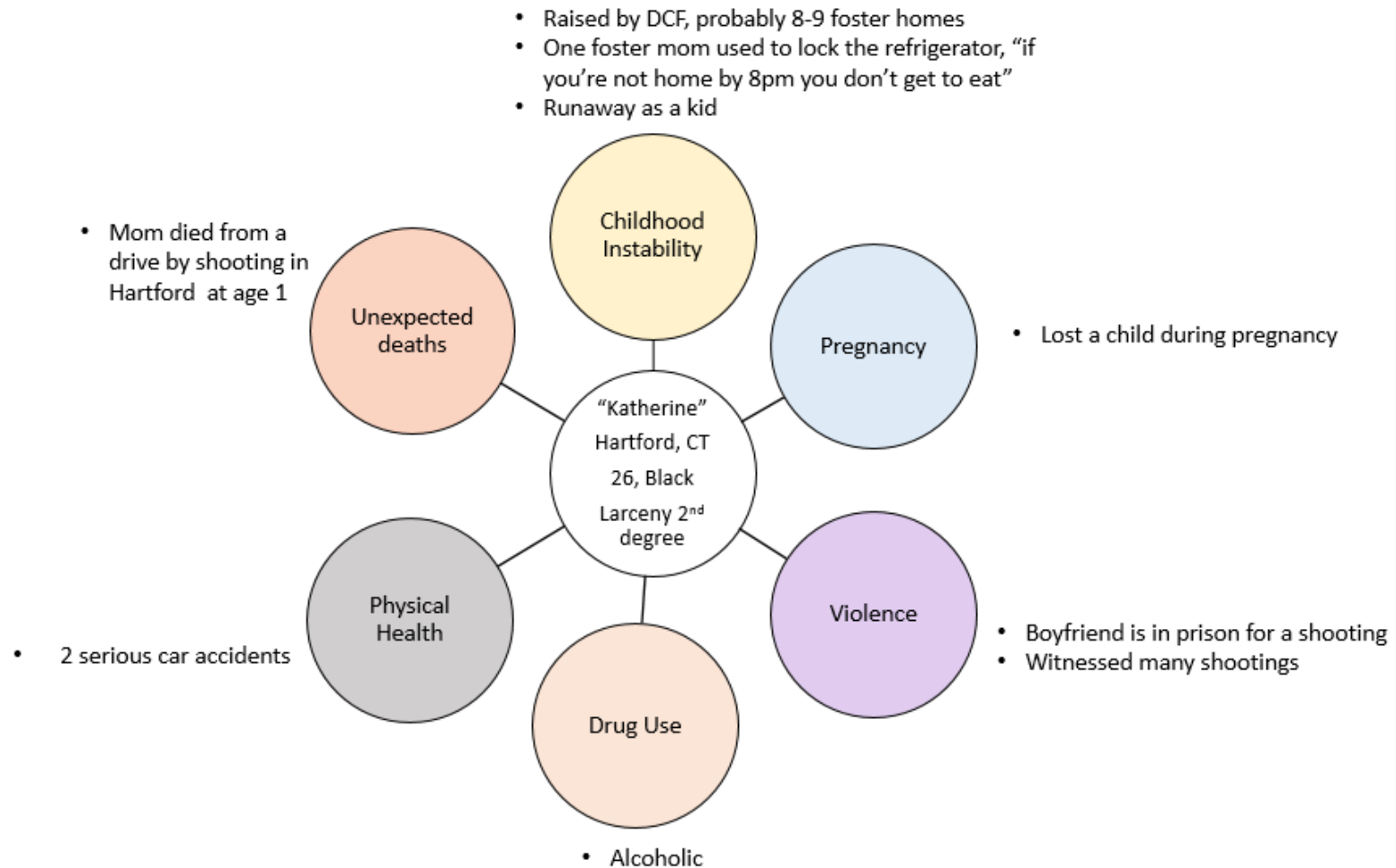
Constellation of Issues



Constellation of Issues



Constellation of Issues



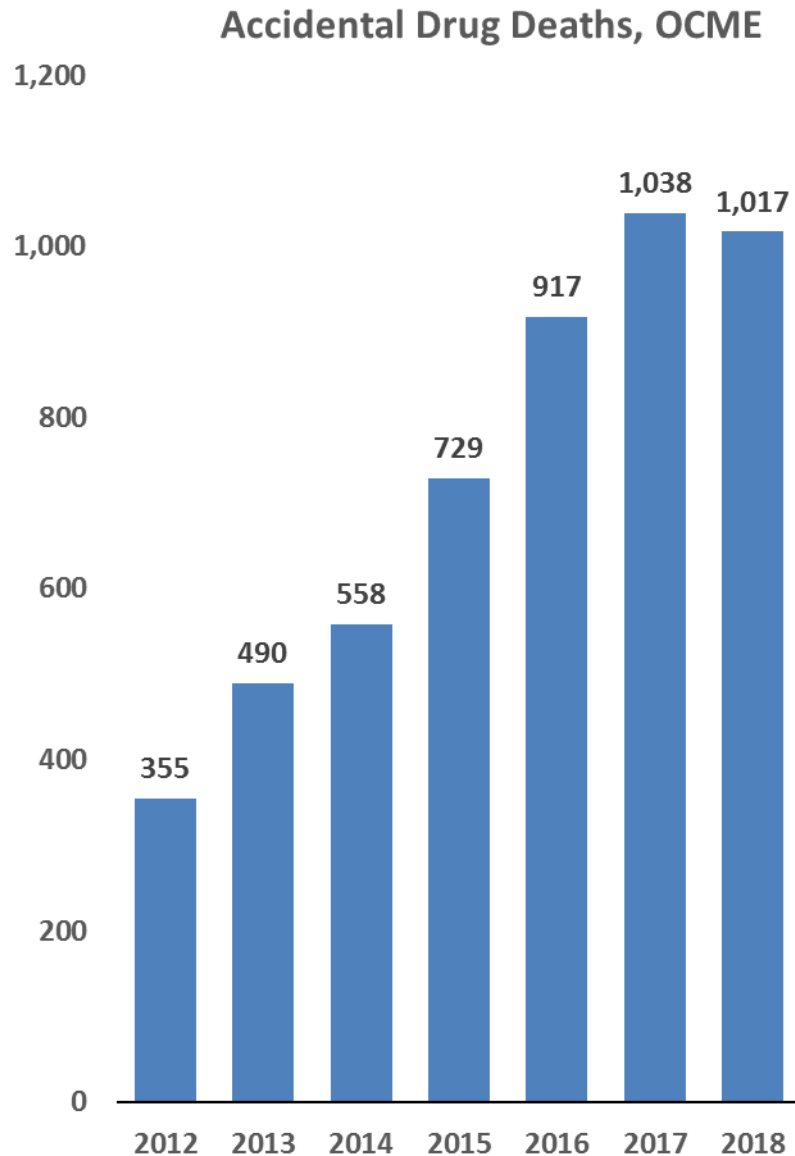
Next Steps

- Vignettes

Report Link

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjAbout/SAC-Documents-from-2018-and-2019/Women-in-Jail-Interview-Notes_FINAL-20190319KSB.pdf?la=en

Overdose Death Mapping

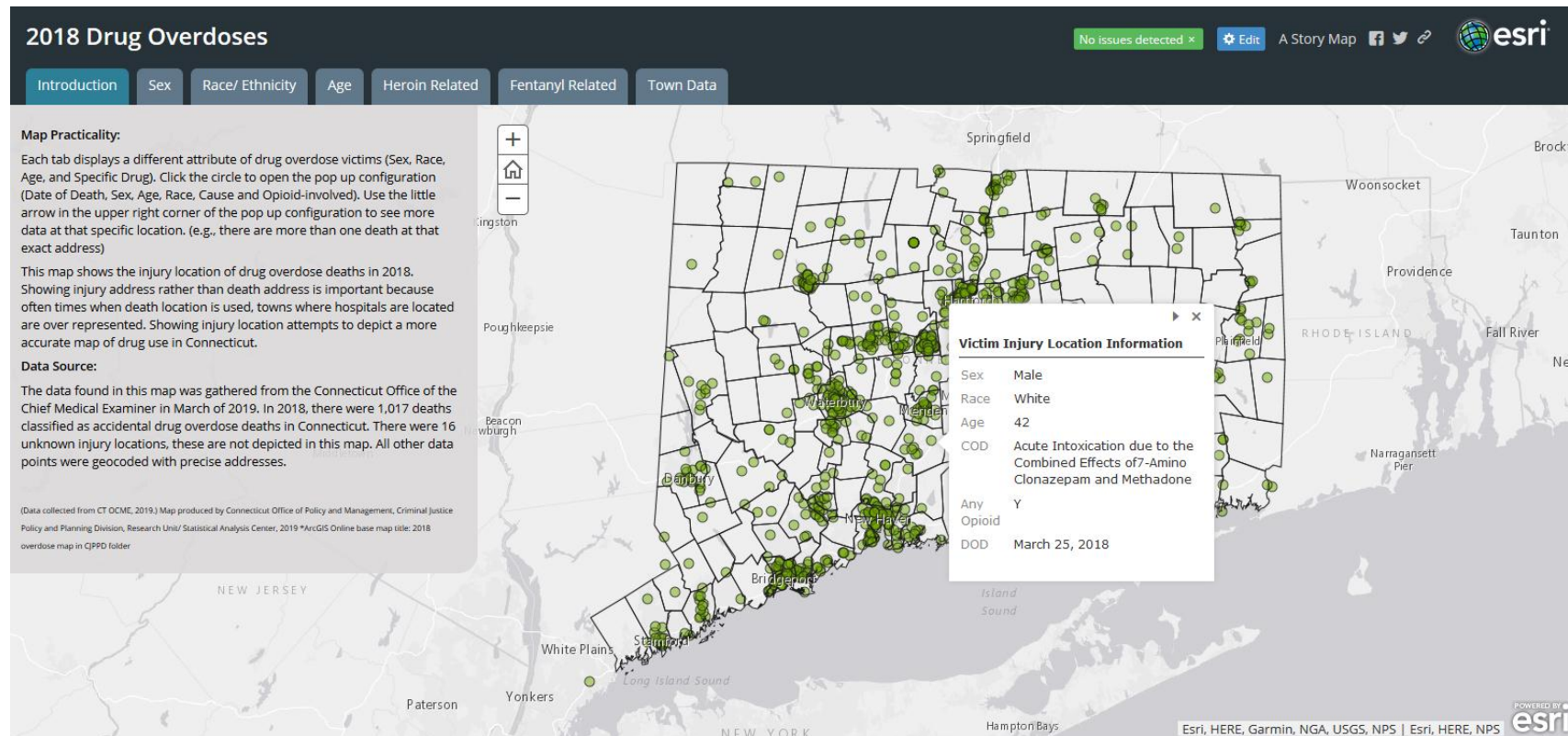


- The Research Unit has been working with the OCME mapping overdose death data since 2014
- Since then, we have gotten Death Registry data from CT DPH
- With this data, we've been able to document a large overlap of overdose deaths and the DOC population

2018 Overdose Deaths Map

Past Features

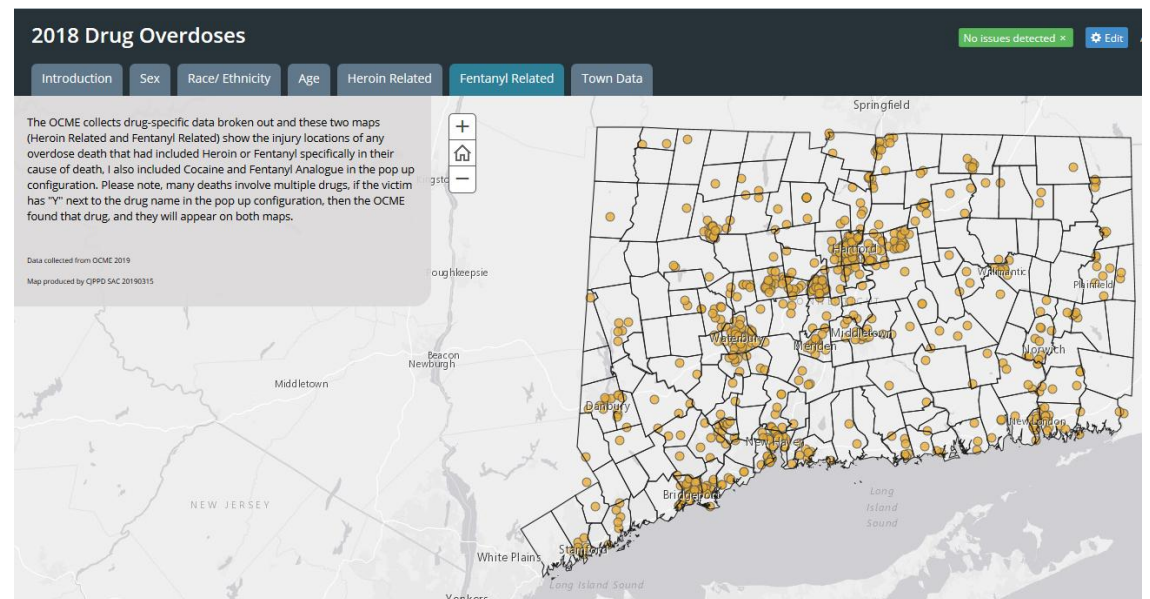
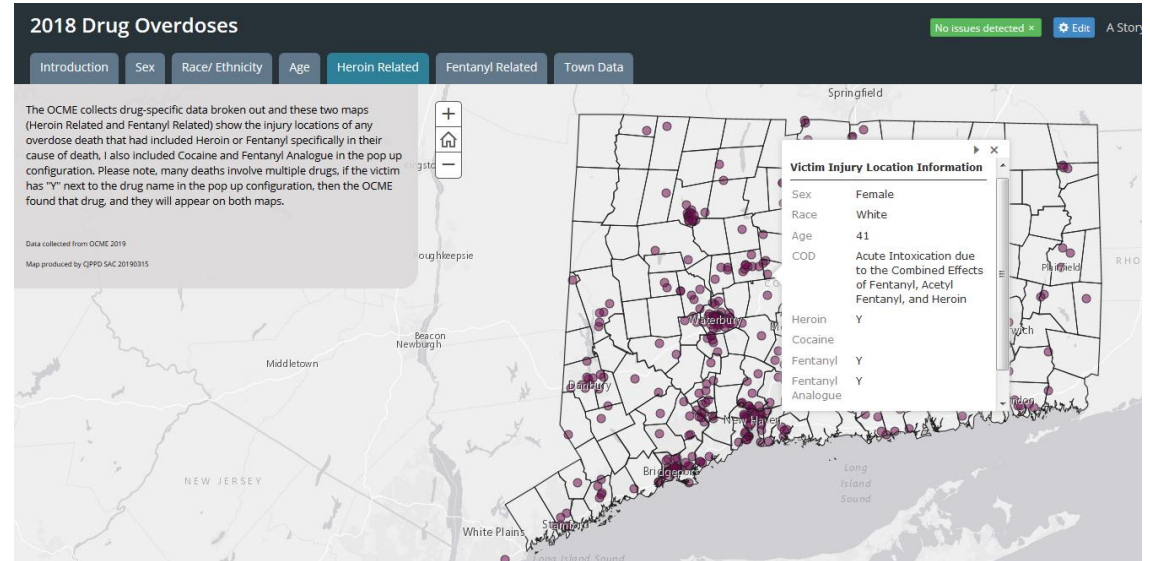
- Injury Location vs Death Location
- Sex
- Race/Ethnicity
- Age



2018 Overdose Deaths Map

New Features

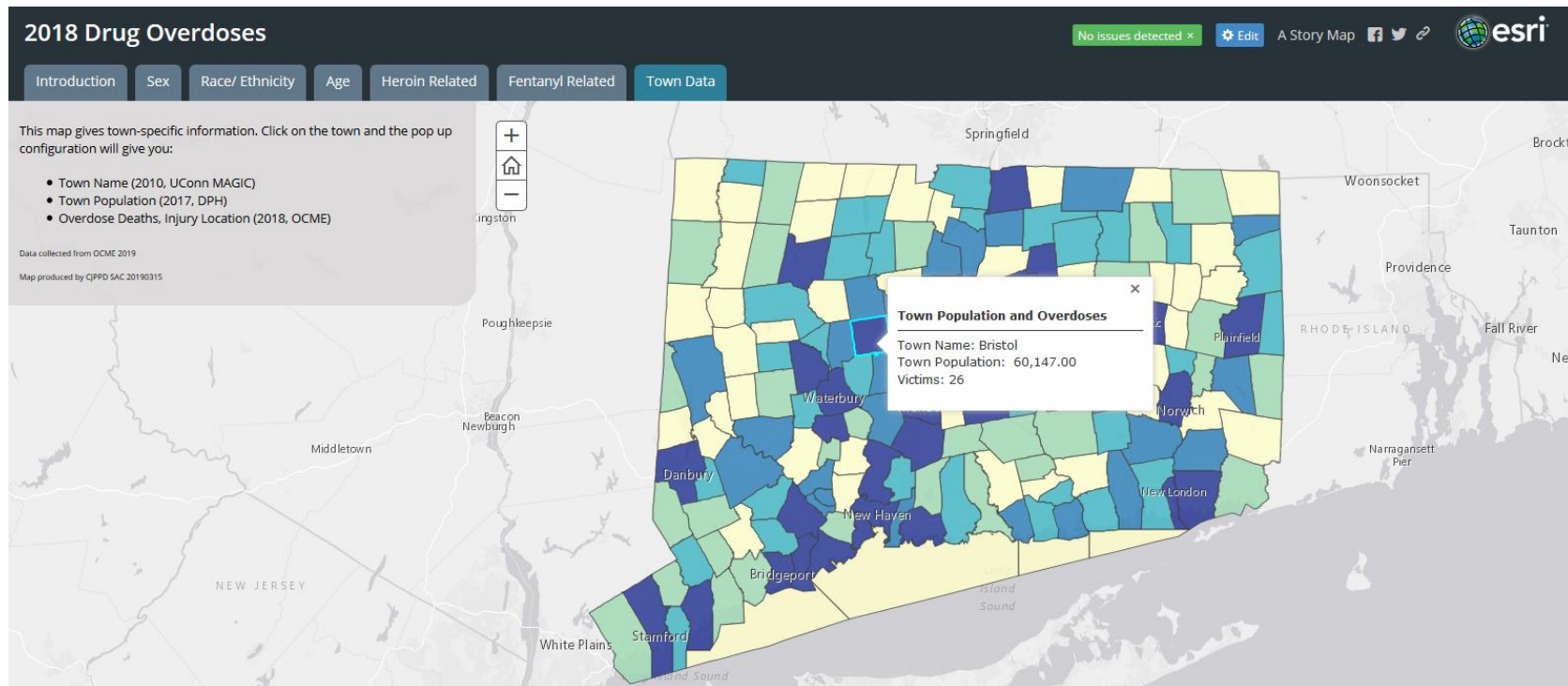
- Heroin Related
- Fentanyl Related



2018 Overdose Deaths Map

New Features Cont.

- Town Level Data



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OPM CJPPD Research Unit

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