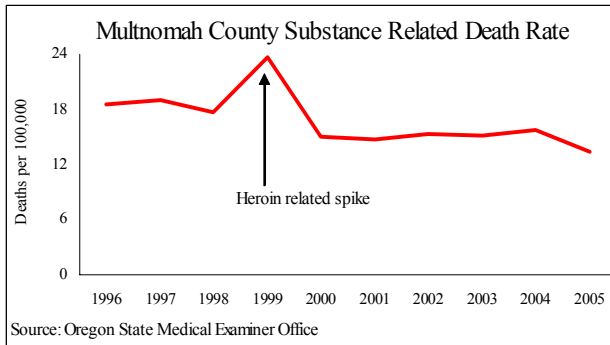


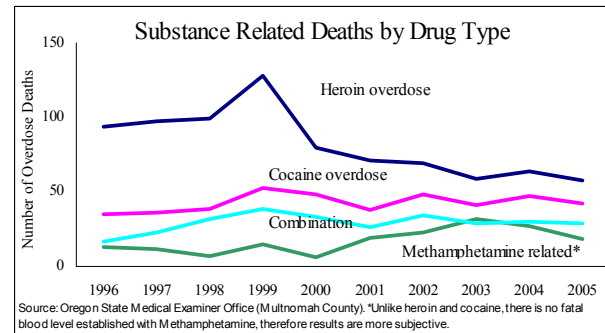
## OVERDOSE TRENDS IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY (005-06)

The following brief identifies the substance related overdoses in Multnomah County over the past decade. The data reported herein was made available by the State Medical Examiner's Office.<sup>1</sup> Budget Office Evaluation staff compile data for Multnomah County on total overdose deaths as well as substance specific overdose deaths in order to track the rates of overdose death for the county.

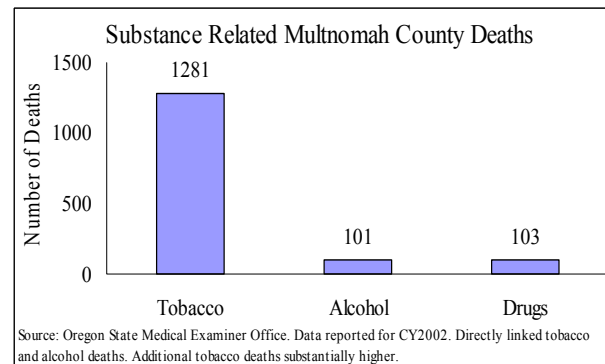
**Substance Related Death Rate.** The results of State Medical Examinations showed that overall overdose rates and totals have declined since 1996. Following a dramatic rise in overdose deaths due to heroin in 1999, the total overdose rate dropped in 2000.<sup>2</sup> From 2000 to 2004 the overall death rate remained mostly flat. In 2005 when Multnomah County had 93 reported overdose deaths, fifteen less than in 2004.



**Various Substances.** Similar to a recent report, the type of substance related to overdoses has changed over the last few years.<sup>3</sup> Overdose deaths for all substances decreased in 2005. While heroin was still the leading substance related to overdose deaths, it has been on the decline since 2000. Total heroin related overdose deaths have reached their lowest level in the last decade. Cocaine related overdose deaths showed a 10% decline and methamphetamine related overdose deaths declined by 33%. Unlike heroin and cocaine, there is no fatal blood level established for methamphetamine, therefore results are more subjective.



**Perspective.** To lend perspective to the number of drug deaths, the following chart shows the number of deaths directly due to tobacco and alcohol. Consistent with the recent Robert Wood Johnson report, the number of deaths due directly to tobacco were substantially higher than either drug or alcohol deaths.<sup>4</sup> The number of alcohol related deaths was consistent with all drug overdose death combined.



<sup>1</sup> Source: Eugene Gray, Oregon State Medical Examiner Office (Multnomah County site).

<sup>2</sup> [www.co.multnomah.or.us/dbcs/budget/performance/pmg\\_reports/heroin.pdf](http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dbcs/budget/performance/pmg_reports/heroin.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Caubet, S. & Nice, M. L. (2004). *Local Trends in Illicit Substance Use*. Budget Office

<sup>4</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2001). *Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem*. pg. 6. The proportion of alcohol related deaths compared to drugs in Multnomah County was considerably lower than what was reported nationally in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report.