

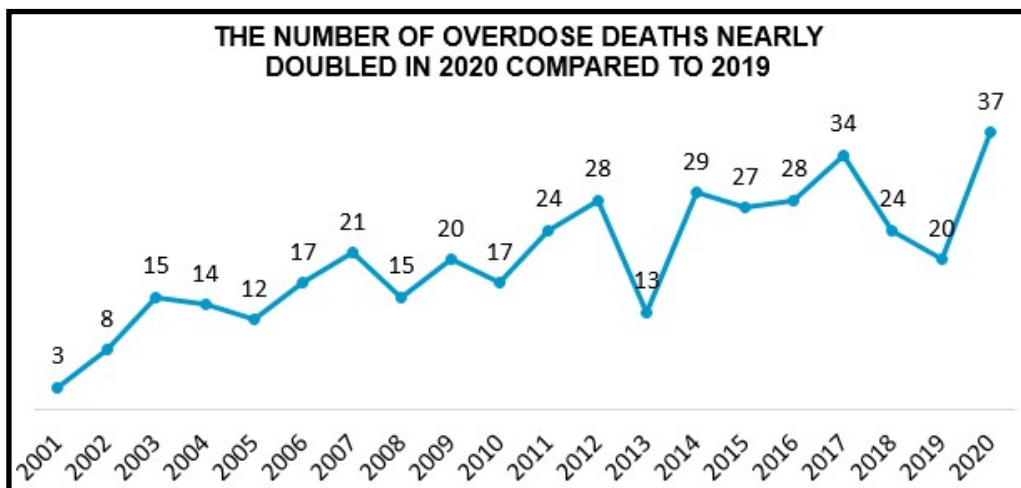


ANNUAL REPORT 2020–2021

Overdose deaths are preventable.

Background

The Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) team has been coming together to review overdose deaths since 2018. The work is funded as part of a Department of Justice and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) grant. In response to the opioid epidemic and the astonishingly high rates of death by overdose in Winnebago County, the review team came to action. *Since the team's inception, Winnebago County saw a decrease in overdose deaths in 2019 and watched that total nearly double in 2020. Our community is now struggling through an epidemic within a pandemic with many people relapsing after years of sobriety, trying to cope with substances in a world of unknown housing, employment, and childcare, exacerbated by the stress of being alone, not having support, and not being able to get help.*



Our growing team of committed partners strive to address systems that could prevent overdose deaths and create a community that supports recovery. While our team continues to meet monthly for reviews, the majority of our work is done outside of the cases discussed. Our partners share ideas and strategies to reduce fatalities, while championing evidence-based recommendations and implementing innovative pilot programs. In recognition of our work, we have been invited to speak locally, statewide, and nationally at the National Overdose Fatality Review Summit. We are a peer-to-peer mentor site through the Bureau of Justice Assistance's COSSAP program where we mentor sites throughout the country, and have continued our mentoring to other counties throughout the state. *We realize our work is much bigger than us. Together, by looking at the lives of people who have lost their fight to addiction, we're given the opportunity to change our community and hopefully the trajectory of someone's life. We honor those who have died by bringing urgency to our work.*

PARTNER AGENCIES

Addiction Medical Solutions of Wisconsin (AMS), Apricity, Ascension, Ascension Behavioral Health, Aurora Medical Center of Oshkosh, Breakwater, City of Menasha Health Department, City of Menasha Police Department, City of Oshkosh Fire Department/Emergency Medical Services, City of Oshkosh Police Department, Community Church, Department of Justice, Fox Crossing Police Department, Fox Valley PRISM Team/Unity Recovery Services, Gold Cross Ambulance Service, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lake Winnebago Area Metropolitan Enforcement Group, Neenah Police Department, Northeast Wisconsin Mental Health Connection, Omro Police Department, Oshkosh Area School District, Partnership Community Health Center, Samaritan Counseling Center of the Fox Valley, Shaffer Counseling & Consulting, LLC, Solutions Recovery, Inc., ThedaCare, ThedaCare Behavioral Health, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Police Department, Village of Winneconne Police Department, Winnebago County Coroner's Office, Winnebago County Health Department, Winnebago County Human Services Department-Behavioral Health, Winnebago County Safe Streets Committee (Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee), Winnebago County Human Services Department-Child Welfare, Winnebago County Office of the District Attorney, Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, Winnebago County Sheriff's Office - Jail, and Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

DATA ON ALL 2020 OVERDOSE DEATHS IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY

This report represents **confirmed** data for 2020, which included 37 overdose deaths in Winnebago County. Historically, this is the highest number of overdoses reported.

SEX: 23 Males, 14 Females

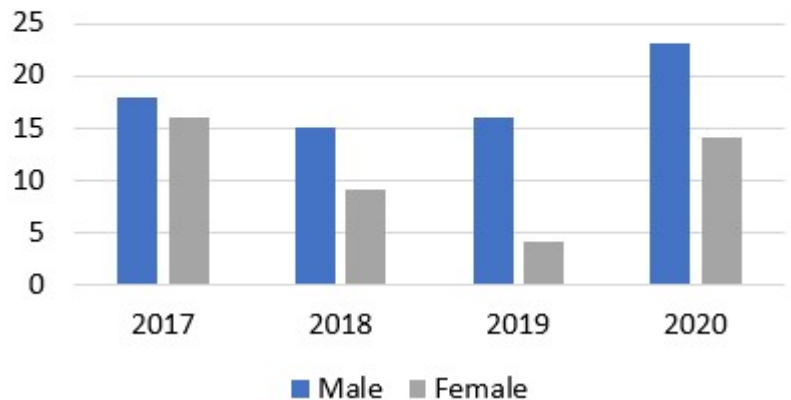
AGE RANGE: 19-75 years old

RACE/ETHNICITY: 84% White, 16% Black/Hispanic/American Indian/Unknown

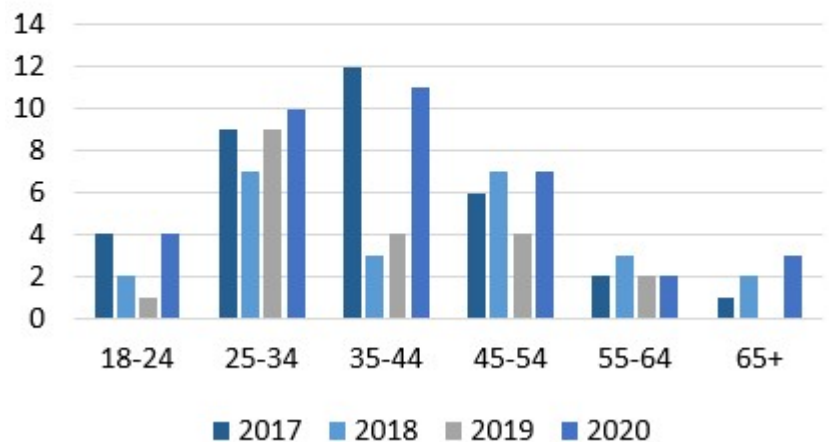
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF DEATH:
Oshkosh=20; Neenah=5; Menasha=2;
Appleton=2; and towns/villages=6

Comparing 2020 overdose deaths to 2019, there was an increase in overdose deaths among women (250%), people aged 35-44, and as a result of Fentanyl. People are still dying alone, and primarily in their residences, or the residences of family and friends.

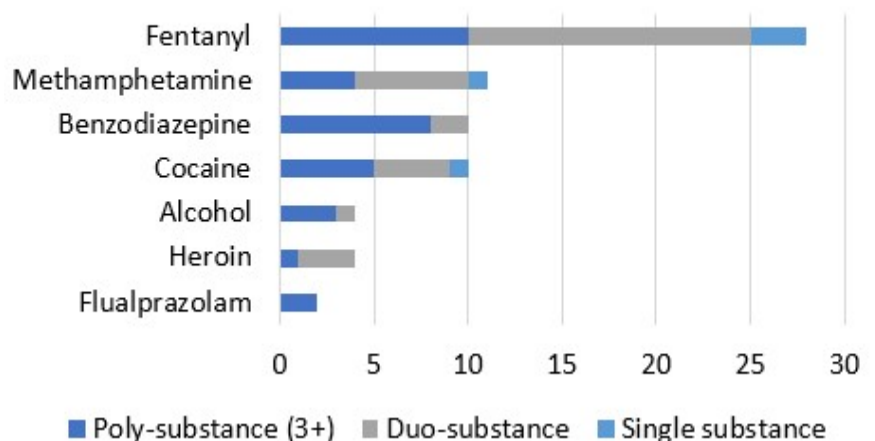
IN 2020, THERE WAS A SPIKE IN OVERDOSE RELATED DEATHS AMONG MALE AND FEMALE INDIVIDUALS COMPARED TO 2019



IN 2020, THE MAJORITY OF OVERDOSE DEATHS OCCURRED AMONG INDIVIDUALS AGED 25-44









IN 2020, FENTANYL HAD A ROLE IN 28 OVERDOSE DEATHS



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY

2020 was a year like no other, where every touchpoint (i.e., the OFR process, our partners, and the people we aim to support) was impacted by COVID-19. Our community saw increased substance use, increased mental health needs, increased overdoses and overdose deaths, and people continue to struggle. During this time, our team has met virtually to find ways to collaborate, and continued to review cases, especially those affected by the pandemic to better understand where our community needs to make changes.

		
COVID-19 & Deaths of Despair	Safer at Home Orders	Treatment & Recovery Services
<p>COVID in 2020 Cases: 14,348 Deaths: 169</p> <p>Overdose Deaths: 37 Deaths by Suicide: 25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide emergency orders in place through May; struck down by Wisconsin Supreme Court Legal challenges and differences in business/service restrictions across local communities Limits on social gatherings, travel, in-person schooling, and extracurricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human services, counseling and referrals offered virtually Treatment services transitioned to virtual care; residential treatment programs were restricted or closed Recovery services and sober living closed; recovery meetings and support became virtual
		
Housing & Evictions	Income & Unemployment	Childcare & School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eviction moratoriums providing varying protection in 2020; fear of pending eviction 836 evictions filed in Winnebago County from March 2020 – August 2021 Rent and mortgage assistance available for qualifying applicants starting in June 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass layoffs among employers impacted by COVID-19; restaurants, hospitality, and service industries Influx of unemployment claims, reaching over 800,000 unpaid claims in August 2020; 6-10 month delays in payment Federal unemployment programs launched to provide supplement payments, extra weeks of payments, and expanded eligibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing anxiety over difficult decisions based on care needs of their children and work/life obligations Childcare closed or restricted in number of children served Transition to virtual learning or combination of in-person and virtual; some districts remained in-person with sudden closures Challenges with lack of internet and technology access

"One of the things that we talk about a lot (in treatment) is that not one of us is as strong as all of us and that we need to have support, that recovery is not an individual process, it is a process that involves so much support and compassion and love from others... that was taken. That was just kind of ripped out from underneath people. For so many people, their recovery program was based on interaction with other people, and they were kind of robbed of that."

Brophy, B., Growth, A., & Mathew, B. 8/31/2021. "Drug overdose deaths increased in Wisconsin during the COVID-19 pandemic. These northeast counties were among the worst hit." *Post Crescent*. <https://www.postcrescent.com/in-depth/news/2021/08/31/wisconsin-addiction-resources-drug-overdose-deaths-spiked-during-covid-pandemic/5418500001/>

MAJOR THEMES FROM DEATHS REVIEWED IN 2020-2021

Role of Family, Friends, and Partners: Many people who died from an overdose had friends and family who were unaware of substance use, cases where people knew but did not know what to do, and cases where substance use occurred across generations.

Early Initiation: Decedents had initiated substance use at an early age [10- 15]. We know this is a risk factor for disordered use in the future and can be attributed to childhood trauma, family history, and ease of access to drugs and alcohol.

Trauma: Childhood trauma, community violence, complex trauma, intimate partner violence, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and the effects of a pandemic, all have impacted the lives of our decedents.

Mental Illness: This remains a priority as we see cases that present depression, anxiety, pain, suicidal ideation and past attempts, and the lack of treatment for dual diagnosis (i.e., mental health and substance use disorders). We have seen an increase of substance use with co-occurring mental health issues, making more people at risk for overdose fatalities.

Recovery: We strive to be a recovery friendly community that prioritizes being supportive (instead of shame and stigma) for people in recovery through work, living, and family. Through these cases we see that while the recovery community is strong, the broader community still has a lot of work to do.

Continuum of Care: Gaps in communication between treatment, mental health, primary care, and other key agencies, were apparent in many overdose deaths. Our community needs to continue to actively support communication to strengthen the continuum of care among systems with a shared focus of helping people when they are ready. We need better transitions from treatment to after care programs, for people from sober living to other housing, and from law enforcement touchpoints to treatment/recovery services.

Narcan Administration/Location of Death: All of the reviewed substance related deaths in Winnebago County were without Narcan and died alone without anybody nearby to help. Overdose deaths are continuing to happen at the home of the decedent or their family/friends.

2021-2022 Priorities

Three of our priorities remain the same as last year; Mental Health, Child Trauma, and Recovery Community. We have two more to add for this next year.

Social Connectedness

People feel isolated and that they have little to no support. Many are dying alone. A strong recovery community is a critical support for people seeking help, and can reduce relapse for those in recovery. Family, friends, workplaces, and our broader community can be a support by learning about addiction, reducing stigma and shaming, and becoming aware of services in our community.

Prevention

To save lives we need to continue to focus on preventative efforts. This may be with children, after a nonfatal overdose, or connecting with family/friends left behind. Working with Breakwater we will continue to work on preventing youth and adult substance use.

Rise of Fentanyl: Nationally, Fentanyl has been on the rise, but locally it is hitting our community hard. Fentanyl had a role in 28 overdose deaths in 2020, which was an increase of 211% from 2019 cases. The most common of fatal overdoses included Fentanyl (a potent additive) and another substance. Heroin, once a chart topper for overdose fatalities, was overshadowed in 2020 by Methamphetamine, Cocaine, and Fentanyl. The presence of synthetic opioids occurred nearly six times that of natural opioids, a major shift from earlier years.

Rise of Other Drugs: Our county saw a rise of new substances involved in overdose fatalities, such as Benzodiazepines (e.g., Flualprazolam, Etizolam, Lorazepam), Opiates (e.g., Isotonitazene, Carfentanil, Buporphine), and other prescription drugs seen as firsts in toxicology (Chlordiazepoxide, Ephedrine, Lithium, and Methylphenidate).

2020-2021 OVERDOSE PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Our team knows that action is the only way we are going to prevent deaths from happening. In our work together we pilot a lot of ideas and are proud of the successes we have made, but realize we have a lot of work left to do.

OFR Successes

1. Handle with Care Pilot

To address childhood trauma and connect the school and law enforcement systems, we worked with Oshkosh Area School District and Oshkosh Police Department. In our short pilot of 7 months, we had over 70 referrals. Social workers said all the kids referred were new to the system of support, which means we have a great opportunity to reach more kids impacted by trauma. We're looking forward to formalizing and growing this program in the fall of 2021.

2. How to Get the Job Done: Working through Burnout, Secondary Trauma & Compassion Fatigue Training

Based on our recommendation to offer training and support to law enforcement agencies in Winnebago County regarding trauma informed care, we had a pilot with local officers. Participants were able to be vulnerable, learn and develop new skills to enhance job performance, and address self-care concepts. These efforts reduce secondary trauma, help with crisis intervention, and can reduce further trauma of children and loved ones.

3. We Heart You Cards

This incredible resource not only shares necessary phone numbers, but also sends an important message to those struggling, as well as their friends and family. Our partners have distributed these cards to agencies in ten counties across Northeast Wisconsin to assist in service referral related to substance use. It's also gone as far as Pennsylvania! Breakwater has made a PSA about the card that is shared widely, and it has been highlighted in the Oshkosh Herald since April 2020, and will continue until March 2022.

4. OFR success is also based on the success and hard work of our partners.

- *Unity Recovery Services gained a regional Basic Needs Giving Partnership grant for capacity building.*
- *Menasha Community Addiction Assistance Program (MCAAP) has helped connect 70+ people go through their program and seen a decrease in overdose deaths.*
- *Winnebago County Jail is now handing out Narcan to help those most at-risk for overdoses.*
- *ThedaCare Behavioral Health Walk-in Care in Neenah opened in 2020 to help people when they most need it.*
- *Sandy Shaffer and Lindsay Loewe of Collaborative Wellness started a group dual diagnosis program at Solutions.*
- *Many of our OFR partners went above and beyond during the pandemic, and we celebrate all their efforts to make this community better!*

New Recommendations

Last year we recognized that Mental Health, Child Trauma, and Recovery Support and Communication of Lessons Learned were our top priorities. Our work has continued to address these areas, as well as to identify new recommendations.

- *Offer training on peer support, mental health, and substance use to law enforcement and Emergency Medical Systems.*
- *Enhance OFR partners' awareness and knowledge of the Child Protective Services process.*
- *Increase the number of mental health clinicians who are competent in providing integrated mental health and substance use services.*
- *Identify strategies to reduce overdoses that occur shortly after release from incarceration.*
- *When prescribing opioids, healthcare professionals in Winnebago County should co-prescribe Naloxone (Narcan) and educate people who may encounter an opioid overdose event.*
- *Statewide Recommendation: When prescribing opioids, healthcare professionals should co-prescribe naloxone (Narcan) and educate people who may encounter an opioid overdose event.*
- *Create a Winnebago County OFR logo.*
- *Pilot a data-driven proactive rapid response team in Winnebago County that aims to prevent overdose deaths.*



PROGRESS MADE ON PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

We have taken action on many of our recommendations shared in our 2019-2020 Annual Report. The following includes updates on our successes, work we've accomplished, and work we continue to do.

Previous Recommendations	Progress Made
Explore EMS/fire departments mapping drug overdoses and interactions to provide intervention for help and improve access to services and referrals.	<i>A taskforce evaluated mapping systems through ODMAP for one year, but the results weren't as great as we thought. From this we decided we needed to explore a rapid response initiative to offer assistance after an overdose, as well as leverage the state's Overdose Spike Alert system.</i>
Ensure Narcan/naloxone distribution in Winnebago County through the health department and partners.	<i>Winnebago County Health Department continues to offer Narcan/naloxone to community residents and continues to exceed its supply issued through a state program. With additional supplies granted to meet our community's need, access to Narcan/naloxone continued throughout COVID-19 and has aided many community residents and partners.</i>
Promote Narcan/naloxone access to those who use substances, even for those who do not plan to use opiates (due to synthetic opiates mixed into other drugs).	<i>Communication continues with our community to keep Narcan/naloxone on hand, regardless of the substance used. Efforts are ongoing and require regular evaluation. We continue to find ways to have more Narcan in the community through helping partners apply for Narcan Direct grants, and our work on leave behind Narcan kits.</i>
Explore the expansion of Victim Crisis Response (VCR) to serve all areas of Winnebago County.	<i>This continues to need our attention. With COVID-19, our volunteer recruiting efforts were stalled. We continue to aim to get 10 volunteers in the Oshkosh area so that we can make the program exist throughout Winnebago County to address childhood trauma.</i>
Offer training and support to law enforcement agencies in Winnebago County regarding trauma informed care.	<i>We offered this training as a pilot, which was a success. While numbers were small, it allowed there to be a safe environment where officers could be vulnerable and connect with one another. We are working with community partners to offer similar trainings to additional law enforcement officers throughout Winnebago County.</i>
Promote and share resources to family/friends of substance users for the purpose of recognizing signs/symptoms of substance use disorder and to connect to support services.	<i>In partnership with Breakwater and the Daybreak Project we offered community conversations with this population to better understand the needs of those struggling. Some of these needs have become other OFR recommendations and pilots, and at the same time we are looking at creating a card for families that can be a leave behind support card.</i>
Support and expand a substance free culture that engages many stakeholders in our community, and focuses on the support of individuals and families who are on a path to recovery.	<i>Through the work of our OFR Sounding Board, and community conversations with others who had lived experience, we have continued to document ways our community can get better in supporting the recovery community. The first big step is our We Heart You: Recovery in Our Community Conference to be held on March 30, 2022. The event will bridge the recovery and broader community, share resources, and educate the masses on addiction being a disease.</i>
Support efforts to establish a community-based supervision program, Winnebago Connect, that works with people in the justice system to quickly gain access to treatment and recovery services, community resources, and case management.	<i>The program was stalled due to COVID-19, but we continue to stay updated on the work of the program, what resources and support they need, and how best to refer community members to the program.</i>
Implement the Zero Suicide framework across health, behavioral health, and substance use providers and systems.	<i>In the past two years, The Connection has assisted organizations to attend the Wisconsin Zero Suicide training, in which three community organizations have attended. Future work includes: continuing to offer training scholarships, hosting a local training, and study the impact of lived experience.</i>

A COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION

We all have a role in preventing overdose deaths.

This work, the work of the review process and the implementation of recommendations that stem from the review process, requires resources. Those resources come in many forms (e.g., staff, time, data, knowledge, and money). Please consider how you may be able to contribute your resources to the work of the Overdose Fatality Review Team and the broader community work around overdose death prevention and substance use reduction.

Connect with Help

FREE NARCAN ACCESS: Life saving Narcan/naloxone is available through the Winnebago County Health Department, call 920-232-3000 or at Vivent in Appleton, call 920-733-2068.

UNITY RECOVERY SERVICES: Help connect those seeking recovery from addiction with peer support, visit unitypeersupport.org, or call 920-266-6000 (24/7 PRISM Line).

SOLUTIONS RECOVERY, INC.: Connect with, refer to, and support our local recovery community. Visit sri-wi.org, call 920-233-0888, or stop by 621 Evans St., Oshkosh.

APRICITY: For those impacted by substance use disorders and needing treatment, employment, and support services in a safe, progressive recovery community call 920-722-2345 or visit apricityservices.com.

2-1-1: Get help paying bills, finding food, locating other resources near you, and connect with help if you find yourself or a loved one struggling with addiction. Call 2-1-1 and visit 211.org. or 211wisconsin.communityos.org/addiction-helpline.

DAYBREAK PROJECT: A gathering of people whose lives have been affected by someone's use and misuse of substances. Visit daybreakproject.com or call 920-968-9105 for help.

Call to Action

WE HEART YOU CARDS: Use these referral cards, which can be requested by calling 920-232-3000, to connect people with substance use issues and their friends and family to resources in our community. Watch the Breakwater PSA for more information: vimeo.com/477422950.

BREAKWATER: Breakwater is focused on preventing substance use in our communities, and work to strengthen community collaboration and implement many of the recommendations made by the OFR Group. Visit breakwaterwi.org for more information.

OFR SOUNDING BOARD: To make sure our work is relevant, the OFR team decided that we needed to have more people in recovery around the table. We ask for input from people struggling with addiction, those in recovery, and those who serve as community advocates. The goal is to understand if the recommendations are relevant, and how to implement them into the community. If you're interested in joining, email the contact below. We'd love to hear your voice!

Contact information:

Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) support is coordinated through the Winnebago County Health Department. Jennifer Skolaski, the OFR facilitator, can be reached by email at: jskolaski@co.winnebago.wi.us.

