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### Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review Annual Report Released

OSHKOSH, WIS. (October 14, 2021) —The Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) team, on behalf of their 47 community partners, has released their [annual report](#) summarizing findings and recommendations from the deaths by overdose reviewed in 2020.

The OFR team is offering a free, virtual Lunch & Learn on November 10, 2021, from noon to 1 p.m. to share findings from the report and highlight recent successes in implementation work. Visit the Winnebago County Health Department's website at [www.winnebagohealth.org](http://www.winnebagohealth.org) to view the complete [OFR annual report](#) and [register](#) for the Lunch & Learn.

The purpose of Overdose Fatality Review is to gain a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding deaths by overdose and use this information to create community recommendations to reduce future deaths. The team strives to address systems that could prevent overdose deaths and create a community that supports recovery. Their main focus is on mental health, child trauma, recovery community, social connectedness and prevention/harm reduction. There is an urgency around identifying gaps, changing systems and saving lives.

Notable findings from the report include:

- 37 overdoses resulted in unintentional deaths in 2020, which is the highest number reported in Winnebago County.
- Among the deaths reported, 23 were male and 14 females. In 2020, the team reported a 250% increase in deaths among women.
- The ages of decedents ranged from 19 to 75 years, with an increase in 2020 among people aged 35 to 44.
- Fentanyl was listed in the toxicology reports for 28 of the 37 fatal overdoses (76%).
- Most overdose deaths occurred in the home. All of the decedents died alone without anybody nearby to help.

"Overdose deaths in Winnebago County almost doubled from 20 deaths in 2019 to 37 deaths in 2020, and we have continued to see a rise in overdose deaths in 2021," said Jennifer Skolaski, facilitator of the Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review. "The pandemic has had a huge impact on substance use and mental health in the community, whether it be from safer at home orders, restricted or closed treatment and recovery services, eviction moratoriums, mass layoffs, an influx of unemployment claims and programs, as well as ongoing childcare concerns and school closings and restrictions."

[more]

Recommendations the OFR team discussed for the Winnebago County community include enhancing awareness of the child protective services process, increasing the number of mental health clinicians providing integrated mental health and substance use services, identifying strategies to reduce overdoses that occur shortly after release from incarceration, encouraging healthcare professionals to co-prescribe Naloxone (Narcan) with opioids, and training law enforcement and emergency medical systems on peer support, mental health and substance use.

"Our community has typically seen a separation of services for people in need of mental health and substance use treatment, but the reality is that many people are in need of both and trying to navigate between both with often limited success," said Ashlee Rahmlow, community health and prevention supervisor, Winnebago County Health Department. "We are looking to find some natural bridges between these two vital resources to help people get the treatment they need, when they need it. Part of this will be assessing our provider communities and offering training opportunities to bridge any gaps in services to those providers that are interested."

While the annual report includes data from 2020, the trajectory for this year's overdose fatalities is even higher, making the work of the team and community as urgent as ever. Wisconsinites continue to struggle with substance use disorder and die on a daily basis from overdoses. Anyone can support their colleagues, family, friends and our community, and here are a few ways how:

- Connect with, refer to, and support our local recovery community.
  - Solutions Recovery, Inc. Solutions Recovery, Inc. serves the Fox Valley's recovery community with programs for individuals and their families, assisting in relapse prevention and providing outreach services within our community. Learn more at [sri-wi.org](http://sri-wi.org) or call 920-233-0888.
  - Apricity provides those impacted by substance use disorders a full spectrum of care including treatment, employment and support services in a safe, progressive recovery community. Learn more at [apricityservices.com](http://apricityservices.com) or call 920-722-2345.
  - Ask for help or connect your loved ones with Unity Recovery Services peer support. Everyone at Unity Recovery Services has a personal recovery story, and they create a community where recovery is encouraged, supported and respected. Learn more at [unitypeersupport.org](http://unitypeersupport.org), call 920-345-7747 (24/7 PRISM Line), or connect with [Apricity](http://Apricity).
- Call [2-1-1](tel:2-1-1) or text your zip code to 898211 to connect to the [Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline](http://WisconsinAddictionRecoveryHelpline) if you find yourself or a loved with struggling with addiction.
- Work with our local coalition, Breakwater, to prevent and reduce youth and adult substance use. Learn more at [breakwaterwi.org](http://breakwaterwi.org).
- Get a free Narcan kit to help reverse an opiate related overdose for yourself, friends, family or other community members at the Winnebago County Health Department at 112 Otter Avenue, Second Floor, Oshkosh or 211 N. Commercial Street, Neenah.
- Go to the Winnebago County Health Department's website at [www.winnebagopublichealth.org](http://www.winnebagopublichealth.org) to learn more about the work of the [Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review \(OFR\) team](http://WinnebagoCountyOverdoseFatalityReview(OFR)team), or contact Jennifer Skolaski at [jskolaski@co.winnebago.wi.us](mailto:jskolaski@co.winnebago.wi.us) with questions.
- Lastly, please check in with friends, family and colleagues. As we continue through this pandemic, people will still struggle and, as a community, we need to show compassion and support one another. Take time and be intentional in asking people how they are, supporting them when needed, and being open to helping. Tips for talking to a friend about addiction can be found on the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation website at [www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/what-can-i-say-to-get-you-to-stop](http://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/what-can-i-say-to-get-you-to-stop).