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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review Annual Report Released

OSHKOSH, WIS. (August 12, 2022) —The Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) team released its 2021-2022 annual report sharing statistics, trends and recommendations to prevent future overdoses and deaths in our community.

"Overdose deaths continue to rise across our country and local communities," said Jennifer Skolaski, facilitator of the Winnebago County OFR team. "The need for better support systems for people struggling with substance use disorders is urgent, and the information that our team gathers is an important piece in understanding the factors that may have contributed to these deaths so we can help save lives."



The overdose fatality review team is made up of 47 partners representing 36 organizations, all working together to address the root causes of overdose deaths and make our community a safer place to live, work and be. The team reviewed data from overdose deaths from June 2021 to July 2022 and conducted an in-depth examination of the lives of nine of those individuals through a process that involves sharing data, risk factors about the victim's life and death, and identifying system issues related to addiction and substance use.

Some of the key takeaways were:

- Overdose deaths have increased for the second year in a row. 41 people lost their lives to drug overdose in 2021, an 11 percent increase compared to 2020.
- Fentanyl remains the leading cause of overdose deaths. Fentanyl was listed as the primary cause of death in 28 of the 41 overdose deaths.
- The majority of overdose deaths occurred among individuals 25 to 44 years old.
- People who are released from incarceration are at a higher risk of overdose, in part due to isolation, stigma and barriers to treatment and other necessary supports.
- Deaths related to non-opiate substances, such as methamphetamine and alcohol, are rising.

The OFR team outlined recommendations to prevent overdose deaths based on the data and themes from case reviews. Priorities for this next year include improving access to treatment, increasing support from medical providers, improving response to changes in drug trends, and supporting children to prevent early substance use.

In 2021-2022, the OFR team and partners had many successes. They addressed child trauma through the Handle with Care program, improved access to Narcan through the Oshkosh Fire Department's Leave Behind Narcan Kits, provided free fentanyl test strips through the Winnebago County Health Department in partnership with Vivent Health, offered training and installed Naloxone Boxes at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and worked to break through the stigma at the We Heart You event.

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"The health department provides Narcan free of charge to anyone who wants it, and we have been working to expand availability in areas outside of Oshkosh through community partnerships and Naloxboxes," said Danielle Florence, community health strategist, Winnebago County Health Department. "The more people in the community who have access to harm reduction services and trainings, the more we can effectively work together to prevent overdoses and save lives."

Narcan is a harm reduction tool anyone can use to save a life. It is currently available at the Winnebago County Health Department's Oshkosh office, Solutions Recovery, Vivent and Unity Recovery Services for no charge. Fentanyl test strips can also be found at the health department and Vivent.

In honor of International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, the Winnebago County Health Department, an OFR partner, will be hosting a free virtual Narcan training from noon to 1 p.m. Participants will learn how to recognize and respond to an overdose using Narcan. To sign up, visit wchd.pub/augustnarcantraining.

The OFR team is also hosting a virtual Lunch & Learn on Friday, August 26, from noon to 1 p.m. to share findings from the annual report and highlight recent successes. Visit the Winnebago County Health Department's website at www.winnebagopublichealth.org to view the complete [OFR annual report](#) and [register for the Lunch & Learn](#).

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