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**Subject: New Interagency Partnership Launches an Overdose Fatality Review Team**

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## **New Interagency Partnership Launches an Overdose Fatality Review Team**

[Winnebago County] On Tuesday March 20<sup>th</sup>, partners from throughout Winnebago County are launching a new effort to better understand what is leading to overdose deaths in our community and identify innovative ways to prevent those deaths in the future. Winnebago County is one of six Wisconsin communities to receive funding, training, and support from the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health](#) and Wisconsin Department of Justice through an award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to establish an Overdose Fatality Review Team. The Winnebago County Project is being facilitated by the [Winnebago County Health Department](#), but relies on strong partnership across community sectors that touch the lives of people impacted by substance use, from schools to law enforcement to recovery and beyond, leveraging interagency data sharing and practitioner expertise.

Our community, like most communities across Wisconsin, is increasingly seeing the impacts of substance use. In 2017, 31 people in Winnebago County died from an overdose; 21 of those deaths were due to opiate use. This number has been rising in recent years despite the tireless prevention and intervention efforts of so many organizations throughout our community. In response to the growing need for a coordinated response, partner organizations and community members formed the [Winnebago County Drug and Alcohol Coalition \(WCDAC\)](#). Members of the WCDAC's Data Team submitted the application for the Overdose Fatality Review project. Kurt Leibold, Chief of Police at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Police Department, is a member of the Data Team and has first-hand experience with death review processes. "In my 29 years of policing, 26 in the city of Milwaukee, I have seen many different strategies implemented for drugs and crime, some worked well and some didn't work at all." Chief Leibold continues, "The premise of the death review strategy is convening key community stakeholders, dissecting a death incident, information sharing, and examining multidisciplinary data. This collaborative process reveals gaps in our systems, encourages cooperation, builds relationships, and ultimately results in creative problem solving and actionable intelligence."

To turn the trend of overdose deaths around, communities must try to understand the local issues and strategize prevention methods together. While the project is being facilitated by the Winnebago County Health Department, it gets strength from more than [twenty-five partner agencies around the table](#). "As an agency that works to improve the health of our community through service and partnership, we are excited to be facilitating the Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review process," says Carolyn McCarty, Community Health and Prevention Supervisor at the Winnebago County Health Department. "We know that it is through partnership and collaboration that we can have an impact on such a complex issue. We

are so encouraged by the number of partners who have come together from across our community with a sense of urgency and determination to solve this issue.”

Many of the overdose fatality review partners are members of the WCDAC and have been working collaboratively to address substance use in our community for years. The coalition’s mission is *“To prevent and reduce drug and alcohol use by empowering our community to effect individual and social change through education, advocacy, collaboration, and coordination of resources.”* The existing relationships within the coalition laid the foundation for a successful grant application and will support the review process. “The rich information about substance use, overdose, 01overdose deaths and targeted prevention strategies that will come from the overdose fatality review process are so valuable for guiding the action of our coalition,” says Serah Muinde, Steering Team Chair of the Winnebago County Drug and Alcohol Coalition. “With this information, we will be able to implement changes that will improve outcomes and save lives in our community.”

The Winnebago County Overdose Fatality Review Team will meet monthly. With the depth of information we will learn from the review process and the strength of partnership around the review table and throughout Winnebago County, we are poised to not only identify prevention opportunities but to make real change in the systems that touch the lives of the people impacted by substance use.

For more information on Winnebago County’s Overdose Fatality Review Program, please visit the [Winnebago County Health Department website](#) and search Overdose Fatality Review.

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