



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Background

Winnebago County established an Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) team in early 2018 and is funded by an Overdose Data to Action grant through Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). From June 2021 to July 2022, the OFR team reviewed nine deaths through a process that involves partners sharing data, risk factors about the victim's life and death, and identifying system issues related to addiction and substance use to prevent future overdose deaths. Confidentiality is maintained through inter-agency memorandum of understandings and case review signed agreements. The process is designed to maintain the highest levels of respect for everyone involved in the process.

Three Waves of Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths (CDC)



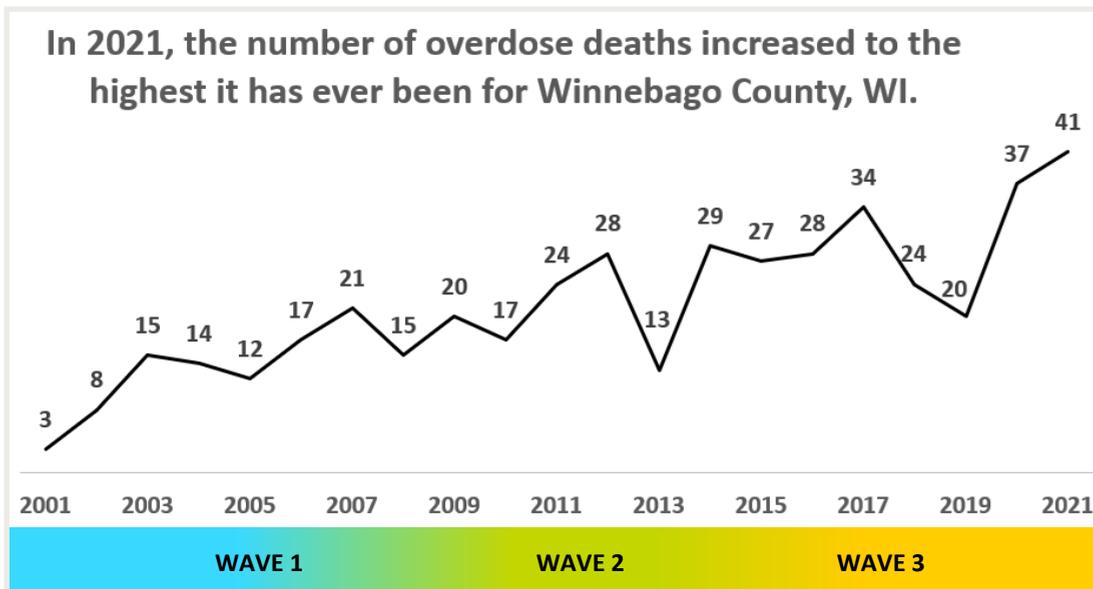
WAVE 1 started in the 1990s and marked a rise in prescription-related opioid overdose deaths.



WAVE 2 began in 2010 and marked a rise in heroin-related overdose deaths.



WAVE 3 began in 2013 and marked a rise in synthetic opioid (i.e. fentanyl) related overdose deaths.



Overdose deaths have continued to increase in Winnebago County. The cause of overdoses and overdose deaths since the early 2000s have followed three distinct waves identified by the CDC beginning with the over-prescription of opioids, followed by heroin availability, and most recently, the rise in fentanyl mixed into many substances.

2021 OVERDOSE DEATH DATA IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY

The data below and on the following page represents confirmed data for 2021 overdose deaths in Winnebago County as shared by the Winnebago County Coroner's Office. In 2021, there were 41 overdose deaths in Winnebago County, which accounts for an 11% increase in deaths compared to the 37 deaths reported in 2020.

Sex*: 29 Males, 12 Females

Race & Ethnicity*: 36 White, 3 Black or African American, 1 Hispanic, 1 American Indian

Geographic Location of Death: 21 Oshkosh, 9 Neenah, 9 Towns and Villages, 2 Menasha & Appleton (total only reflects the portion of these two cities that fall within Winnebago County)

*Sex, race & ethnicity were determined based on identifiers listed on government documents, such as a driver's license. The identifiers listed were not necessarily chosen by the victims.

OVERDOSE DEATH DATA & COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

Continued Rise in Overdose Deaths

Since 2017, fentanyl has been the leading cause of overdose deaths in our county. Winnebago County is part of the Overdose Spike Alert pilot initiative through DHS. As part of this pilot, alerts are shared when agencies report overdose and overdose death data. In 2021, the first overdose spikes (3+ overdose deaths in one week) and surges (continued cluster of spikes) with 15 overdose deaths occurred between November and December alone. Age has also become a factor with increases in fatal and non-fatal overdoses among people under the age of 35.

Changes in Cause of Overdose

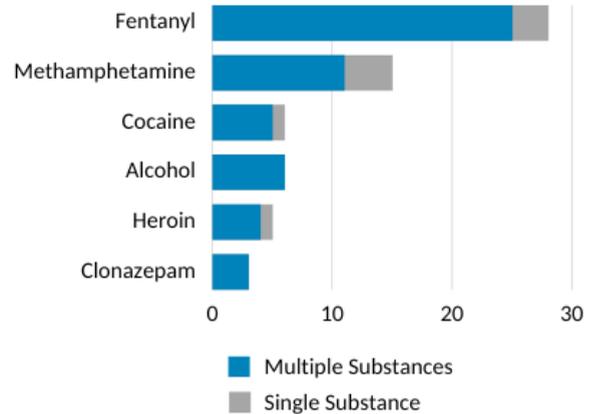
Over the past two years, incarceration and methamphetamine toxicity have become major factors in overdose deaths. In 2021, drugs laced with fentanyl (i.e. methamphetamine, cocaine, pressed pills, and heroin) have been attributed to the continued increase in overdoses and overdose deaths. Non-opiate substances (such as methamphetamine and alcohol) are increasingly becoming a cause of overdose deaths. In 2021, 27% of overdose deaths did not cite an opiate as the cause of death. People who are released from incarceration are also at a higher risk of overdose, in part due to isolation, stigma, and barriers to treatment and other necessary supports.

Overdose Prevention Opportunities

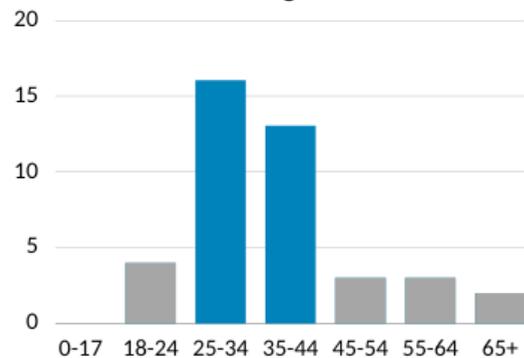
Based on local data, overdose prevention can be improved by incorporating strategies to:

- Promote harm reduction, including use of Narcan and fentanyl test strips.
- Educate and communicate the risks of overdose from non-opiate drugs.
- Improve communication of overdose prevention to younger age groups.
- Establish connections to treatment and recovery services prior to release from incarceration and while on probation.

In 2021, Fentanyl was listed as a primary cause of death in 28 overdose deaths.



In 2021, the majority of overdose deaths in Winnebago County occurred among individuals aged 25-44.



Experiencing incarceration is associated with increased risk of overdose death.



7 of the 41 overdose victims were on probation when they died



4 of the 41 overdose victims had been incarcerated within the 30 days prior to their death

Icons retrieved from thenounproject.com

THEMES AND PRIORITIES TO PREVENT OVERDOSE DEATHS

Themes from Deaths Reviewed

Childhood Trauma: Many victims who died by overdose experienced traumatic events prior to age of 18. The impact of trauma is worsened by the lack of support and access to services for children and families who experience trauma.

Mental Health History: Most victims who died of overdose had a documented history of mental health disorders. Many victims did not receive the treatment and services needed to support their mental health and substance use disorders.

Early Onset of Substance Use: A continued theme across overdose victims is exposure to substance use at a young age and access to drugs and alcohol in the home. These conditions are attributed to early substance use (before the age of 12).

Community Conditions: In Winnebago County, overdose victims continue to die alone and primarily in their homes or the residences of family and friends. Fentanyl remains the cause of death in the majority of overdose deaths with a high frequency of unintentional fentanyl use (mixed into drugs without knowledge). Methamphetamine attributed to 15 overdose deaths this year.



Photo by Monty Montgomery

2022-2023 Priorities

Recommendations will be developed in response to the following priority areas:

Access to Treatment

Many victims of overdose had engaged with treatment. Due to insurance policies, people with substance use disorders are frequently not able to access the treatment level their assessment requires until they fail out of lower levels of treatment. Insurance companies can also terminate treatment before completion. Long wait lists for services and access to dual diagnosis (mental health and substance use) treatment continues to be a barrier.

Increase Support from Medical Providers

Medical providers often encounter patients with substance use disorders. Many providers do not have the training or experience needed to reduce risky prescribing, discuss use of Narcan, ask about substance use in a non-judgmental way, support recovery, or connect patients with resources. Training and system changes are needed to reduce harm caused by stigma and improve medical professional care for patients with a history of substance use disorder, including people in recovery.

Improve Response to Changes in Drug Trends

Methamphetamine use has increased partly due to the lower risk of overdose compared to opiates. In the past year, a significant increase in methamphetamine related overdoses as a single substance has caused alarm. Agencies need to better understand the impacts of methamphetamine use and improve harm reduction, treatment, and recovery supports.

Support Children and Prevent Early Substance Use

To address and improve supports for children and families, strategies and initiatives need to be more accessible and available to youth who fall between the gaps of services currently available. Additionally, our community needs to support substance use prevention efforts and reduce the normalizing of alcohol and drug use at community events.

LOCAL AND STATE OFR RECOMMENDATIONS

After review of overdose related data, the OFR team develops recommendations to prevent future overdoses and overdose deaths. Recommendations are then shared to be implemented by OFR partners and community agencies. State level recommendations are shared to the OFR State Advisory Group for further action. This past year, the team voted to issue the following recommendations:

1. Connect youth exposed to trauma who do not reach the level of mandated Child Protective Services intervention to community services and resources.
2. Train frontline University of Wisconsin Oshkosh employees on addiction, treatment, mental health, and available resources, and supply Narcan for staff, residence halls, and public buildings to prevent overdoses and save lives.
3. Expand the Handle with Care program throughout Winnebago County so youth who are involved in a police-related incident are assessed and provided trauma-sensitive support as needed by school district social workers.
4. Create a system in our jails that allows people to stay on medications for Opioid Use Disorder.
5. Increase the use of peer recovery coaches in our community to help navigate community systems and prevent overdose deaths.
6. Increase connection to resources and support options to families and friends following a death of despair (i.e., deaths due to substance use or suicide).
7. Implement training and access to Narcan for all residence halls and public buildings across the University of Wisconsin System and identify Narcan access for campuses (statewide recommendation).
8. Change state policies to allow Emergency Medical Systems providers to leave behind Narcan for individuals at risk of overdose (statewide recommendation).

HIGHLIGHTS OF OFR PARTNER SUCCESSES



OSHKOSH
FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS NARCAN FOR OVERDOSE CALLS

Handle with Care: A partnership between Oshkosh Police Department, Oshkosh Area School District, Valley Christian School, and Lourdes Academy, connects students who have experienced trauma with needed assessments and supports. Within the first 18 months, 250 referrals were made. This work received the Oshkosh Area School District Spirit of Education award for its collaboration and success.

Oshkosh Fire Department (OFD) Leave Behind Narcan Kits: OFD initiated a program to distribute “Leave Behind Narcan Kits” to those at high risk of overdose. Between February and June 2022, OFD distributed 20 Narcan kits while out on calls in the community.

Fentanyl Test Strip Distribution: Winnebago County Health Department, in partnership with Vivent Health, began distributing fentanyl test strips out of their Oshkosh office location. Test strips allow people to identify if fentanyl is present in substances prior to use. Fentanyl is the cause of most overdoses and overdose deaths in Winnebago County. Fentanyl test strips are available at no cost at the health department. For details, call 920-232-3000.

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO)’s Addiction Training and Naloxone Boxes: OFR partners from UWO Police Department, Unity Recovery Services, and Winnebago County District Attorney presented an overdose prevention training for over 100 UWO staff and students. This training, along with installing Naloxone Boxes, have helped to prevent overdose deaths on campus.





WE YOU

RECOVERY IN OUR COMMUNITY

BREAK THE SILENCE.
REDUCE STIGMA. SAVE LIVES.

“We are here in a community that is filled with hope; we are here in a community that wants to inspire, wants to encourage, and, ultimately, wants to provide each and everyone of you with unconditional love.” - Lauren Sisler



We Heart You: Recovery in Our Community was held on March 30, 2022 with over 330 people in attendance. The event was inspired by community conversations with people in recovery, as highlighted in the *Connection and Belonging: Voices of People in Recovery* report. The recovery community shared the need to be acknowledged, feel valued, and be heard. The event bridged the recovery community with the broader community, educated people about the disease of addiction, and provided resources to support connection to treatment and recovery services. The community came together to celebrate people in recovery, remember family and friends who have lost their lives to addiction, and commit to working together across agencies and organizations. Much like the “We Heart You” cards created by OFR partners, the We Heart You event shared the message that no matter your background or circumstance, we are a community who cares about you.



“Congratulations on such a great event and THANK YOU as well! I was definitely one that was in tears listening to some of the stories, it helped me understand that I am not alone in the substance use crisis with my daughter. It gives me hope and strength to keep fighting and advocating for my daughter. I give those warriors a lot of credit for standing up and letting their story be heard because I needed to hear it. I needed to hear that there are good stories that go along with this devastating disease.”

“I have family and a community that struggles with substance use and I just really needed to learn more about it and what I can do to help and be a better listener.”



Stay Connected!

Use the QR code to watch a video recap of the We Heart You event, access resources and recordings, and connect with our Facebook group to learn about upcoming events and announcements.



Photos by Michael Cooney

PROGRESS MADE ON PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a snapshot of some recommendations that have been or are currently in the process of being implemented along with updates on progress that has been made:

PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS MADE
<p>Promote and share resources to family/friends of people who use drugs to help recognize signs/symptoms of substance use disorder and connect to support services.</p>	<p><i>A team has been established to develop a “We Heart You” app. They have held focus groups to understand how an app can bridge community members to the resources and support available in the region. The app will be ready to share with the community in 2023!</i></p>
<p>Pilot a data-driven and proactive rapid response team in Winnebago County that aims to prevent overdose deaths.</p>	<p><i>OFr partners conducted 30+ interviews with community stakeholders to understand how a rapid response would look and how it would be most successful in our community. We received a \$150,000 CDC Foundation/Public Health and Safety Team (PHAST) Grant to develop a rapid response team. This initiative also addresses our recommendation, “Identify strategies to reduce overdoses that occur shortly after release from incarceration.”</i></p>
<p>Implement the Drug Endangered Children (DEC) program in Winnebago County to help support children who experience trauma from exposure to substance use.</p>	<p><i>Community partners signed on to start DEC protocol in Winnebago County. The team has been trained and now our community is working to identify the process and responsibilities of each partner. Partners will initiate DEC protocol as we build the process to ensure kids in our community are safe.</i></p>
<p>Establish a process where youth who experience trauma and do not reach the level of Child Protective Services (CPS) intervention can be referred to community-based services and resources.</p>	<p><i>Winnebago County CPS receives 3,000 calls a year. Not every call rises to the level of program intervention. To better support families in our community, we are working with the Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh to identify opportunities to support kids and families affected by substance use disorder by offering childcare, programming, family support, and addressing basic needs such as food and transportation.</i></p>
<p>Offer training and support to law enforcement agencies in Winnebago County regarding trauma-informed care.</p>	<p><i>We continue to work with the Winnebago County District Attorney’s Office to offer trainings to law enforcement agencies throughout the county.</i></p>
<p>When prescribing opioids, healthcare professionals in Winnebago County should co-prescribe naloxone (Narcan) and educate people who may encounter an opioid overdose event.</p>	<p><i>We are working with the AdvocateAurora Oshkosh Addiction Medicine Clinic to pilot a process where patients are able to access Narcan through a prescription when also prescribed opiates. OFr partners are working with additional staff throughout the health care system to train, educate, and connect to resources.</i></p>
<p>Offer training on peer support, mental health, and substance use to law enforcement and EMS (e.g., replicate PRISM training from MCAAP, Apricity training).</p>	<p><i>Oshkosh Fire Department EMS hosted a training for paramedics at Solutions Recovery, Inc. A peer firefighter with lived experience in recovery shared their story to help break the stigma around addiction and substance use. Participants said this opportunity helped improve their understanding and response.</i></p>

OFR PARTNERS MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

Overdose deaths have increased for the second consecutive year. Our family, friends, and neighbors are dying from this horrible disease. The work of OFR continues to focus on preventing overdose deaths, but progress and positive impact is also being made in other ways. To illustrate the ripple effect, several of our partners have shared their reasons for participating in OFR and the impact that we are making.

“Being part of the Winnebago OFR team has been very enlightening. I have been in this business for 18 years and I continue to learn so much from the other partners involved. This is a very heavy topic, but we strive to work together as a team and community to help make a difference, and for that I am grateful for those that continue to struggle.” - Jolie VerVoort, Apricity



“The OFR Team has opened lines of communication between community groups that previously have not talked, taken down silos, and has created actionable plans to assist those dealing with addiction in their lives. While there is more that still needs to be done, lives have been saved as a result of the work of the OFR Team.” - Tim Styka, Menasha Police Department

*“The overdose fatality review is an amazing opportunity to see how we as a community can do better to support those who struggle with substance use disorders. This group brings community partners together and I have personally seen recommendations carried out that make our community a better place to support anyone affected by substance use.”
- Trevor Fenrich, Solutions Recovery, Inc.*



*“OFR has created space to learn from the lives lost in our community due to overdose. I’ve seen how trust and vulnerability across the team has led to improved response and innovative solutions to prevent overdoses. Because of OFR, we see systems changes within agencies (including public health) and across the community through collective action.”
- Stephanie Gyldenvand, Winnebago County Health Department*

*“People die from overdoses because they lack the connection to people that can help them. The overdose fatality review provides me the connections that can save lives.”
- Eric Smiltneek, AdvocateAurora*



THANK YOU to all the OFR partners who remain committed to working together to address the root causes of overdose deaths and make our community a safer place to live, work, and be.

Addiction Medical Solutions of Wisconsin (AMS), Apricity, Ascension, AdvocateAurora, Breakwater, City of Menasha Health Department, City of Menasha Police Department, City of Oshkosh Fire Department, 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, 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 and 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.

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