

NEWS RELEASE

August 31, 2023

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Addressing the Opioid Overdose Crisis In Winnebago County

WINNEBAGO COUNTY – Opioid overdoses continue to take lives in Winnebago County, especially of those living with Substance Use Disorder. In recognition of [International Overdose Awareness Day](#), today, August 31 and [National Recovery Month](#) in September, the Winnebago County Opioid Response Team (ORT) encourages our community to help build the path to recovery for those living with Substance Use Disorder.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a treatable, chronic disease that requires ongoing management throughout life. This disease can impact anyone and there is no single factor that leads to SUD. Everyone's pathway to recovery is different, but with the right supports and resources, everyone can recover. Finding the right treatment option can be the key to a successful recovery journey.

The ORT is committed to working to prevent, treat, and respond to this chronic disease. ORT partners are preventing overdoses through education, awareness, and opioid prescribing standards. Expanded treatment access such as medical assisted recovery/medication assisted treatment (MAR/MAT) has been made available through primary care and mental health providers. ORT partners continue to urge community members to be trained in the use of naloxone to reverse an overdose. Local businesses and community organizations have stepped up to provide naloxone access at "red boxes."

The Rockford Fire Department, an ORT partner, works to respond to and provide continued resources for those experiencing overdoses and their families. The Department's strategy includes Knock and Talk visits after a call is made to 911 due to an overdose. Within 48 hours of that call, Fire Department staff go to the patient's home to offer resources on treatment and training on Naloxone (NARCAN). In 2022, the Department provided more than one hundred (100) training sessions to patients, their families and loved ones. From those trainings, twenty-five (25) people then used the provided naloxone to resuscitate an individual prior to the arrival of EMS on a subsequent overdose.

The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD), another ORT Partner, has launched its harm reduction initiative to include drug testing strips for fentanyl and xylazine, naloxone training, access to preventive services to reduce the potential for communicable disease through PrEP and vaccination, safer use education, and referral for treatment. Harm reduction engagement may be the first step on the path to recovery.

"The Winnebago County Health Department is committed to helping residents build their path to safer use, support, and when ready, recovery." said Dr. Sandra Martell, Public Health Administrator and Co-Chair of ORT, "Anyone who needs support with this disease and access to information and services to help them stay safe, can connect with WCHD."

As a community, we can prevent opioid overdose deaths and help build the path to recovery.

HELP BUILD THE PATH TO RECOVERY:

- Everyone can save a life: get trained on naloxone and have naloxone in every first aid kit
- Encourage those who are using drugs to test for Xylazine and Fentanyl
- Connect those with Substance Use Disorder to WCHD for help staying safer while using
- Ask those you know with Substance Use Disorder if you can help them on their path to recovery, which may make all the difference in their recovery success
 - Make the path to recovery simple by helping with travel, appointment scheduling, etc.
 - Need help right away, call **1-833-2FindHelp**. For Mental Health Services, **call 988**.
 - Ask those not ready for recovery to take steps toward safer use by connecting with WCHD.

For more information, go <https://publichealth.wincoil.gov/Harm-Reduction>

This message is supported by the Winnebago County Opioid Response Team (ORT): Led by the Winnebago County Health Department and the City of Rockford Fire Department, the ORT is a collaboration of partners working to address the opioid overdose crisis in Winnebago County. The ORT coordinates community activities utilizing evidence-based strategies to address the opioid crisis through prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

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