

# OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEWS: A COORDINATED, MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

A partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Health Services  
and the Wisconsin Department of Justice



## What are Overdose Fatality Reviews?

Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) is a locally-based, multi-disciplinary process for understanding the risk factors and circumstances leading to fatal overdoses and identifying opportunities to prevent future overdoses. The basis of OFR – like all fatality reviews – is that overdose fatalities could have been prevented with the right action, timing, intervention, and/or response.



## What are the goals of OFRs?

The primary goals of OFRs in local communities are to better understand the context of these deaths and to take immediate action to prevent future deaths.

This is accomplished through:

- Recognizing and addressing gaps and barriers in services.
- Identifying underlying causes of substance use disorders.
- Determining prevention strategies targeting opioids and other substances.
- Developing recommendations for policy and program changes at local and state levels.
- Building a community of multi-disciplinary partners to collaborate across agencies.



## Who participates in OFRs?

- Public health
- Coroner or medical examiner
- Emergency medical services
- Law enforcement
- Corrections
- District attorney's office
- Health care
- Behavioral health
- Drug treatment
- Social services



## What is the review process?

An OFR is a systematic process used to examine the underlying causes of overdose fatalities in real time and problem solve. This process includes:

- In-depth case reviews shared by multi-disciplinary partners.
- Timely information sharing and dissemination of findings.
- Identification of risk and protective factors.
- Identification of trends, gaps, and deficits within and across the already existing programs and systems designed to prevent and reduce overdose.
- Actionable recommendations to strengthen these programs and systems.



## How are sites funded and trained?

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Justice co-fund local OFR sites through two grants. Each new site who seeks to implement these OFRs receives:

- Funding for data collection and facilitation of the reviews.
- Training and technical assistance on the development and maintenance of the reviews.

# OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEWS: BACKGROUND AND REPRESENTATION

The opioid epidemic has occurred in three waves in Wisconsin and nationally.

**Wave 1: Prescription opioids**

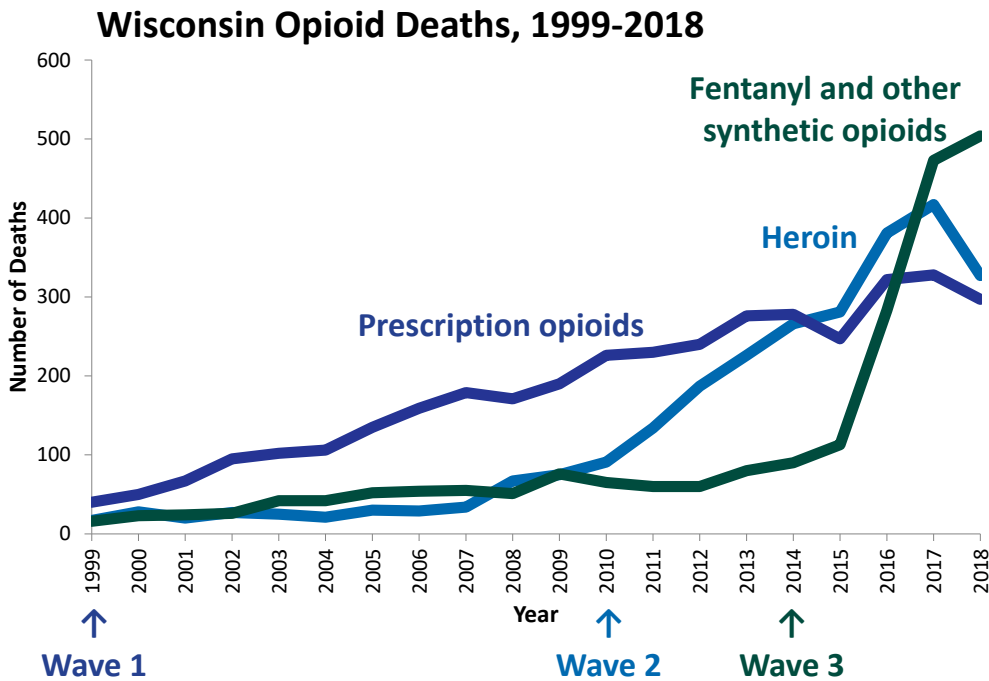
**Wave 2: Heroin**

**Wave 3: Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids**

**Prescription opioids** drove the first wave of increased opioid-related deaths, beginning in 1999 and following the increase of opioid prescriptions to treat pain during the 1990s.

**Heroin** drove the second wave, beginning in 2010 because it was easier to access and cheaper than prescription drugs.

**Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids** have increasingly been found linked to opioid overdose-related deaths since 2014, driving the third wave of the opioid epidemic. These synthetic opioids are often mixed with other substances such as heroin and cocaine.

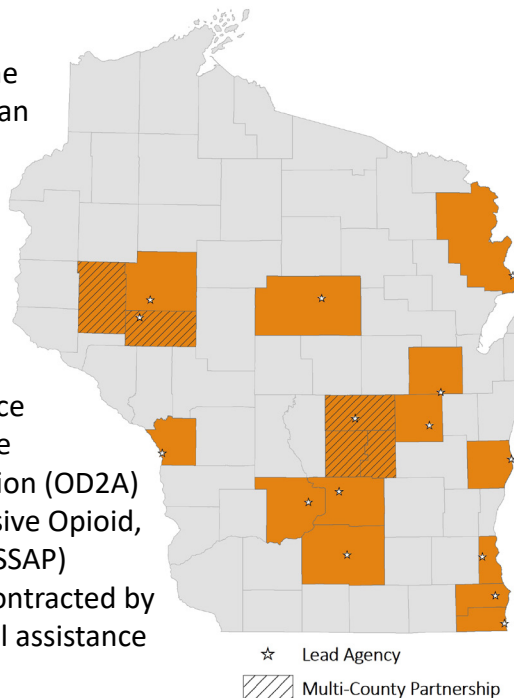


Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Office of Health Informatics, Overdose Data to Action

## Wisconsin Overdose Fatality Reviews

OFR sites are primarily local counties, with one dual-county and one tri-county site. Both urban and rural populations are represented. The local agency leading OFR also varies, although most sites are led by the local public health department.

The OFR program is a collaborative effort of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ). It is funded through Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) and Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) grants. The Medical College of Wisconsin is contracted by DHS and DOJ to provide training and technical assistance to the local OFR teams.



## Program Sites

- Chippewa County
- Columbia County
- Dane County
- Eau Claire and Dunn Counties
- Green Lake, Marquette and Waushara Counties
- Kenosha County
- La Crosse County
- Marathon County
- Marinette County
- Milwaukee County
- Outagamie County
- Racine County
- Sauk County
- Sheboygan County
- Winnebago County

