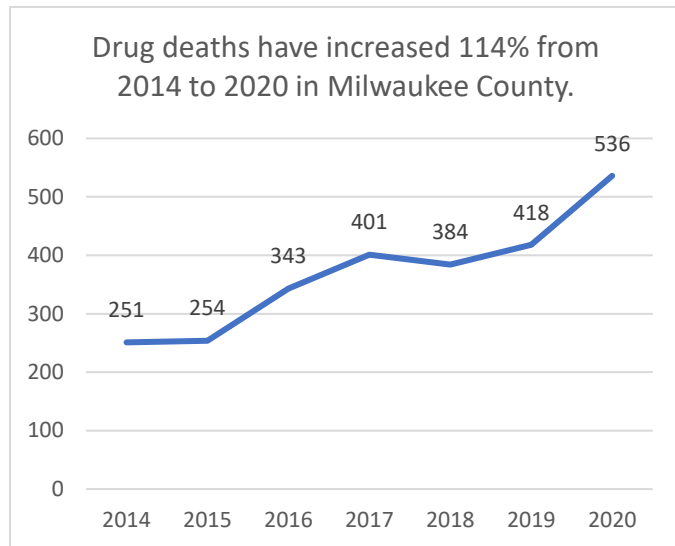


# Milwaukee County OD-PHAST Overdose Public Health & Safety Team



Milwaukee County has among the highest rates of overdose deaths in Wisconsin. From 2014-2019, the opioid overdose fatality rate in Milwaukee County was 28.7 per 100,000 persons, more than twice the Wisconsin rate of 13.8 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup> Deaths involving cocaine were over three times higher at 11.7 per 100,000 persons in Milwaukee County compared to 3.5 per 100,000 persons statewide in the same period. Preliminary counts of overdose deaths in 2020 indicate a 28% increase in overdose fatalities compared to 2019 which had been the highest year to date.<sup>2</sup>



Milwaukee County, through the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office, was awarded a three-year grant from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) to create an Overdose Public Health and Safety Team (OD-PHAST) that aims to:

1. Expand the delivery and analysis of near real-time data between multiple public health and public safety partners.
2. Utilize both aggregate data and insights from case reviews to develop and implement strategies and recommendations for changes to reduce the likelihood of future overdose incidents.
3. Increase capacity to deliver timely toxicology findings to public health and public safety partners.
4. Enrich understanding of fatal overdose risk factors through expanded next of kin interviews.
5. Connect families impacted by overdose, particularly children, to services to mitigate the impact of the trauma experienced.

The OD-PHAST will be comprised of the existing Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) Team, a multi-disciplinary team that meets regularly to review individual fatal overdose cases occurring across the county and a newly formed Data and Strategy Team (DST) that will bring together key public health, public safety and other partners for regular review and analysis of aggregate data and key metrics (aim 1). Both teams will develop data-driven recommendations for the prevention of future overdoses and

<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Drug overdose deaths dashboard (2021, February 3). <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/aoda/drug-overdose-deaths.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary data provided by Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office (2021, Feb. 25).

will collaborate with the Milwaukee Community Justice Council’s Executive Team to further assess and implement the recommendations (aim 2).

Medical College of Wisconsin, Institute for Health and Equity, will serve as the research partner on this project and will coordinate and facilitate both the OFR and DST. Grant funds also will be allocated for an additional laboratory technician position at the Medical Examiner’s Office (aim 3) and expansion of the role of the Community Resource Dispatcher services newly added to the Medical Examiner’s Office in 2020 (aims 4 and 5).

The OD-PHAST will bring together community agencies to identify the trends and factors contributing to the increase in overdose deaths. It will provide a foundation to enhance accountability across agencies and policymakers for implementing actionable recommendations to reduce overdose fatalities across Milwaukee County.

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