



*"Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community."*

OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEW (OFR) ANNUAL REPORT 2024





*“Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.”*

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PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the overdose fatality review (OFR) committee is to reduce the incidence of overdose deaths in Stark County. This is completed through a multidisciplinary and comprehensive review of individual overdose deaths. The OFR committee identifies, evaluates, and makes recommendations to improve community programs and systems that serve Stark County residents.

The Ohio Revised Code 307.643 states "The purpose of the overdose fatality review committee is to decrease the incidence of preventable overdose deaths by doing all of the following":

(A) Promoting cooperation, collaboration, and communication between all groups, professions, agencies, or entities engaged in overdose prevention, education, or mental health treatment efforts.

(B) Maintaining a comprehensive database of all overdose deaths that occur in the county or region served by the review committee in order to develop an understanding of the causes and incidence of those deaths.

(C) Recommending and developing plans for implementing local service program changes and changes to the groups, professions and agencies, or entities that serve local residents that might prevent overdose deaths.

(D) Providing the department of health with aggregate data, trends, and patterns concerning overdose deaths.

This report will provide feedback and recommendations that community leaders and partners have recommended after analyzing overdose deaths that occurred in 2023 and 2024.

OFR MEETING FREQUENCY AND STRUCTURE

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings are held quarterly to review data and individual cases, four meetings were held in 2024.

Structure

The county commissioners appointed a health commissioner to establish the OFR committee. ORC 307.632 states, the review committee shall consist of the following:

1. The chief of police of a police department in the county or region or the county sheriff or a designee of the chief or sheriff
2. A public health official or the official's designee
3. The executive director of a board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services or the executive director's designee
4. A physician authorized under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery

The committee also chose to invite the county coroner and other partners. Each invited member has the same duty and responsibility as the appointed members.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kirkland Norris R.E.H.S, M.P.H
Health Commissioner

Michelle Schoonover MSN, RN
Drug Overdose Coordinator

Chief Deputy Oliver
Stark County Sherriff

Amanda Uhler MPH, RN,
Public Health Official

Justina Gorman
Coalition & Community Development Coordinator of Stark County Mental Health and Addition Recovery

Dr. Maureen Ahmann, D.O
Physician

PARTNER AGENCIES

Alliance City Health Department (ACHD)	Local Police and Fire
Alliance Family Health Care (AFHC)	Massillon City Health Department (MCHD)
AVO Behavioral Health and Recovery	Stark County Coroner's Office
Aultman Hospital	Stark County Job and Family Services (JFS)
Brightview	Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Board (StarkMHAR)
Canton City Public Health (CCPH)	Stark County Sheriff's Office Metro Narcotics Unit
Cleveland Clinic Mercy Medical Center	Stark County's Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC)
Coleman	
CommQuest	
Direction Home	

OFR REVIEW PROCESS AND DATA SOURCES

The OFR committee is focused on residents of Stark County who died from an accidental overdose. Recognizing overdose as a public health issue is founded on an understanding of substance use behavior arising from contextual, biological, environmental, systemic, and social stressors. This approach focuses on prevention by addressing the known factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of overdose.

For each death by overdose selected for individual case review, the committee will collect age, sex, race, ethnicity, the year the death occurred, the location of the death, the cause of death, factors that contributed including legal and social issues, medical records and any other pertinent information. Aggregated data on all deaths is presented at each meeting which includes age, sex, race, educational attainment, marital status, class of drugs indicated in cause of death, and other information relevant to the picture of drug overdose deaths in Stark County.

The cases reviewed in this report were deaths that occurred in 2023 or 2024 and include only residents of Stark County. Each case review is discussed among the team to gather a comprehensive understanding of the context of the decedent's life and the events and actions that led to the fatality. The discussions highlight potential contributing factors, intervention implications and recommendations for systemic improvements.

Data sources include: Ohio Department of Health's DataOhio Portal Mortality Protected download, behavioral health records, medical records, criminal justice records, death certificates, prescription drug records, emergency medical services reports, and substance use assessment and treatment records.

OFR ANNUAL REPORT DATA FINDINGS

Table 1: County Metrics

Total number of overdose deaths that occurred in 2024*	104	Total number of 2024 overdose deaths <u>not reviewed</u> by OFR committee	101
Total number of 2024 overdose deaths involving opioids*	53	Total number of overdose deaths involving opioids <u>reviewed</u> by OFR committee	7
Total number of overdose deaths reviewed by OFR Committee	17	Total number of 2024 overdose deaths involving opioids <u>not reviewed</u> by OFR committee	52

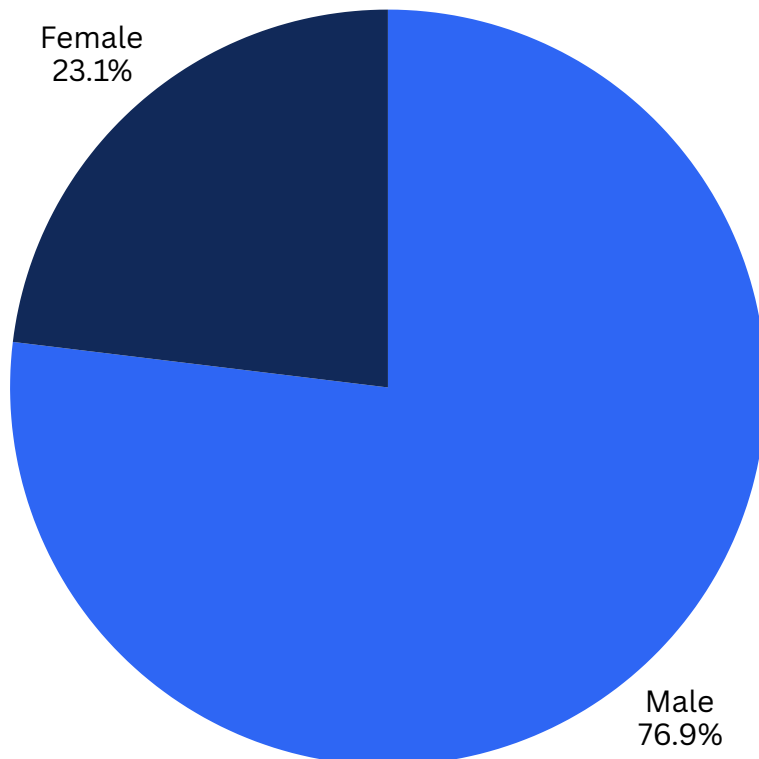
Cases reviewed occurred in 2023 and 2024

*Per ODH's DataOhio Portal Mortality Protected

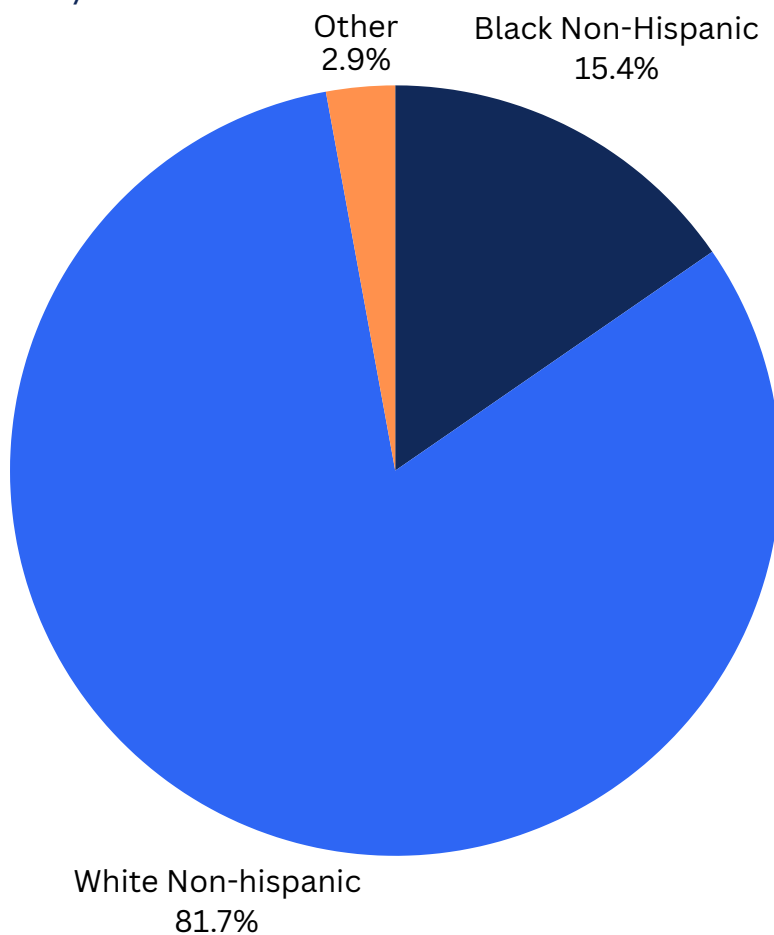
Data on all deaths occurring in 2024* only

*Data accessed and current as of 4/29/25

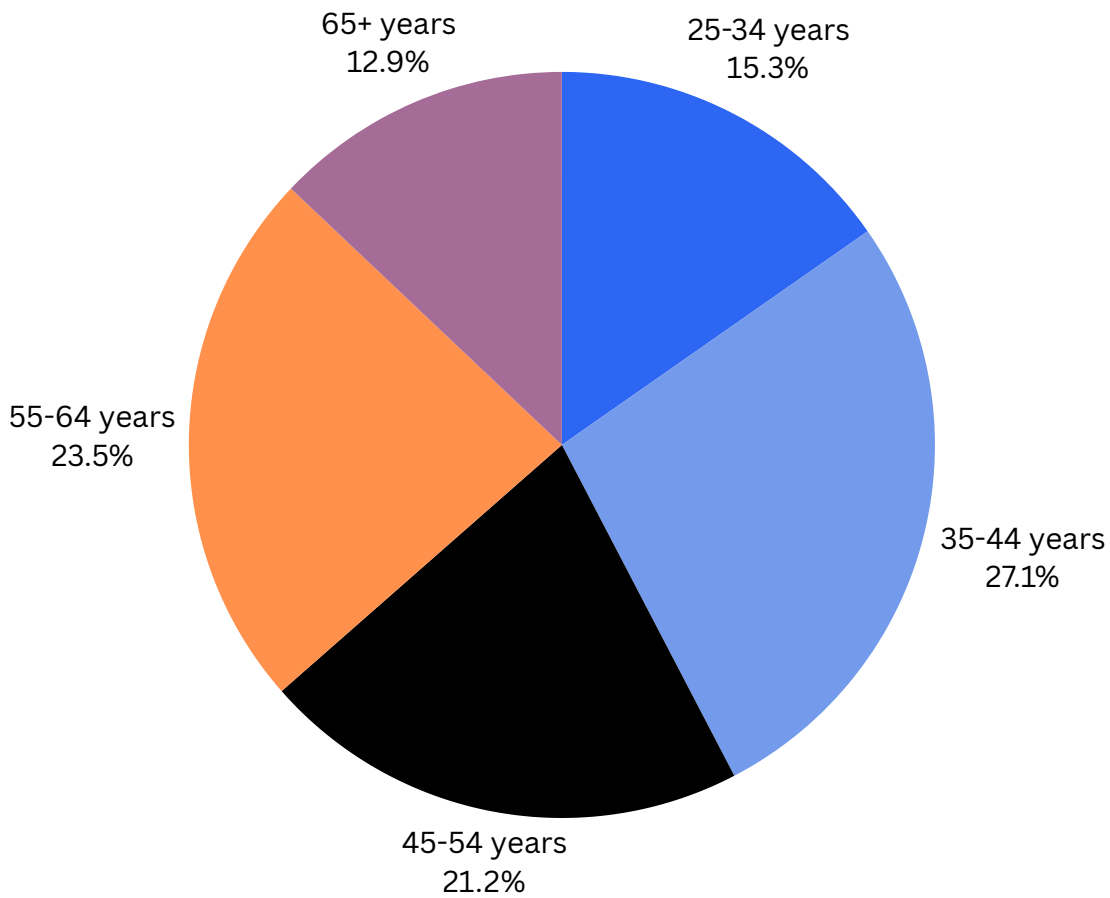
Graph 1: Sex Metrics



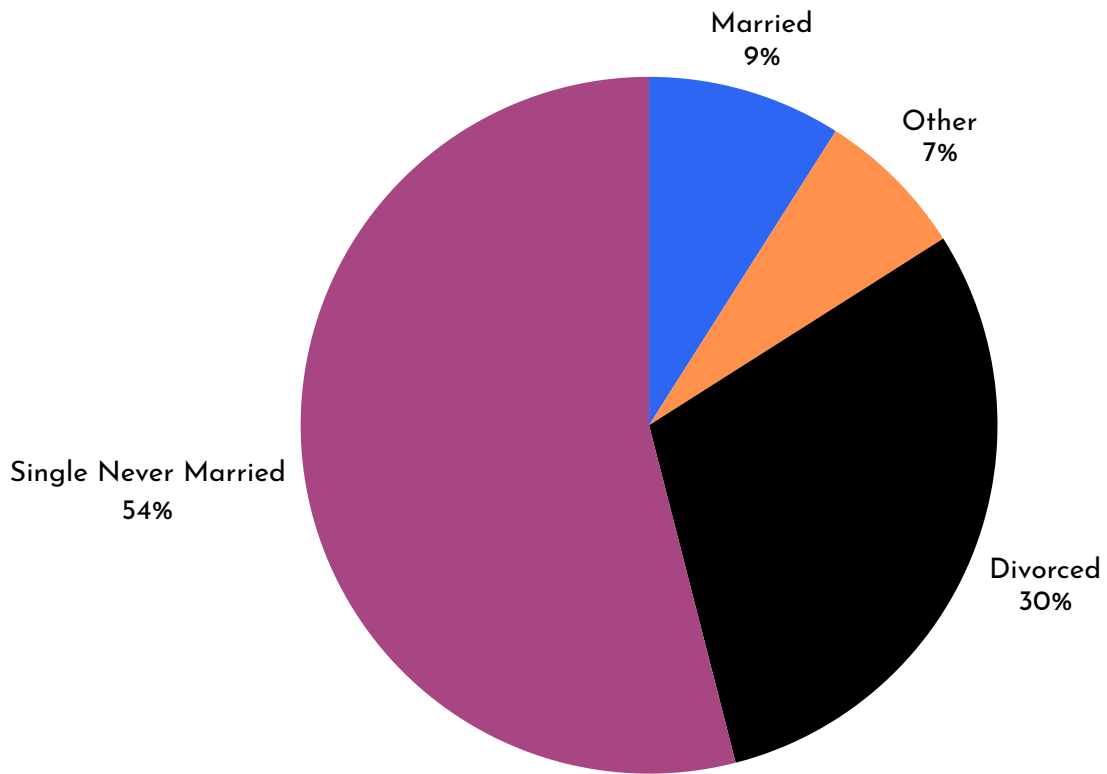
Graph 2: Race/Ethnicity Metrics



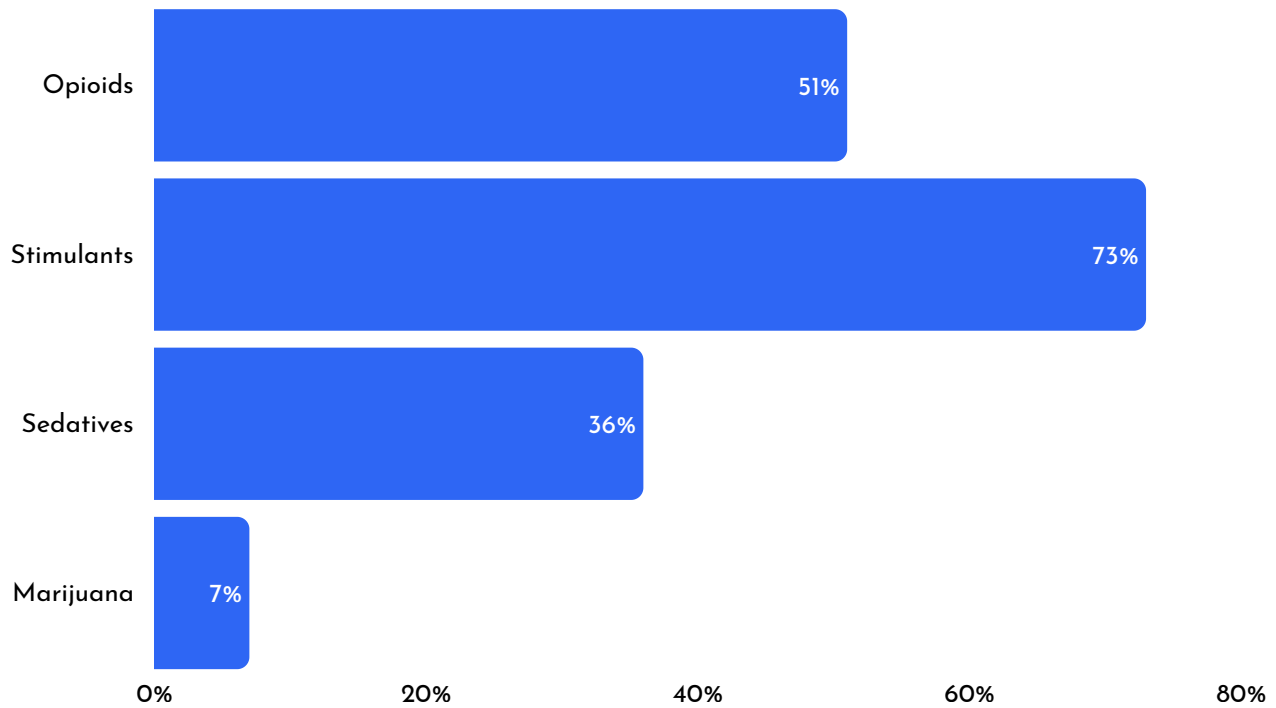
Graph 3: Age Metrics



Graph 4: Marital Status



Graph 5: Drug Class Prevalence



Trends/Patterns

The Stark County OFR identified a number of trends in overdose deaths and used these identified trends to choose cases to review individually at the 2024 meetings. Trends were identified when reviewing aggregated data from the Ohio Department of Health's DataOhio Portal Mortality Protected download. Trends include:

1. Increase in prevalence of xylazine and methadone within cause of death of decedents.
2. Increase in the number of decedents with history of armed forces.
3. Increase in stimulant related overdose deaths which has now surpassed that of opiates.
4. Black overdose death rates continue to be double that of white decedents.
5. Decrease in overall and opiate related overdose deaths.

Some trends are newly identified or seen in Stark County while others have been previously identified. Aside from Stark County, increases in deaths involving stimulants have been identified as national trends in the United States in recent years, adding to the cumulative need for new strategies and additional resources.

2024 Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations made by the Overdose Fatality Review Committee. Some of the committee is made up of multi-sector partners with expertise in substance use disorders and/or currently engaging with substance use disorder patients. Recommendations are divided into the following categories: systemic, agency-specific, population-specific, and OFR process improvement and should be implemented by utilizing evidence-based practices and/or strategies.

Systemic

1. Increase access to care for those with transportation barriers and/or living in rural areas.
2. Advocacy for easier and/or increase amount of private insurance approvals for inpatient treatment with increase length of stays.
3. Increase education regarding housing options within Stark County.
4. Increase education, training and information about trauma informed care.

Agency-Specific

5. Improve process for referral from Emergency Department to Community Health Workers (CHW)/peer support/patient navigator.
6. Education on motivational interviewing with Emergency Room staff as needed.
7. Implement substance use screenings or education in dental offices.
8. Provide educational material to primary care physicians on Medication for Opioid Disorder (MOUD)/Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).
9. Provide MOUD/MAT induction in the ERs.
10. Encourage veteran serving agency staff to be trained in trauma informed care and motivational interviewing.

2024 Recommendations Continued

Population-Specific

1. Implement early prevention strategies, such as resiliency training and healthy coping skills in school.
2. Increase education regarding risk factors for fatal overdose, never use alone and Good Samaritan law.
3. Disseminate general education on medication management and serotonin syndrome.

OFR Process Improvements

4. Invite appropriate agencies/partners to OFR sessions that have a certain population focus (e.g. VA, area hospitals and/or treatment centers).

2024 Summary of Implementation

Below is a list of action items that have been implemented in 2024 to address the recommendations. The list is not inclusive and was compiled by the OFR Committee.

Increase access to care for those with transportation barriers and/or living in rural areas

- Stark Wide Approval to Prevention (SWAP) provides one single ride bus pass to participants.
- StarkMHAR worked with TASC to provide harm reduction vending machines at permanent supportive housing sites.
- OhioGuidestone provides services at home, school and community to help eliminate barriers to transportation to behavioral health services.
- Stark JFS offers the Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) program to help with transportation to medical appointments for Medicaid recipients.
- Alliance City Health Department (ACHD) stocks vending machines and naloxboxes within that community.
- Stark County Health Department (SCHD) updated transportation guide.
- HealthMobile advocating for additional services on unit through quarterly visioning meetings and exploring other grant opportunities.
- SCHD coordinated countywide community conversation about transportation as a component of the Community Health Improvement Plan.

Increase education regarding housing options within Stark County

- Opiate and Addiction Task Force providing education on housing options during meeting.
- SCHD coordinated countywide community conversation about housing in accordance with CHIP/CHA.
- OhioGuidestone provides a resource list to all clients at intake which includes housing options.
- The Homeless Continuum of Care created the Community Guide for People facing homelessness.
- Stark Housing Network spoke at JFS staff meetings about housing options in Stark County.
- StarkMHAR Recovery Services Coordinator works with funded provider agencies to educate them on behavioral health housing options.

Increased education, training and information about trauma informed care:

- StarkMHAR regularly hosts trauma training.
- ACHD, JFS and SWAP employees have attended trauma-informed trainings.
- SCHED offered virtual or in-person training through the Adolescent Health Resiliency Project - Ohio Department of Health.

Improve process for referral from Emergency Department to community health workers (CHW)/peer support/patient navigator

- TASC works with area hospitals within Stark County to connect patients indicating SUD with peer support services.
- SWAP is partnered with Stark County TASC to improve referral and navigation.
- StarkMHAR co-funds the behavioral health navigator placed at Aultman Hospital.

Provide educational material to primary care physicians on MOUD/MAT

- StarkMHAR offered CMEs at the 2024 Conference on Opiate and Addiction.

Provide MOUD/MAT induction in the ERs

- StarkMHAR is actively working toward MAT induction in the community with Fire/EMS and has offered support to Aultman as they implement their MOUD program in the ED.

Implement early prevention strategies such as resiliency training and health coping skills in school

- StarkMHAR funds prevention curricula in nearly all Stark County schools.
- SCHED host school nurse support group monthly meetings to help strengthen prevention strategies within schools.

Increase education regarding risk factors for fatal overdose, never use alone and Good Samaritan law

- ACHD provides Narcan training to other agencies in the Alliance area.
- SWAP provides education on these topics to participants.
- StarkMHAR and the OATF consistently shares this information to the community.

Disseminate general education on medication management and serotonin syndrome

- SCHED worked with MPH student to research overdose and serotonin syndrome and disseminated information at the Ohio Combined Public Health Conference.

Invite appropriate agencies/partners to OFR sessions that have certain population focus

- SCHED worked with veteran servicing organizations to provide overdose prevention strategies, resources and training opportunities.
- OFR Committee has seen regular representation from local hospitals.

OneOhio Recovery Foundation funded projects within Stark County

<https://www.oneohiofoundation.com/>

- Community Restoration Centers - Gender and ORAS Risk Specific Opioid IOP Treatment Program
- Aultman Hospital - ED MOUD Program
- YWCA Alliance - Transition housing and wraparound supports for individuals with SUD
- AVO - Recovery Housing Enhancement Programming
- Silver Maple Recovery - Empowering Recovery - Recovery Coach Support Service
- Boys & Girls Club of Massillon - Prevention
- Canton City Public Health - Building Resilient Harm Reduction Solutions
- Alliance Health Department - Needle Exchange
- Stark County Health Department - HealthMobile

Next Steps

Steps are being taken to review and improve the Overdose Fatality Review committee by increasing representation in certain sectors. The OFR coordinator continuously invites new organizations which are underrepresented such as treatment providers, public safety, local hospitals and other agencies to ensure diverse representation. The committee will focus on obtaining representation from those who are in recovery as well. The committee is moving toward agencies bringing information to the meeting to share on the individual cases being reviewed. Two agencies have shared so far. The epidemiologist will start to incorporate more of the non-fatal overdose dashboard data into the aggregated portion of the OFR presentation which was requested by committee members.

Goals for next year include:

- Researching and developing a public facing recommendation dashboard (example: sharepoint document)
- Researching and developing a data sharing platform for OFR individual case review information
- Conducting the individual case reviews through collaboration with treatment agencies, coroner's office and other members of public safety, sharing information during the meeting



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COUNTY DEPARTMENT

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