



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

John T. Jansen, Director
Department of Human Services

Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner
Office of the Medical Examiner
Kenosha County Public Safety Building
1000 55th Street
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140
Phone: (262) 653-3869
Fax: (262) 653-3877

March 29, 2019

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner
262-653-3869

Cynthia Johnson, Health Director
262-605-6760

Medical Examiner's Office sounds warning about recent spate of suspected overdose deaths

KENOSHA – A string of four suspected overdose deaths in the last week is raising concern among public health officials in Kenosha County.

Kenosha County Medical Examiner Patrice Hall said the four deaths since March 22 occurred across Kenosha County – one each in Twin Lakes and Somers, two in the City of Kenosha – and involved two men and two women.

Final determinations on the official causes of these deaths are awaiting toxicology results from the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office, but Hall said drugs appeared to be present in all four cases.

“Whenever there is an apparent uptick of suspected overdose deaths in a short amount of time, we want to bring this to the attention of our community to make them aware of this trend,” Hall said. “There are resources available in Kenosha County and the surrounding areas for people with substance abuse disorders to receive help. Free Narcan and Narcan training is also available through Kenosha County.”

This recent spate of deaths comes in spite of an encouraging trend as of late.

In 2018, Hall said there were 46 deaths due to toxicity in Kenosha County. That is down 19 percent from 2017, when there were 57 of these deaths.

Toxicity includes deaths due to abuse of any drugs, such as alcohol, cocaine, heroin and prescription medications, or a combination thereof.

Kenosha County, mirroring a national trend, has seen a marked uptick in overdose deaths in recent years, many of which have involved the use of opioids/opiates. Opioid drugs include

Percocet, Vicodin, oxycodone and fentanyl, while opiates include heroin, morphine and codeine.

In response to this, Kenosha County has obtained state and federal grants to launch and administer drug prevention programs to combat substance abuse and overdose deaths.

The county has also created an Opioid Task Force made up of stakeholders from various sectors of the community, from public health and law enforcement to people in recovery and family members of those struggling with drug use.

The task force holds its meetings, which are open to the public, at 10 a.m. the second Tuesday of each month at the Kenosha County Job Center, 8600 Sheridan Road, Kenosha. More information is at <http://www.kenoshacounty.org/1917/Opioid-Task-Force>.

“Addictive disorder, such as substance abuse and dependence, is a disease.” said Cynthia Johnson, director of the Kenosha County Division of Health. “Addiction develops over time and is a chronic and relapsing illness. Treatment is available. Recovery is possible.”

Further information about prevention, treatment, and resources are listed below:

FREE NARCAN TRAININGS & EDUCATION

- Narcan is an emergency medication administered nasally to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.
- It is available for free from the county after receiving a free training session for people 18 and older. Community trainings are held at 5 p.m. on the first Monday of each month at the Kenosha County Job Center and at 5 p.m. the third Thursday of each month at the Racine-Kenosha Community Action Agency, 2000 63rd St., Kenosha. Call 262-605-6741 or email narcan@kenoshacounty.org to sign up for a training.
- The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin also provides trainings. Call 262-657-6644 for more information.

KNOW WHAT A SUSPECTED OVERDOSE LOOKS LIKE

- Use the acronym **BLUE**:
 - **B (Breathing)**: The person is not breathing or breathing very slowly. They may be snoring or their breathing sounds like they are gurgling.
 - **L (Lips)**: Lips and finger tips are turning blue.
 - **U (Unresponsive)**: No response when you yell the person’s name or rub the middle of their chest hard.
 - **E (Eyes)**: Center part of their eye is very small, also called “pinpoint pupil.”
- **IF AN OVERDOSE IS SUSPECTED, GIVE NARCAN (if available) AND CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.** You or someone you know will require follow-up medical attention.

TREATMENT/RESOURCES

- Recovery is possible!

- The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center can help you find treatment and services that are right for you such as counseling, medication assisted treatment, or a 12-step program. Call 262-657-7188 for more information.
- Narcotics Anonymous at 262-653-9800
- Heroin Anonymous/Southport Recovery Club at 262-552-6879
- Comprehensive Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program at 262-654-1004
- Recovery Coaches at 262-652-9830 or 262-658-8166
- Resource packets that include information sheets and pamphlets about opioids and related community agencies and programs may be picked up at the Division of Health, 8600 Sheridan Road, Kenosha, and in the lobby at the Public Safety Building, 1000 55th St., Kenosha.
- The “A Way Out” program at local police departments in Lake County, Ill., is available to anyone with private insurance, regardless of their residency. This program fast-tracks drug users to substance abuse programs and services. More information is available at www.awayoutlc.org.

PREVENTION

- **LOCK-UP YOUR MEDICATIONS:** Keep track of quantity by regularly counting your tablets, in order to make sure they are being used as prescribed, and not misused.
 - The Kenosha County Division of Health provides medication lockboxes, free of charge, to all members of the community who feel they could benefit from having them in their home. Call 262-605-6700 for more information.
- **DISPOSE OF UNUSED OR EXPIRED MEDICATION**
Kenosha County has six medication drop boxes located at all the police departments. Visit <http://www.kenoshacounty.org/314/MedicationNeedle-Disposal> to find the nearest location and collection hours. Also, Medication Take-Back Day events will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 27 at the Kenosha County Job Center in Kenosha and the Kenosha County Center at highways 45 and 50 in Bristol.
- **DO NOT SHARE** your medications. Use only as prescribed.
- When pain control is needed, ask your medical provider, dentist, or veterinarian if an alternative treatment or medication is available.
- **TALK WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY ABOUT THE DANGERS OF OPIOID/OPIATE USE.** For information visit: <https://www.saveliveskenosha.org/>.

For more information, please call the Kenosha County Division of Health at 262-605-6700 or visit <http://www.kenoshacounty.org/>.

###