

Department of Health Services: State agencies award grants to six counties to combat fatal drug overdoses

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the state Department of Justice (DOJ) today announced they have awarded \$200,000 to six counties to create or enhance local partnerships to review fatal drug overdose cases.

The counties sharing the award include Dane, La Crosse, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Sauk, and Winnebago.

“These reviews will help us better understand the life of each person we have lost,” said State Health Officer Karen McKeown. “Getting a full picture of what brought each person to the moment of overdosing is the key to finding intervention and prevention strategies ([link is external](#)) that will make a difference on the local and state level.”

Local public health and law enforcement will be joined in the reviews by medical examiners or coroners, and representatives from emergency medical services, hospitals, treatment providers, and treatment courts.

“These reviews are not about finding who to blame, but about preventing people from falling through the cracks,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “We can’t

arrest our way of the opioid crisis, because it is more than a criminal justice issue, it's also a public health issue.”

DHS, through its Division of Public Health, is partnering with DOJ in the development and implementation of the reviews and is providing a majority of funding through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. DOJ is providing data support to the local counties, and will manage, analyze, and report on the data collected during the reviews. Support for training and technical assistance is being provided by the Medical College of Wisconsin, and additional funding has been provided by the United States Department of Justice.

This collaboration is part of Governor Scott Walker’s call for “all hands on deck” in the state’s efforts to end the opioid overdose epidemic.