

Ald. Murphy: HOPE Kits aim to provide lifesaving tools for the community

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On Monday, March 28 at 2 p.m. **Alderman Michael J. Murphy**, Chair of the Milwaukee City-County Heroin, Opioid, and Cocaine Task Force, will join representatives from the Milwaukee Fire Department, Milwaukee County and fellow elected officials for a HOPE Kit distribution event. The event will take place at Fire Station #26, 1140 S. 26th St.

HOPE Kits are distributed through the Milwaukee Overdose Response Initiative (MORI), a community-wide collaboration between the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD), Milwaukee Health Department and other community stakeholders. MFD MORI teams have been distributing HOPE Kits since November 16, 2021. As of March 25, 2022, HOPE Kits now include two fentanyl test strips which detect the presence of fentanyl in powders or injectables and can help prevent accidental overdoses. Previously these test strips were classified as drug paraphernalia under state law. HOPE Kits also include one 2-pack of Narcan nasal spray with instruction card, one single-use CPR face shield, and harm reduction, treatment, and community resource information cards.

“HOPE Kits contain the tools necessary to help prevent accidental overdoses, provide treatment in the event of an overdose, as well as information and resources to get help for those facing addiction,” said Alderman Murphy. “In 2021, more than 500 overdose deaths were linked to fentanyl in Milwaukee County. Even one such death is too many. These HOPE Kits can help save lives which is why we must make sure they are accessible to the community.”

All Milwaukee Fire Department engines, trucks and MED units will now carry HOPE

Kits.

“I also want to extend my gratitude to Governor Evers for recognizing the impact these testing strips can have and signing legislation to decriminalize them,” Alderman Murphy added.

MORI, founded in 2019, utilizes opioid-related overdose data from MFD to initiate a rapid response by a trained community paramedic and peer support specialist to engage clients in treatment and recovery services following an overdose. Recently, MORI was awarded a Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program grant in the amount of \$1.2 million to continue MORI operations into 2024.

Recent statistics provided by MORI show that the program has had more than 1,200 patients/clients contacted about treatment, and more than 50 patients referred to treatment between June 2020 and September 2021.

“The work done by MORI in recent years has proven immensely valuable to the community, and I’m delighted that funding was secured to support the program in the years to come,” said Ald. Murphy.