

# Gov. Evers: Signs three bills in La Crosse to help address substance use and overdose deaths in Wisconsin

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 16, 2022

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LA CROSSE — Gov. Tony Evers today signed three bills in La Crosse to help address substance use and overdose deaths in Wisconsin.

“Substance misuse has ravaged families and communities across our state, which has affected not only many Wisconsinites’ own health and safety but the well-being of their families and loved ones, too. Unfortunately, the pandemic has only further underscored challenges for folks working to overcome mental health crises and substance use disorders,” said Gov. Evers. “Tragically, fentanyl has played a serious role in overdose deaths across the country, and these bills are an important step toward reducing substance misuse and overdose deaths here in our state. We have to keep working to invest in getting folks and families the treatment and support they need to overcome these challenges.”

Preliminary data of 2020 from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) shows the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a single year in U.S. history; more than 93,000 people died, representing a 30 percent increase from the previous 12-month period. CDC data also shows that 75 percent of these overdose deaths were opioid-related, and that synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, are the main driver of drug overdose deaths. In Wisconsin, the CDC estimates that in 2020 alone, there were more than 1,200 opioid-related overdose deaths, underscoring the importance of the governor’s action today.

[Senate Bill 352](#), now 2021 Wisconsin Act 179:

- Creates a graduated penalty structure for manufacturing, distributing, or delivering fentanyl (or fentanyl analogs) or possessing it with intent to manufacture, distribute, or deliver it.

[Senate Bill 600](#), now 2021 Wisconsin Act 180:

- Specifies that materials used to test for the presence of fentanyl or a fentanyl analog in a substance are not drug paraphernalia.

[Senate Bill 49](#), now 2021 Wisconsin Act 181:

- Requires the Department of Administration, in collaboration with the Department of Health Services (DHS) and Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS), to issue a request for proposal, subject to approval by the Joint Committee on Finance under a 14-day passive review, to establish and maintain a data system to collect, format, analyze, and disseminate information on opioid and methamphetamines use.

These bills will build on the work the Evers Administration is doing to combat the opioid epidemic, such as the state’s new pilot [“Hub and Spoke”](#) model of care, as well as investing approximately [\\$47 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding](#) to increase community-level supports for people who have been grappling with mental health and substance use challenges. Last year, Gov. Evers also [signed](#) Assembly Bill 374, now [2021 Wisconsin Act 57](#), into law, paving the way for much-needed funds to flow to communities throughout Wisconsin to address the opioid epidemic through a settlement with opioid manufacturers and distributors. The final settlement [agreement](#), approved by the Joint Finance Committee in November 2021, will provide more than \$294 million over 18 years to the 87 local governments involved in the litigation and \$126 million, as well as \$9.6 million in additional restitution, to the DHS for programs aimed at fighting the opioid epidemic and saving lives. Additionally, last year, Wisconsin joined the [Bloomberg Opioids Overdose Prevention Initiative](#) which provided \$10 million to combat the opioid epidemic in Wisconsin over the next five years.

People looking for substance use treatment and recovery services are encouraged to use the [Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline](#), which is free and available 24/7.



An online version of this release is available [here](#).