

Dane County Exec Parisi: Dane County approves \$750,000 emergency initiative to address opiate & fentanyl epidemics

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The Harm Reduction and Prevention Act, a roughly \$750,000 initiative to address opiate and fentanyl related emergencies, will soon infuse much needed supports into the Dane County community, County Executive Parisi announced today. A resolution to fund the legislative package, which includes school prevention and harm reduction curriculum, was approved at last night's Dane County Board meeting.

"In Dane County, more residents are dying of drug poisoning than ever before. Just one pill laced with fentanyl or another synthetic opiate can take the life of a friend or loved one," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Our community must act. The Harm Reduction and Prevention Act builds upon our partnerships and invests hundreds of thousands of dollars into the community to distribute fentanyl testing strips, along with Narcan kits, and increase awareness about these deadly epidemics."

Deaths involving opiates and fentanyl have steadily increased in Dane County since 2016. In 2021, 149 people in Dane County passed away due to opiate related overdoses—reflecting 86% of all overdose deaths in the county. Opiate related deaths have increased more than 30% in the past five years. Meanwhile, overdose deaths involving fentanyl are up close to 70% in that same timeframe. Fentanyl was determined to be a contributing factor in over three quarters of the county's overdose deaths in 2021.

In recognition of the continued scourge of opiates and fentanyl in the Dane County community and the harm they continue to cause families, this initiative will:

- In partnership with Safe Communities and Dane County school districts, pilot developmentally appropriate prevention and harm reduction curriculum through Life Skills and Safety First programming to better serve elementary through high school students. Using an evidence-based approach, Safe Communities will partner with local schools on debuting the new education courses, which focus on building resiliency, identifying risk, being safe, etc. and include interactive modules for older students.
- Increase awareness and community education about the dangers of fentanyl and opiates.
- Partner with community organizations to provide widespread distribution of Narcan and fentanyl test strips.
- Create a dedicated prevention specialist position within the Dane County Department of Emergency Management to oversee the development of a Narcan “leave behind” program where EMS agencies can leave Narcan rescue kits at the scenes of overdoses.
- In partnership with Safe Communities, embed Dane County Recovery Coaches within local hospitals and potentially the Dane County 911 Center to reduce the time between when an overdose occurs and when an individual first makes contact with a professional who can help them begin the path of addiction treatment/recovery.
- Create a prevention coordinator at the OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center to serve as a direct liaison to a number of communities, providing more awareness and prevention services to populations disproportionately impacted by overdoses/fentanyl poisoning.

This initiative totals around \$750,000 and is in addition to the approximately \$1.6 million Dane County currently allocates in opiate settlement funding for opiate treatment, prevention, and recovery efforts.

As part of the Harm Reduction and Prevention Act, Dane County will invest \$159,900 in media and community outreach efforts. The following groups will receive funding to provide med lock boxes, Narcan, and/or fentanyl test strips: African American Opioid Coalition (\$100,000), Pride in Prevention Coalition (\$50,000), Recovery Coalition of Dane County (\$10,000), Dane County Senior Focal Points (\$15,000), and various housing providers (\$10,000). \$120,000 will also be allocated for school life skills/harm reduction curriculum.

A second portion of the Dane County Harm Reduction and Prevention Act—totaling \$283,500—will be funded in the County Executive’s 2023 budget. Of that total, \$115,000 will go to create a Prevention Coordinator position at the OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center. Approximately \$110,000 will establish a prevention specialist position within the Dane County Department of Emergency Management. This individual will work with local EMS agencies on opiate and fentanyl response initiatives in the coming years. \$10,000 will go to the Narcan “leave behind” program, while an additional \$40,000 will go to school life skills/harm reduction curriculum next year.