



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

Joe Parisi
County Executive

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Report: Dane County Experiencing Dramatic Increase in Medical Emergencies for Alcohol Overconsumption, Substance Abuse

County Funded "Recovery Coach" Program Run by Safe Communities Now Available to Assist Families Affected by Excessive Drinking

Dane County is experiencing a significant increase in the number of medical emergencies related to alcohol overconsumption and substance abuse in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. According to new data from Dane County Emergency Management, between February 1st and May 10th there was a 37.9% increase over a year ago in ambulance calls for people with emergencies stemming from substance abuse. There were a total of 666 EMS calls for alcohol/substance abuse in that timeframe, up from 483 from the same weeks just one year ago.

"These numbers highlight the countless layers of this global pandemic and its many pervasive impacts on families and our communities," Parisi said. "As we focus on the health and financial well-being of our community, we must make sure people also know about resources like the Recovery Coach program run by Safe Communities to get people help and confront addiction."

The report shows between February and early May there were 18 days in which emergency responders had 10 or more 911 calls per day for substance abuse. That only happened four days in the same period of dates in both 2018 and 2019.

"Whether its drugs or alcohol, we know these are challenging times for those who struggle with mental illness and addiction," said Cheryl Wittke, Director of the Safe Communities Coalition. "Our team of recovery coaches have lived experience and know what it's like to feel hopeless and struggling, making them the perfect community resource right now to help get those who want to change their lives take the first steps toward getting help."

Dane County was instrumental at developing and expanding the highly successful Recovery Coach program and provided \$350,000 in the 2020 county budget for this incredibly important work done by Safe Communities. Additional support comes from UW Health, UnityPoint Health—Meriter, Quartz, and Sustaining Members of Safe Communities. Those looking to contact a Safe Communities Recovery Coach should email referral@safercommunity.net or call 608-228-1278, toll free (888) 811-3689 ext. 1.

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