

ONE BIG FAMILY

DRIVEN BY HOPE



International Overdose
Awareness Day



International Overdose Awareness Day 2025

Resource Guide

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What is International Overdose Awareness Day?

International Overdose Awareness Day is observed on August 31 each year to raise awareness of the public health crisis of substance misuse and overdose. A remembrance that was initiated in 2001 in Melbourne, Australia, International Overdose Awareness has resonated with communities around the globe as we all see our homes, neighborhoods, and schools affected by the public health crisis of substance misuse and overdose.

*The RISE Drug Free MKE coalition's theme this year is **Driven by Hope** – an outlook and reminder that the work being done in our community is making a difference. The momentum must continue.*

Who is RISE Drug Free MKE?

Established in 2011, the RISE Drug Free MKE coalition exists to raise awareness to elevate youth in Milwaukee County through education, and to lift the entire community out of harms caused by substance (mis)use. With our coalition partners, we will RISE to provide youth with Resource for Inclusive Substance Education. RISE is more than a name: it is a call to action, and a promise of the direction we're moving in as a community, together.

RISE Drug Free MKE prioritizes policies, practices, and programs that address major substance use issues in our community, including marijuana use among use, problematic drinking, and prescription drug (mis)use. The coalition is convened by Community Advocates Public Policy Institute.

2024 Impact:

- 785 youth participated in Botvin LifeSkills sponsored by the coalition
- 1,068 youth received substance use prevention programming
- 2,053 people were informed about substance misuse prevention education through personal outreach and engagement
- 2,400 drug deactivation pouches and medication lock boxes were provided to coalition partners to prevent overdoses
- 26,320 reached on RISE Drug Free MKE's social media pages
- 10,000 people were reached monthly through RISE Drug Free MKE coalition op-eds in the Milwaukee Times
- 281,000 impressions for substance use prevention PSAs were shown at Marcus Theaters and on iHeart Radio stations

Overdose Statistics

Data presented on the Milwaukee County Overdose Dashboard show the stark impact that overdose crisis has had on our community. When RISE Drug Free MKE began observing International Overdose Awareness Day in 2017, 401 people died as a result of overdose in Milwaukee County.

The number of fatal overdoses increased sharply with the widespread presence of fentanyl, peaking in 2022 with 674 drug overdose deaths in Milwaukee County.

Fortunately, there was a significant drop in overdose deaths, then falling to 652 in 2023 and to 450 fatal overdoses in 2024, a 30% decrease



State

From 2023 to 2024, Wisconsin was one of eight states that experienced a decline in drug overdose deaths of 35% or more.

National

According to the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics, there were an estimated 80,391 drug overdose deaths in the United States during 2024 – a decrease of 26.9% from the 110,037 deaths estimated in 2023.

Overdose Basics

Source: www.overdoseday.com/overdose-basics

Alcohol

Alcohol is a legal depressant that slows down the messages travelling between the brain and the body. Alcohol depresses the nerves that control involuntary actions. A fatal dose will eventually cause these functions to shut down.

Signs of an overdose include: confusion, loss of coordination, vomiting, seizures, irregular or slow breathing, pale or blue tinged skin, low body temperature, unconsciousness or passing out.

Opioids

Opioids is an umbrella term for natural or synthetic drugs that are derived from – or related to – the opium poppy. Commonly used opioids include oxycodone, morphine, codeine, heroin, fentanyl, methadone and opium. Opioids dull the senses and slow down breathing and the heart rate. In high doses, opioids depress the body's natural urge to breathe.

Signs on an overdose include: no response to stimuli, shallow/stopped breathing, can't be woken up, unusual snoring/gurgling sounds, blue/grey lips or finger tips, floppy arms and legs.

Depressants

Benzodiazepines, barbiturates (medical depressants), and alcohol all slow the central nervous system to produce a calming effect. When taken in excessive amounts or in combinations with other drugs, they can depress normal functions such as breathing and heart rate until they eventually stop, resulting in brain damage or death.

Signs of an overdose include: vomiting, unresponsive (but awake), limp body, pale and/or clammy face, blue fingernails or lips, shallow or erratic breathing (or not breathing at all), slow or erratic pulse, choking or sounds of a gurgling noise, and loss of consciousness.

Stimulants

Stimulants are a category of drug that increase alertness and heart rate, producing an effect of increased confidence, and energy. Large doses of these drugs can result in anxiety, panic, seizures, headaches, stomach cramps, aggression and paranoia. Examples of stimulant drugs include: amphetamines, cocaine and Ecstasy (MDMA).

Signs of an overdose include: hot, flushed or sweaty skin, headaches, chest pain, unsteadiness, rigid muscles, tremors or spasms, uncontrolled movements or seizures, difficulty breathing.

Events

Healing Together, Driven by Hope

Date: Friday, August 29, 2025

Time: 5 to 8 p.m.

*Location: Mitchell Park Pavilion,
524 S. Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee*

Healing Together, Driven by Hope is a community-focused event dedicated to promoting healing and supporting those who are grieving. This gathering aims to create a safe and nurturing space for individuals and families affected by overdose, as well as those seeking to understand and cope with their grief.

Activities include:

- Poetry Station
- Typewriting Station
- Yoga
- Picture Printing Station
- Library Pop-Up
- Affirmation Memorial Rock Station
- Local Resources

Resources will be available from: Community Advocates Public Policy Institute, Community Medical Services, Escucha tus Emociones, Milwaukee County Parks, Nar-Anon Family Groups, Rogers Behavioral Health, Samad's House, and Sigue Sanando Studio.

International Overdose Awareness Day Memorial Event - "Driven by Hope"

Date: Sunday, August 31, 2025

Time: 5 to 7:30 p.m.

*Location: Washington Park (Areas 2 and 3),
1859 N. 40th Street, Milwaukee*

The International Overdose Awareness Day Memorial is a heartfelt gathering aimed at showing love, support, and healing for those affected by the devastating loss of loved ones due to substance misuse, as well as the survivors of overdose. This event is a space for community solidarity, remembrance, and hope.

Activities include:

- Inspiring Speakers
- Dedication Station
- Candlelight Memorial Vigil

The event is sponsored by City of Milwaukee Health Department, HIR Wellness Institute, Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services, Milwaukee County Parks, Community Advocates Public Institute, RISE Drug Free MKE.

In addition, RISE Drug Free MKE Coalition partners will be providing resources and information about overdose prevention and intervention at Milwaukee City Hall, 200 E. Wells St., Milwaukee, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. from Monday, August 25, to Friday, August 29.

Setting Boundaries with Alcohol and Other Drugs

Setting boundaries with alcohol and other drugs is about establishing limits for yourself in order to help you feel safe. It's about balancing each aspect in your life that deserves your full attention and energy. Whether it's work or school, friends or family, basketball or pottery, setting boundaries with alcohol and other drugs is crucial to your success in achieving your dreams.

Be Clear About Your Boundaries

Write down clear and concise boundaries. Avoid using ambiguous phrases like "I won't drink that much tonight" and opt in for something like "I will only have two drinks tonight."

Boundaries are to Protect, Not Control

Don't think of boundaries as things you're not allowed to do. If you set your boundaries in advance, maintaining those boundaries is an act of trust and respect in yourself.

Practice Saying No

You always have the right to say "no" and you don't owe anyone an explanation. Here are some responses if someone offers you alcohol or another drug:

- No, thank you.*
- Not at this time.*
- I don't want to.*

Hold Yourself Accountable

When discussing boundaries with other people, a key component is having reasonable consequences when someone crosses your boundary. Hold yourself to the same standards that you would hold someone else.

RISE Drug Free MKE's Setting Boundaries with Alcohol and Other Drugs Toolkit is the perfect guide to navigating your relationship with substances. With information about alcohol, commercial tobacco, marijuana, prescription medications, and more, we hope to empower you with the knowledge and tools to make healthy and educated decisions. It provides tips and examples that can help you set boundaries with alcohol and other drugs.

<https://risedrugfreemke.org/what-we-do/setting-boundaries-with-alcohol-and-other-drugs.html>

Harm Reduction Vending Machines

The Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services Harm Reduction Vending Machine initiative is a cross-sector education and dissemination partnership for harm reduction supplies. Government agencies, colleges, businesses and nonprofits educate the public on using harm reduction supplies and increase residential access to supplies. Supplies include:

Drug Testing Strips

The illicit drug supply is increasingly contaminated with dangerous substance like fentanyl and xylazine. These drugs, often added without a user's knowledge, can dramatically increase the risk of overdose and other severe health complications. Drug testing strips are essential tools for harm reduction because they allow individuals to test their drugs for the presence of these deadly substances.

Gun Locks

A gun lock is a device designed to secure a firearm, preventing unauthorized access and use. It typically fits over the trigger or barrel of a gun, rendering it inoperable.

Naloxone Nasal Spray

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that rapidly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. It's easy to administer, even for people without medical training.

Medication Deactivation Bags

The Detera Drug Deactivation and Disposal System is a safe, effective, and convenient way to dispose of unwanted or expired medications, including prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and even illicit substances.

Medication Lock Bags

Medication lock bags are specifically designed, secure containers used to store prescription and over-the-counter medications. These bags feature key and combination locks, making them an effective tool for preventing unauthorized access to potentially harmful substances.

Harm Reduction Vending Machine Locations

Harm Reduction Vending Machines can be found at the following locations:

- *Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) – 2610 W. North Ave., Milwaukee*
- *Greendale Police Department – 5911 W. Grange Ave., Greendale*
- *Outreach Community Health Centers – 210 W. Capitol Dr., Milwaukee*
- *Oak Creek Fire Department – 7000 S. 6th St., Oak Creek*
- *Community Advocates – 728 N. James Lovell St., Milwaukee*
- *Diverse & Resilient – 2439 N. Holton St., Milwaukee*
- *Hillview Building – 1615 S. 22nd St., Milwaukee*
- *Milwaukee County Community Reintegration Center – 8885 S. 68th St., Franklin*
- *First Step – 2835 N. 32nd St., Milwaukee*
- *Vin Baker Recovery – 4757 N. 76th St., Milwaukee*
- *AMRI Counseling Services – 4001 W. Capitol Dr., Milwaukee*
- *Dr. Martin Luther King Community Center – 1531 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee*
- *Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center – 5000 W. National Ave., Milwaukee*
- *4th Dimension Sobriety – 500 E. Center St., Milwaukee*
- *Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. – 3732 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 200, Milwaukee*
- *Forest Home Health Center – 1316 Forest Home Ave., Milwaukee*
- *Benedict Center (Sisters Program) – 209 Orchard St., Milwaukee*
- *Kuscuiszko Sport & Community Center – 2201 S. 7th St., Milwaukee*
- *Rogers Behavioral Health, West Allis Campus – 11101 W. Lincoln Ave., Milwaukee*