

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Community encouraged to use resources, honor lost loved ones on International Overdose Awareness Day**

**Eau Claire, WI – August 31, 2023** – Communities in Eau Claire County and around the world are coming together today to remember the community members we’ve lost to overdose and acknowledge the grief of the family and friends left behind.

Observed on August 31 each year, International Overdose Awareness Day seeks to create better understanding of overdose, reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths, and reduce the harms associated with drug use.

U.S. overdose rates have risen concerningly in recent years. In 2021, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated there were 107,622 drug overdose deaths, an increase of 15 percent from 2020.

Overdose has also deeply impacted the Eau Claire County community. In 2022, there were 20 drug overdose deaths in Eau Claire County, 13 of which were related to opioids. The number of opioid-related deaths per year in the county doubled between 2015 and 2022.

“By coming together to remember those who we’ve lost, we stand together to say that more needs to be done to end overdose in our community,” says Sarah Dillivan-Pospisil, public health specialist at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. “Learning about and using local resources is a meaningful way to honor the many in our community who are deeply impacted by overdose.”

**Here are some ways that you can help prevent an overdose:**

- **Get free Narcan nasal spray and fentanyl test strips** from the harm reduction vending machine, located in the lobby of the Eau Claire County Jail (710 2nd Ave., Eau Claire). The repurposed vending machine, a collaboration between the Health Department and the Eau Claire County Sheriff’s Office, opened in June and offers free Narcan and fentanyl test strips to the public seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Anyone can use the vending machine at any time of day, no questions asked. Get more information [here](#).

- **Use a lockbox, lock bag, or locked drawer** to keep your prescription medication safe and out of sight.
- **Dispose of your unused or expired medication** at one of the [permanent drop-off locations](#) in Eau Claire County, or use a medication deactivation system.
- **Find support groups and treatment resources** in the Chippewa Valley by clicking [here](#).
- **Sign up to learn about a new family support program** coming to the Chippewa Valley for family and friends whose loved ones struggle with addiction by clicking [here](#).
- **Keep an eye out for an overdose prevention video** on Gas Station TV the next time you're filling up at the gas station in Eau Claire, Altoona, or Fall Creek – or [click here](#) to watch the short video and learn about the signs of an opioid overdose.

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*This September, keep an eye out for bus ads on Eau Claire Transit vehicles with information about a new self-serve harm reduction vending machine, located in the Eau Claire County Jail lobby.*