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# Opioid overdoses trend downward in Monroe County over past year, but fatalities remain high



by: Eriketa Cost

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ROCHESTER, N.Y. (WROC) — Numbers for opioid overdose in March were slightly higher than the beginning of 2021, according to the [Monroe County Heroin Task Force data portal](#). However, Monroe County is seeing a downward trend in opioid overdoses on average, compared to the start of the pandemic, and years past.

The average number of overdoses in the last three months is 50 per month – compared to 73 a month during the same stretch last year.

Deputy Mike Favata with the Monroe County Heroin Task Force says a year ago today, the pandemic caused a lot of stress for everyone, leading to a spike in overdoses. Those in recovery had distractions taken away overnight: things as simple as going to work or going to the gym.

“You take people battling addiction, you take every one of their resources away, overnight,” he said.

But not all the resources were gone, and people were always at the ready to help, he says. Both nonprofit and county-run organizations persisted with outreach, including a new 24 hour team run by the county.

As the summer winded down, so did overdose. Numbers remain lower than they were in years past, and the start of the pandemic, where the county saw monthly records in the 70s and 80s.

Favata says while any downward trend is good news, it's not painting a full picture.

“People get Narcan-ed all the time and it's not getting reported,” he said.

Narcan is a medication used to treat overdoses, and something Favata says has become widely accessible today.

Joel Yager, Senior Director of Clinical Services at [Huther Doyle](#) says with the use of Narcan, people may try to handle situations with :

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"Because we have the availability of Narcan, which is a great thing to have, it also does not give you an accurate reporting on overdoses," said Yager.

Jennifer Faringer, Director of DePaul's National Council of Alcoholism in Rochester, says another important element to consider when looking at the numbers is the fatalities – which are going up.

She says unfortunately this is a result of a powerful ingredient fentanyl, which has become more prevalent.

"It's been documented in the medical examiner's reports over last two years that the percentage of fentanyl in products is going up," she said.

These experts say anytime these numbers are going down, it's a good thing. But outreach and education must not stop – especially into the warmer weather.

Huther Doyle launched a mobile support unit this week in rural areas to expand education and resources as we head into spring, where cases usually climb.

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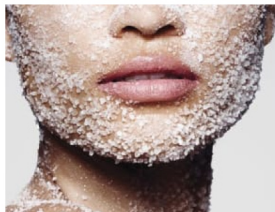
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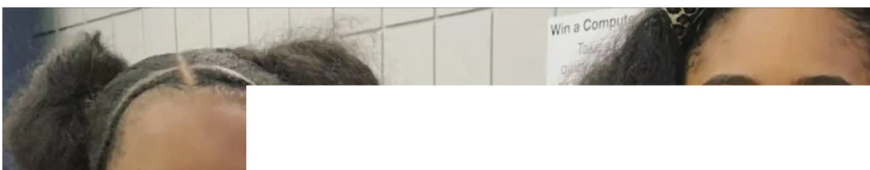
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