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**MICHAEL J. MURPHY**  
ALDERMAN, 10TH DISTRICT

# **Fourteen drug overdose deaths in Milwaukee County July 26-29 is tragic, unacceptable and preventable**

## **Statement from Alderman Michael J. Murphy July 31, 2019**

The greater Milwaukee area experienced 14 deaths from Friday, July 26 through Monday, July 29. The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office reports that these 14 people died this past weekend from drug overdoses. Eight women and six men ages 21 to 63 from around the county are the latest victims of (*heroin, cocaine, opioids*) abuse and addiction.

As co-chair of the **City-County Heroin, Opioid and Cocaine Task Force (CCHOCTF)**, I see every day how drug addiction is killing our family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Beyond just statistics, this latest loss represents families in our communities who are now without loved ones and will continue to experience trauma and grief. The loss of these members of our community negatively impacts all of us.

I also know that there are many individuals and organizations just as committed as I am to root out the causes of opioid addiction, to work on solutions to prevent dependence on these drugs, and hold drug makers and distributors responsible for this epidemic of destructive behavior.

**County Executive Chris Abele:** "One overdose death is too many. Fourteen in four days puts Milwaukee on a pace for our worst year ever. We must continue to combat the opioid crisis by addressing the underlying causes of addiction while holding the manufacturers and distributors of these drugs accountable."

**Michael Lappen,** Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division Administrator and co-chair of CCHOCTF: "Mental health issues often accompany addiction struggles, creating a perfect storm of vulnerability. It is our core mission to care for the region's most vulnerable, and that includes helping individuals overcome dependency struggles."

**Jeanette Kowalik,** Commissioner, Milwaukee Health Department (MHD): "Our condolences go out to the families impacted by this tragedy. Substance use and addiction are conditions that deserves the same level of concern as any other health and/medical condition. Compassion and healing should be front and center, not judgement and blame. The MHD will continue to partner with those committed to this cause including prevention of overdose."

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**Dr. Brian Peterson**, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner quote: “Sadly, while the number of overdose deaths this past weekend produced additional stress for extremely proficient Medical Examiner’s Office staff, it really reflects a continuation of the tragically high numbers our community has been experiencing for the past five years. Overdoses continue to drive accidental deaths in general, and opioid involvement overlaps into other areas – homicides and suicides – as well. Unless and until the flow of these illicit substances (fentanyl analogs, cocaine, heroin) across the border and ultimately into Milwaukee County is stopped, and demand is decreased, I expect tragedies such as we experienced this weekend to continue.”

**Amanda Rodriguez**, Manager, Community Medical Services: "Our 24/7 facility allows us to provide services to individuals when they need it most. Through the assessment process, we work with each patient to identify the best combination of medication and psycho-social therapies vital for their recovery. If you or a loved one is in need of services please call us at (414) 885-3525 or visit us online at [communitymedicalservices.org](http://communitymedicalservices.org)."

**Capt. Michael Wright** of the Milwaukee Fire Department’s Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) team: “The Milwaukee Fire Department Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) team grieves for the families and loved ones of this horrible epidemic. The MIH team is rapidly working on new strategies to address this epidemic, with the aim of *"harnessing the power of the community!"* Collectively WE must all work together to avoid another day, month, or weekend with so many lost.”

Additional resources can be found at Cleanslate which has clinics in Milwaukee County, neighboring counties and soon to be located throughout Wisconsin. Go to [cleanslatecenters.com](http://cleanslatecenters.com) for more information on services offered and clinic locations.

To read the final recommendations report of the CCHOCTF, click [here](#).