

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Department of Public Health Commemorates
International Overdose Awareness Day, August 31, 2022
*“Time to Remember. Time to Act”***

(Hartford) In Connecticut, residents are more likely to die from an unintentional drug overdose than a motor vehicle accident. The use of illicit drugs and misuse of prescription opioids were the main causes of drug overdose deaths in Connecticut, resulting in a total of 9,219 deaths from 2012 to 2021. According to the CDC, the 2020 Connecticut age-adjusted rate for drug-induced mortality was 39.1 per 100,000 population compared to the 2020 national rate of 28.3. In 2021, 93% of overdose deaths involved an opioid (e.g., fentanyl, heroin, or a prescription opioid pain reliever).

Connecticut’s crisis mirrors the national one: In 2021, provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate more than 107,000 people died of a drug overdose, with 75% of those deaths involving an opioid. The overall rise in overdose deaths is largely attributable to the proliferation in the drug supply of illicit fentanyl, a highly potent synthetic opioid.

International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD), a global event held yearly on August 31st, aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of a drug-related death. It also acknowledges the grief felt by families and friends remembering those who have met with death or permanent injury as a result of drug overdose.

The following locations in Connecticut will hold Overdose Awareness Events on August 31, 2022

- Albany Ave, Hartford from 10AM-3PM
- New Haven Green, New Haven from 12PM-4PM
- Waterbury Green, Waterbury from 10AM-2PM
- 43 Madison Ave., Bridgeport from 11AM-12PM
- East Main Street and Jane Street, Bridgeport from 1PM-3PM
- Sea Side Park, Bridgeport from 11:15AM-12:30 PM
- Community Health Center, New London at 9:45AM
- Old Lyme Town Hall, Old Lyme at 11:00AM
- Waterford Community Center, Waterford at 12:30PM
- Groton Library, Groton at 1:30PM
- Stonington Human Services, Stonington at 2:30PM
- Williams Park, New London at 4:00PM
- Ledyard Farmer's Market, Ledyard at 5:30PM
- Wheeler Library, North Stonington at 7:00PM
- 16 Coventry Street, Hartford from 1PM-3PM

“The DPH overdose prevention education and naloxone access campaign, known as **OPEN Access CT**, was created to address drug user health and access to harm reduction services for injection drugs users. The OPEN Access CT program provides overdose education, training, and access to naloxone for clients who utilize HIV prevention services in CT, including syringe access services” said Marianne Buchelli, MPH, MBA, CHES. “This is an important part of the multifaceted response to improve opioid prescribing practices to prevent addiction, expand access to effective treatment for those who are addicted, increase use of naloxone to reverse overdoses”.

DPH in collaboration with partners are working to address opioid abuse, dependence, and overdose a priority. The DPH will continue to lead with the use of the evidence-based initiative that focuses on three promising areas: **informing opioid prescribing practices, increasing the use of naloxone – a drug that reverses symptoms of a drug overdose, and using medication-assisted treatment to slowly move people out of opioid addiction.**

Contact: Marianne Buchelli, Health Program Supervisor
HIV Prevention Program
860-509.8053
mbuchelli@msn.com