

Portage overdose deaths increased by 33% in 2020

Overdose deaths rose by 33% in Portage County, from 33 deaths in 2019 to 44 deaths from 2020. Nationally, overdoses rose by 29%. Most of the people who died had fentanyl in their system along with other drugs such as methamphetamines or cocaine.

The Board is involved in several initiatives to prevent a person from overdosing. The Board received a donation of fentanyl test strips to distribute to the community. The strips can be used to detect fentanyl and, in some cases, fentanyl analogues, which are commonly found in the drug supply — alone and mixed with other illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Individuals using a drug may have no idea that a powerful synthetic opioid is present. “This will hopefully build some bridges to connect people to treatment and ultimately save lives,” said Garrity.



Naloxone is a medication that rapidly reverses an overdose. It is available for residents along with overdose education through Project DAWN. Appointments are necessary. Call Townhall II's business line at 330-678-3006.

Medication-assisted treatment is a proven, evidence-based treatment which uses medications along with counseling to help people recover from opioid use disorder.

Treatment is available here in Portage County with detoxification, residential treatment, counseling, medication-assisted treatment, and recovery housing services from our Board-funded providers – Townhall II, Family & Community Services, and Coleman Professional Services – as well as other local organizations.

If you need help, contact the Addiction Helpline at Townhall II at 330-678-3006.

Dukes & Schumm Join Mental Health & Recovery Board



The Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County is pleased to announce the appointments of two new board members, LaTasha Dukes and Jenn Schumm. LaTasha Dukes resides in Ravenna and has been an active community member in Portage County. Jenn Schumm is a Kent resident.

LaTasha Dukes is the assistant director of the donor recognition program at Kent State University. She holds a degree in public health from Kent State University and is currently working

towards her master's in human development and family studies.

Dukes is active in the community and is a member of several committees and boards throughout the county. She hopes to help destigmatize mental health issues among the African American community and help bring awareness to the importance of mental health.

"I also hope to bring more awareness to the resources available and see how services can be utilized more throughout the community," said Dukes. With her time on the board, she hopes to help open doors for others in the community to access services. In her free time, Dukes enjoys spending time with her five children, reading, and shopping. Jenn Schumm is a service and support administrator for Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities where she coordinates services for individuals with disabilities. She holds a degree in criminal justice from Kent State University.

Her unique employment history offers insight into areas regarding mental health, addiction services/recovery houses, criminal justice, and developmental disabilities. Jenn's previous work at ROOT house (Family & Community Service's resident treatment facility for men in Portage County) motivated her to try and reduce the stigma of Medicated Assisted Treatment and overall community opinions of those struggling with addiction.

This extensive experience will offer unique perspectives. "I believe my experience will bring a unique perspective to the Board," stated Schumm. "I look forward to working with fellow board members to address the mental health and addiction needs of those in Portage County."

In her free time Jenn enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons, gardening, reading, and running.

Welcome our new Clinical Manager, Luke Barker



Luke Barker, MS Ed., LPCC, joined the Mental Health & Recovery Board staff as Clinical Manager. Luke holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in counseling from Youngstown State University. He completed an internship with the U.S. Marshall's Office and was also a Graduate Research Assistant at YSU. Prior to joining the Board, he was a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor at The Counseling Center of Columbiana County.

Luke enjoys sports, woodworking, traveling, hiking, and/or anything outdoors. Welcome!

NAMI Family to Family Class Begins in September

Registration is now open for the Portage County Family-to-Family Education Program, a free, 8-week class for family members and caregivers who have a loved one with a mental illness.

The class will run every Tuesday starting September 28, 6:30 to 9 p.m., at the Mental Health & Recovery Board located at 155 E. Main Street in Kent

Family-to-Family provides education and support to help families and others who have a loved one with mental illness to better understand the disorders, behavior, treatments and impact. Some of the topics covered will include the types of mental illness, medications and side effects, recent changes in mental illness courts, medical insurance, and more.

To register, call the MHRB at 330-673-1756 or email laurab@mental-health-recovery.org

Managing Mental Health in the Workplace

Mental health is essential to a person's overall health and well-being. A healthy mind and body can help individuals work to the best of their ability and reach their full potential.

The pandemic has given employers an opportunity to be more supportive and understanding of the difficulties employees may be experiencing, however, a stigma still exists concerning mental health conditions. To help reduce this stigma, employers can support employees by ensuring the safety of individuals, being open about any mental health struggles they might be dealing with themselves, offer flexibility in scheduling and time off, and ensure employees have treatment options and resources available to them, if needed.

There are several ways employers can support their employees' mental health. One way is through leadership modeling. Being open with employees about any mental health struggles they themselves might be dealing with and showing that vulnerability to employees may help reduce stigma and allow for the employee to be more open about their own struggles. When people come forward with concerns regarding their mental health, it is important to respond with acceptance and validation of those concerns.

Employers can offer flexibility by giving employees time off to get vaccinated and to deal with any possible side effects. Flexibility can also be offered by helping employees prioritize critical work. It should not be expected that work and productivity will continue as it was before the pandemic. There should be clear communication about expectations and any new policies. Offering flexibility can give employees more peace of mind and reduce stress.

Another important way employers can help support mental health concerns is to provide employee treatment options and resources. Some employers offer employee assistance programs which may include treatment for mental health concerns. Another resource for employees to utilize if they have a mental health condition is Mental Health Employee Resource Groups (MHERG). Even just the existence of these groups can help normalize and reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace.

The pandemic has given employers an opportunity to better address mental health concerns at the workplace. Employers can help reduce stigma and open a conversation regarding mental health through acknowledgment, offerings of support by ensuring employees are aware of the resources available to them, and through reasonable accommodations.

Although non-professional support can be helpful, sometimes additional help is needed. The best thing to do if you are feeling a hinderance on your mental well-being is to reach out and get help. This may be through a primary care provider, a mental health center, an employee assistance program, or other available resources. Resources can be found at www.mental-health-recovery.org. If you or someone you know is in distress or experiencing a mental health crisis, call the 24/7 help line at 330-678-HELP.

Upcoming Events

Portage Wellness & Recovery Collective Reunion

Saturday, September 25

11:00am NAMI Walk starting at Center of Hope, Ravenna

12:00-4:00pm Speakers, Resource Fair, Closing Shoe Memorial, Ravenna City Park

Portage Substance Abuse & Mental Health Conference

Tuesday, October 26, 8am-4pm at the NEW Center, Rootstown

Registration coming soon!

Talking to your kids about drugs

what parents need to know

Children look to their parents and other adult role models for guidance and support. Although it may not always seem that way, your influence is very powerful. So, when it comes to issues regarding drug and alcohol use, letting them know about the dangers can protect them from causing harm to themselves and others.

Let them know you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.

According to the Portage County Community Health Assessment, 55% of the youth surveyed said they would not drink alcohol and 68% of kids would not try drugs if they knew their parents would be disappointed. Take a stance on drug and alcohol use and express that opinion frequently; you want to make sure that your child has a clear picture on how you feel about drug and alcohol use before they encounter a situation where substances are present.

Show them you care about their health, wellness, and success.

Because there are many dangerous short- and long-term effects to drugs and alcohol use, express to them you care about their future and only want the best for their well-being. Keep the conversations positive. Talk about how excited you are for their future and you don't want to see something like using drugs or alcohol to get in their way and control their lives.

Talk frequently, be clear and consistent.

Instead of sitting down for one big talk, use opportunities as they arise to have little talks - such as something happening on a TV show or a school event. As you continue to talk with children as they grow, be sure you've established clear family rules about alcohol and substance use and follow through when the rules are broken.

Know the facts about vaping, drugs, and alcohol.

Do your research before you talk to your child, so when it's time to have a conversation, you can provide information on why drug and alcohol use has consequences.

Scare tactics don't work.

The use of fear alone will not prevent your child from trying risky behaviors. These kinds of warnings can send unintended messages, or your children will dismiss these messages to avoid the feeling of fear. Research shows that because their brains aren't fully developed like adults, youth are prone to high-risk behaviors and are naturally hardwired to defend against negative messaging.



Most youth at this age aren't concerned about long-term consequences of drug use such as the possibility of interfering with brain development or limited academic achievement. They are concerned about consequences like embarrassing themselves, smelling bad, disappointing people they care for, and getting into trouble.

Learn more:

www.mental-health-recovery.org

Questions or concerns?

Call helpline at 330-678-HELP

Did you know that the majority of young people do not use alcohol or other drugs?



It's true. In survey after survey of Ohio youth, the results show that the majority of young people make the healthy choice to avoid drinking, vaping, prescription drug misuse, and other drug use.

Other ways to keep youth drug-free:

Be a role model: Do not make drinking the sole focus of social gatherings when children are present. Explain why adults may choose to drink alcohol, but children may not. For example, it is illegal for children, and it is harmful for their growing brain.

Be home when your teen has a party. If they go out, stay up until they return home.

Host safe, alcohol/drug free activities for youth. Never allow underage drinking in your home. It is illegal to allow another person's child to consumer alcohol, even with their parent's permission.