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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: Local Media and Press Release Subscribers
From: Katrina Harwood, Health Officer
Date: February 1, 2023

Rock County Starts Overdose Hope Kit Initiative

Rock County, WI – Community partners gathered on Wednesday, February 1 at the Rock County Public Health Department (RCPHD) in Janesville to assemble overdose leave-behind kits, called Hope Kits. These kits will be provided to first responders to leave behind after someone experiences an opiate overdose. Each red bag contains nasal NARCAN®, which can reverse an opioid overdose; fentanyl test strips, which detect the presence of fentanyl; a CPR face shield, drug disposal packets and a resource card.

In 2021, there were a record number of fatal opioid-related deaths in Rock County. In response to rising deaths, RCPHD started an Overdose Fatality Review team last year. Trends identified by the team included an increase in fentanyl mixed with other drugs and a lack of NARCAN® at the site of fatal overdoses. These kits will provide life-saving supplies and information to encourage people to seek peer support and treatment services. The kits were paid for with various grant funds including funds awarded to RCPHD from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to address opioid overdoses in Rock County.

“Hope Kits serve as a lifeline for individuals who are most impacted by substance use disorders and the rise in fentanyl in our community,” said Katrina Harwood, Rock County Health Officer. “The kits also help ensure resources are available to help individuals before they are able to receive other care and support.”

Organizations in attendance included Vivent Health, AMS of Wisconsin-Janesville, Janesville Police Department, Beloit Health Systems, Wellpath, WisHope, and the Rock County Sheriff's Office.

With the pervasiveness of fentanyl in illicit drugs and pills, everyone is encouraged to learn the signs of an opioid overdose and how to use NARCAN®.

Signs of an overdose include:

- Unresponsiveness or unconsciousness.
- Slowed or stopped breathing.
- Snoring or gurgling sounds.
- Cold or clammy skin.
- Discolored lips or fingernails.

If you or a loved one is misusing substances or struggling with addiction, we encourage you to seek treatment. Anyone not yet ready to seek treatment is encouraged to use harm reduction strategies like syringe exchange, fentanyl test strips, the [Never Use Alone hotline](#) and NARCAN®. Additional information and resources can be found on the [RCPHD website](#).



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Rock County Public Health Department serves Rock County residents by improving population health outcomes and removing barriers through community partnerships to provide everyone the opportunity to reach their full health potential. Visit the Rock County Public Health Department [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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