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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Drug and alcohol intoxication deaths drop for Tri-County area

Fatalities related to intoxication down in Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico in 2017

Snow Hill, MD- Deaths related to drug and alcohol intoxication, including opioid overdoses, are down in Worcester, Wicomico and Somerset Counties, according to 3rd Quarter 2017 Overdose Data released by the Maryland Department of Health last week. From January through September 2016, compared to the same period in 2017, intoxication fatalities are down 20-percent in Somerset County, 42-percent in Worcester County, and 32-percent in Wicomico County. The drop-off in the Tri-County region comes at a time when overall drug and alcohol related deaths in Maryland are on the rise.

All three counties saw a decrease in opioid-related deaths from 2016 to 2017, (down 25-percent Somerset, 33-percent Worcester, 42-percent Wicomico) and fentanyl-related deaths (down 25-percent Somerset, 36-percent Worcester, 39-percent Wicomico). Additionally, both Worcester and Wicomico saw a 20-percent drop in heroin-related deaths in 2017 while Somerset remained steady at two deaths.

Health officials in all three counties credit a combined effort from law enforcement, public health, and community partners for the decrease in drug and alcohol intoxication deaths.

Somerset County is expanding staff with two additional Peer Specialists to provide early intervention assistance and support to those who are addicted to opiates. Naloxone training continues to be available to any resident. In February, “Not My Child,” a panel of addiction and substance abuse experts will be presented on Feb. 20 at Crisfield High School for students and again that evening in the same location for the community. On Feb. 21 it will be presented at Washington High for students. That evening it will travel St. Andrews Church for the community.

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"The Somerset County community has done tremendous work over the past several years related to reducing fatal heroin overdoses," said Somerset County Health Officer, Craig Stofko. "These are preventable tragedies. The suffering that occurs due to this loss of life is difficult to comprehend. Until we can stand together and say that there were zero overdoses in Somerset County we will continue to work together to end this crisis."

In Worcester County, a community-based Opioid Intervention Team, which includes the Health Department, continues to meet monthly to consider promising practices and discuss opioid awareness, prevention, and treatment strategies. Recently, the Worcester County Health Department launched the HARTS (High-Risk Addiction Response Treatment Support) team, which provides counseling and early-intervention to residents of the county most at-risk for drug and alcohol overdoses, and other potentially fatal substance abuse or mental health issues. Worcester Health also partners with Atlantic General Hospital by placing trained Recovery Specialists within the hospital's emergency department.

"Through our partnership with Atlantic General Hospital, our Recovery Specialists are able to quickly connect to individuals who come to the emergency department due to overdoses or other substance abuse issues," said Rebecca Jones, Worcester County Health Officer. "Specialists can then connect those individuals directly to recovery resources, so that they have a clear line from the hospital to treatment and counseling."

In Wicomico County, the Community Outreach Addictions Team (COAT) provides telephone and in-person support to individuals who have experienced an overdose or are addicted to an opioid. It also provides assistance with linkage to local resources including access to treatment in the community and abroad. Peers also work in collaboration with local law enforcement to provide outreach in high use areas. COAT is available 24-hours a day with prompt response. Linking families to support programs, and answering questions with the unique insight of a recovering addict, has been a beneficial resource for the community.

"Our network of relationships with partners and stakeholders has increased our ability to directly reduce overdoses," said Lori Brewster, Wicomico County Health Officer.

Wicomico Health Department staff work closely with community partners to provide ongoing Naloxone education and distribution, educate providers and pharmacists on the new Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, assist with increasing access to care and early intervention, and encourage the integration of individualized overdose prevention plans into treatment programs.

The Tri-County region plans to continue joint communication and awareness efforts about substance abuse for 2018, with the goal of further reducing drug and alcohol related deaths. The



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full 3rd quarter overdose death report, as well as other reports from 2007 through 2017, can be seen here: bha.health.maryland.gov/OVERDOSE_PREVENTION/Pages/Data-and-Reports.aspx

For more information in Somerset visit somersethealth.org, in Worcester visit worcesterhealth.org, and in Wicomico, visit wicomicohealth.org.

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