



Jackson County Department of Public Health

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September is Opioid Awareness Month in Jackson County

Jackson County Commissioners have signed a proclamation designating September as Opioid Awareness Month. Throughout the month of September, the Health Department will promote the CDC's Rx Awareness Campaign to shed light on opioid misuse in our nation and community. A series of articles, videos, and resources will be shared on the Health Department's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/JacksonCoDPH/> and through local news outlets.

The opioid epidemic continues to devastate families across our nation, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating misuse and overdoses. In 2019, nearly 5 North Carolinians died each day from an unintentional opioid overdose. Data from 2020 shows Jackson County in the state's highest quantile for opioid overdose deaths (19), community naloxone reversals (65), children in foster care due to parent substance use (55), with a high number of opioid overdose emergency department visits (42). In contrast, Jackson County was in the low quantile for patients receiving opioid pills and people served by treatment programs.

The North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services Opioid Data Dashboard tracks each county's strategies based on the state's Opioid Action Plan. Jackson County is implementing DHHS resources, has permanent medication drop boxes to reduce supply, low/no-cost sterile syringe access through the NC Harm Reduction Coalition, some naloxone access services, and some Medication Assisted Treatment providers. Additional beneficial strategies could include community response teams that assist families impacted by substance use, non-medical drivers such as Housing First and Fair Chance Hiring, pre-arrest diversion and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in jails for justice-involved persons, and peer support specialists to support and promote harm reduction, recovery and resilience.

While the statistics and media reporting around substance use are startling to say the least, it is important to recognize that change can and does occur. We can all start by recognizing each of us know and probably love someone struggling with substance use disorder, whether we know it or not. With that in mind, we encourage you to continue forward in this series in a non-judgmental mindset. Throughout September, JCDPH will share resources on overdose prevention, treatment, and recovery. For more information or to get involved, contact Janelle Messer Health Education Supervisor at (828) 587-8238 or janellemesser@jacksonnc.org

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