



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES
OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEW INITIATIVE**

*U.S. Department of Justice funds multi-disciplinary approach
to combat overdose crisis*

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam J. Bello announced today the creation of the Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) initiative, which will bring together key stakeholders from every sector of the community impacted by the overdose crisis. The multi-disciplinary team will review data related to specific overdose deaths in order to identify emerging trends and existing barriers to prevention. Their work will inform policy makers and practitioners in developing effective solutions to combat the opioid crisis and prevent overdose fatalities.

“Despite aggressive efforts on the part of many government agencies and community organizations, there are still too many people dying from overdoses – be they opioids, fentanyl, or combinations of narcotics and other drugs,” **said County Executive Bello**. “This is not just a health problem, or a public safety problem, or a government problem – it is a community crisis, and it will take a comprehensive, sustained and systematic effort to address it. The OFR is an important step toward making this happen, and I am grateful to Congressman Morelle and Senators Schumer and Gillibrand for their support in securing the funding to establish this program.”

The OFR team will consist of representatives of public and mental health care, public safety agencies, social service providers, and the community, and will meet monthly to confidentially review specific overdose cases. In addition to identifying system gaps in services and missed opportunities for prevention and education, there will be a focus on the County’s underserved populations (immigrants, LGBTQ+, deaf and hard of hearing, for example) who may require targeted and specialized interventions.

“The drug overdose epidemic is a nationwide crisis and has touched every corner of our country—Monroe County is no exception,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle**. “I’m proud to have delivered federal funding to establish the Overdose Fatality Review, advancing a targeted approach to addressing overdoses that is deeply informed by lived experiences to ensure it meets the needs of those struggling with substance abuse disorder.

I'm grateful to County Executive Adam Bello for his continued leadership, and I look forward to the work ahead building a community where no one's life is cut short by overdose."

County Executive Bello also announced the formation of the OFR's Governing Committee, comprised of senior-level leadership of city and county agencies, health systems and community partner organizations. The Governing Committee is responsible for setting priorities, providing resources for implementation, and setting a framework for accountability based on the recommendations of the OFR working team.

"The data we obtain from the Overdose Fatality Review will drive the most effective use of our community's collective resources to treat addiction and prevent fatal overdoses," said **Rochester Mayor Malik D. Evans**. "I want to thank County Executive Adam Bello for making this investment and assembling these partnerships to bring the Overdose Fatality Review to Rochester and Monroe County. I also want to thank to Congressman Joe Morelle, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand for securing the funding to develop this valuable tool that will exponentially improve our understanding of fatal overdoses and the opioid epidemic."

The OFR is made possible by a \$1.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. Noting Monroe County's existing foundation of cooperation in addressing the opioid crisis, the addition of a strong research component from the County's Research Strategy & Development team was important to securing the grant. Not only will the OFR be able to design and implement community prevention and intervention strategies, there will be a robust evaluation process to judge the impact of the programs and ensure community accountability.

"The addition of the Opioid Fatality Review will serve as another valuable arm to the approach we have prioritized with the Monroe County Heroin Task Force: Prevention, Recovery, Education and Enforcement," said **Monroe County Sheriff Todd K. Baxter**. "The OFR is an essential step forward in our efforts to understand the complex factors contributing to overdose deaths, identify emerging trends and break down walls that often hinder prevention. I remain committed to working alongside our community leaders, experts, state and federal partners to combat the opioid epidemic that continues to take lives senselessly each day, and even more passionate about ensuring those selling this poison are held accountable and brought to justice."

The OFR is modeled on similar approaches that have been effective in addressing other complex public health challenges, including child fatalities from both motor vehicle accidents and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The work of interdisciplinary teams in including stakeholders, collecting data, and reviewing trends led to national car seat safety legislation and improved medical advice on infant safe sleeping practices, all of which have reduced child fatalities in the U.S.

“The opioid crisis has devastated families and communities across Monroe County, leaving heartbreak in its wake and shining a light on the urgent need for action,” **said U.S. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer**. “Delivering this \$1.6 million federal grant to assist Monroe County launch the Overdose Fatality Review initiative will enable the county to better understand the causes of overdose deaths and implement targeted, life-saving strategies. I commend County Executive Bello for leading the charge and bringing together experts and community leaders to address this issue head-on.”

“Communities across New York have dealt with the plight of overdoses and the destabilizing effect this has on community well-being and public safety,” **said U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**. “The Overdose Fatality Review initiative will be a critical tool to help stem the tide of substance use disorder, and I’m grateful that the U.S. Department of Justice has recognized the leadership of Monroe County in this fight and will fund this collaborative approach. I will keep fighting to ensure all New York communities have the resources to prevent overdoses and combat the scourge of opioids.”

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