



*"Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community."*

OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEW (OFR) ANNUAL REPORT 2025





*“Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.”*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview and Introduction

Purpose and Objectives _____	3
OFR Meeting Schedule and Structure _____	4
Committee Members _____	4
Partner Agencies _____	5
Review Process and Data Sources _____	5

OFR Data Findings

Table 1 OFR 2025 Metrics _____	6
Graph 1 Sex Metrics _____	6
Graph 2 Race/Ethnicity Metrics _____	7
Graph 3 Age Metrics _____	7
Graph 4 Marital Status Metrics _____	8
Graph 5 Drug Class Metrics _____	8

OFR Stark County Trends/Patterns _____	9
OFR Recommendations _____	9-10
Summary of Implementation _____	10
OFR Next Steps _____	11

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the overdose fatality review (OFR) committee is to reduce the incidence of overdose deaths in Stark County. This is completed through a multidisciplinary and comprehensive review of individual overdose deaths. The OFR committee identifies, evaluates, and makes recommendations to improve community programs and systems that serve Stark County residents.

The Ohio Revised Code 307.643 states "The purpose of the overdose fatality review committee is to decrease the incidence of preventable overdose deaths by doing all of the following":

- (A) Promoting cooperation, collaboration, and communication between all groups, professions, agencies, or entities engaged in overdose prevention, education, or mental health treatment efforts.
- (B) Maintaining a comprehensive database of all overdose deaths that occur in the county or region served by the review committee in order to develop an understanding of the causes and incidence of those deaths.
- (C) Recommending and developing plans for implementing local service program changes and changes to the groups, professions and agencies, or entities that serve local residents that might prevent overdose deaths.
- (D) Providing the department of health with aggregate data, trends, and patterns concerning overdose deaths.

This report will provide feedback and recommendations that community leaders and partners have recommended after analyzing overdose deaths that occurred in 2024 and 2025.

OFR MEETING FREQUENCY AND STRUCTURE

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings are typically held quarterly to review data and individual cases, though three meetings were held in 2025 to accommodate a change in scheduled meeting months in 2026.

Structure

The county commissioners appointed a health commissioner to establish the OFR committee. ORC 307.632 states, the review committee shall consist of the following:

- 1.The chief of police of a police department in the county or region or the county sheriff or a designee of the chief or sheriff
- 2.A public health official or the official's designee
- 3.The executive director of a board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services or the executive director's designee
- 4.A physician authorized under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery

The committee also chose to invite the county coroner and other partners. Each invited member has the same duty and responsibility as the appointed members.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kirkland Norris R.E.H.S, M.P.H
Stark County Health Department Health Commissioner

Michelle Schoonover MSN, RN
Stark County Health Department Drug Overdose Coordinator

Sergeant Bryan Johnson U-52
Stark County Sherriff Office Designee

Amanda Kelly, MPA, CHES
Stark County Health Department Public Health Official

Justina Gorman, Coalition & Community Development Coordinator
Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Designee

Dr. Maureen Ahmann, D.O
Physician

PARTNER AGENCIES

Alliance City Health Department (ACHD)
Alliance Family Health Care (AFHC)
Arrow Passage Recovery
AVO Behavioral Health and Recovery
Aultman Hospital
Brightview
Canton City Public Health (CCPH)
Cleveland Clinic Mercy Medical Center
Coleman
CommQuest
Direction Home

Local Police and Fire
Massillon City Health Department (MCHD)
Ohio Guidestone
Silver Maple Recovery
Stark County Coroner's Office
Stark County Job and Family Services (JFS)
Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR)
Stark County Sheriff's Office Metro Narcotics Unit
Stark County's Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC)

OFR REVIEW PROCESS AND DATA SOURCES

The OFR committee is focused on residents of Stark County who died from an accidental overdose. Recognizing overdose as a public health issue is founded on an understanding of substance use behavior arising from contextual, biological, environmental, systemic, and social stressors. This approach focuses on prevention by addressing the known factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of overdose.

For each death by overdose selected for individual case review, the committee will collect age, sex, race, ethnicity, the year the death occurred, the location of the death, the cause of death, factors that contributed including legal and social issues, medical records and any other pertinent information. Aggregated data on all deaths is presented at each meeting which includes age, sex, race, educational attainment, marital status, class of drugs indicated in cause of death, and other information relevant to the picture of drug overdose deaths in Stark County.

The cases reviewed in this report were deaths that occurred in 2024 or 2025 and include only residents of Stark County. Each case review is discussed among the team to gather a comprehensive understanding of the context of the decedent's life and the events and actions that led to the fatality. The discussions highlight potential contributing factors, intervention implications and recommendations for systemic improvements.

Data sources include: Ohio Department of Health's DataOhio Portal Mortality Protected download, behavioral health records, medical records, criminal justice records, coroners reports, prescription drug records, emergency medical services reports, and substance use assessment and treatment records.

OFR ANNUAL REPORT DATA FINDINGS

Data on reviews by the OFR in 2025

Table 1: County Metrics

Total number of overdose deaths that occurred in 2025*	85	Total number of 2025 overdose deaths <u>not reviewed</u> by OFR committee	81
Total number of 2025 overdose deaths involving opioids*	47	Total number of overdose deaths involving opioids <u>reviewed</u> by OFR committee	11
Total number of overdose deaths reviewed by OFR Committee	15	Total number of 2025 overdose deaths involving opioids <u>not reviewed</u> by OFR committee	43

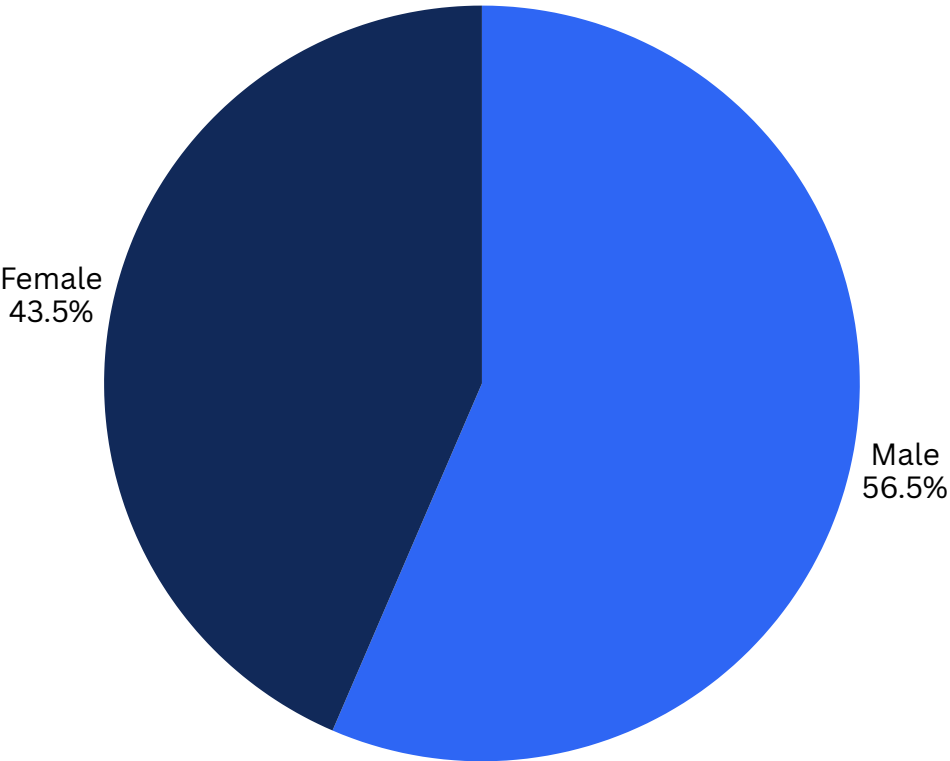
Note: 15 deaths were reviewed by the committee during calendar year 2025 meetings. Of these deaths, 11 occurred in 2024 and 4 occurred in 2025.

*Per ODH’s DataOhio Portal Mortality Protected

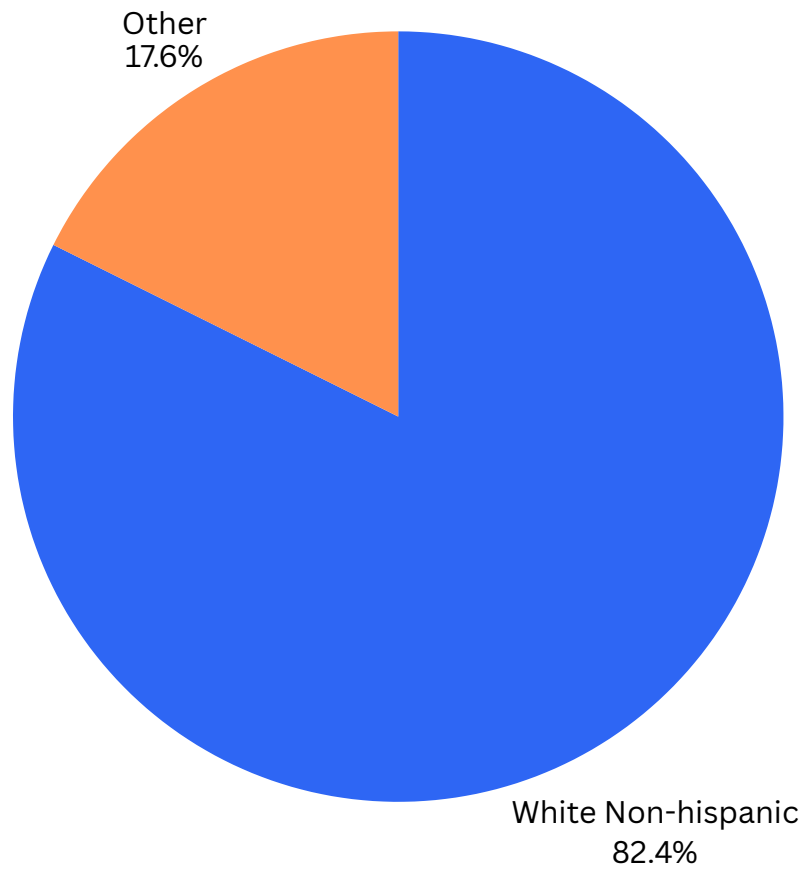
Data on all deaths occurring in 2025* only

*Data accessed and current as of 3/10/2026

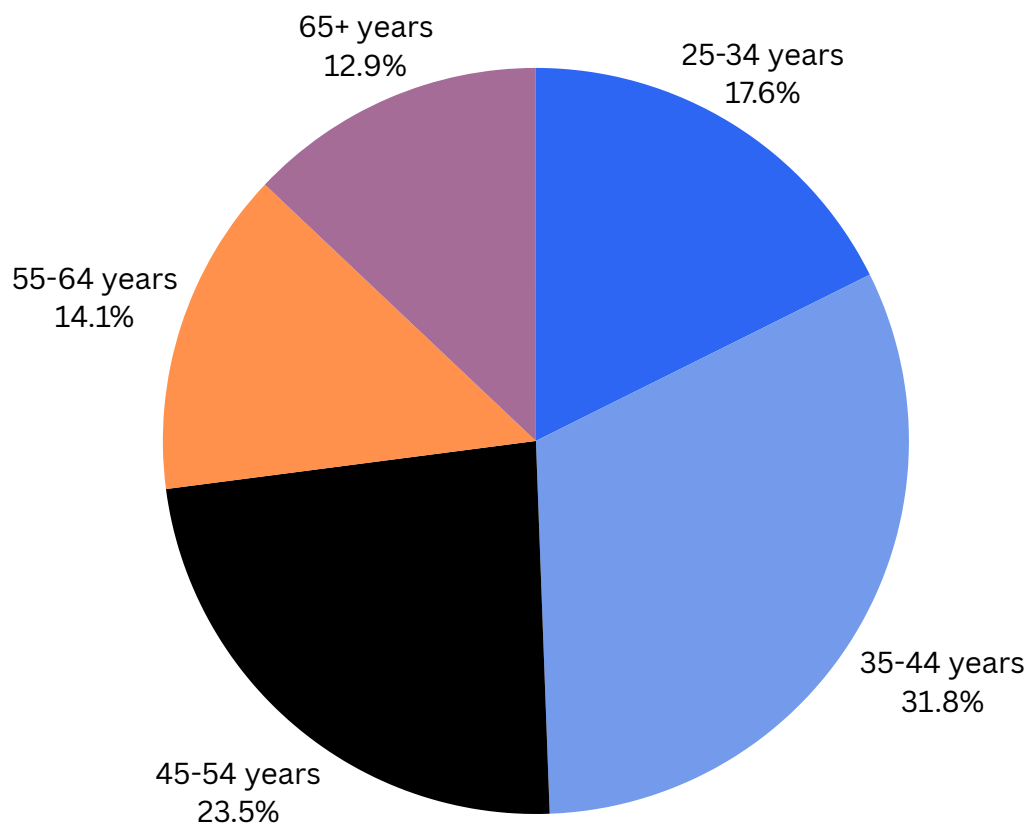
Graph 1: Sex Metrics



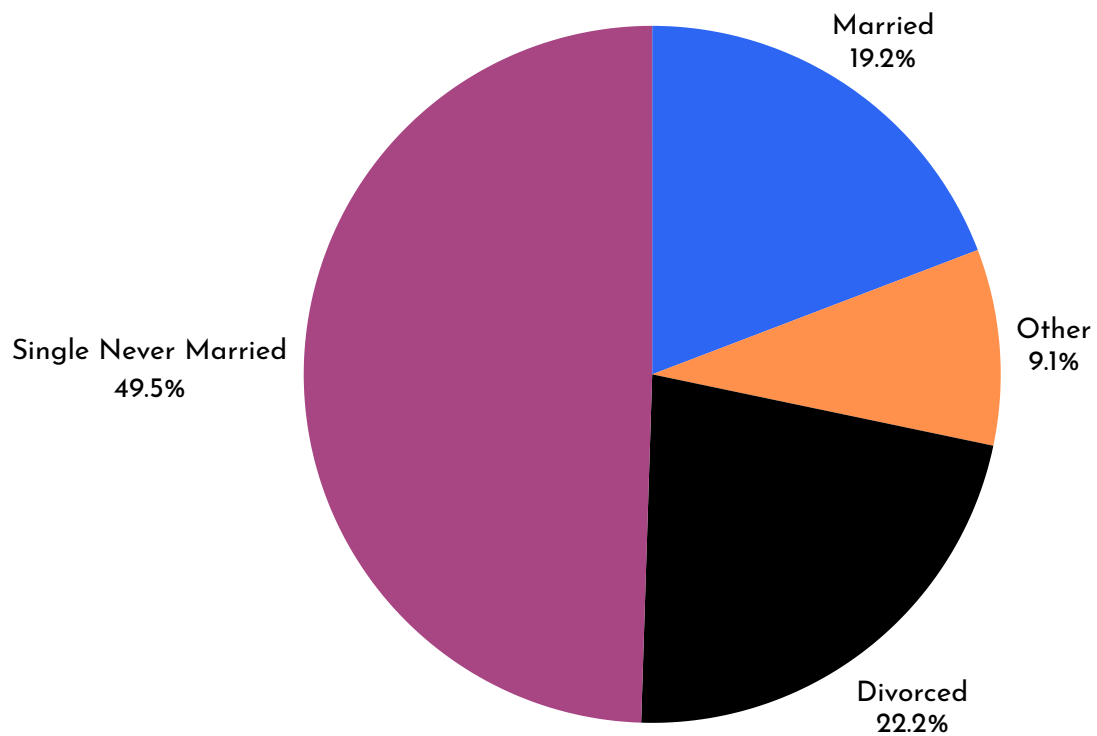
Graph 2: Race/Ethnicity Metrics



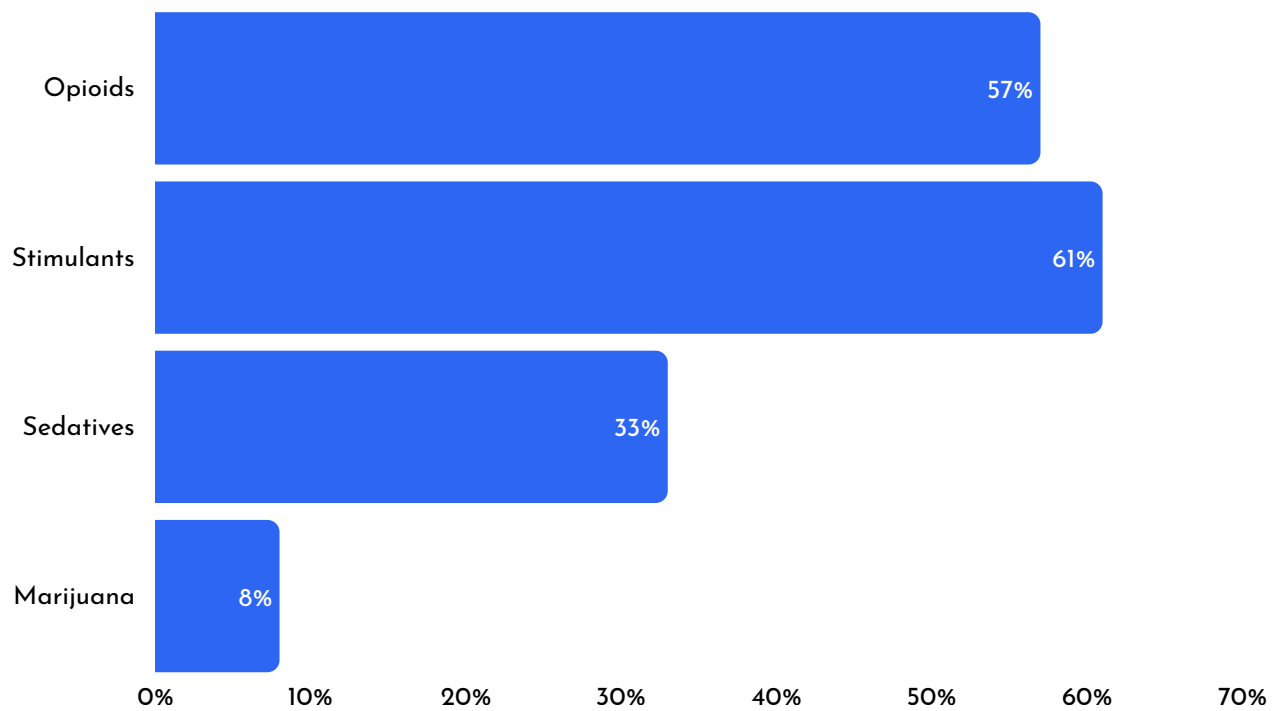
Graph 3: Age Metrics



Graph 4: Marital Status



Graph 5: Drug Class Prevalence



Trends/Patterns

The Stark County OFR identified a number of trends in overdose deaths and used these identified trends to choose cases to review individually at the 2025 meetings. Trends were identified when reviewing aggregated data from the Ohio Department of Health's Data Ohio Portal Mortality Protected download. Trends include:

1. Decrease in overall incidence of overdose deaths among Stark County residents.
2. Increase in the number of deaths involving stimulants (including cocaine) as compared to opiates.
3. Increase in the number of deaths involving females as compared to previous years.
4. Decrease in the number of decedents having a history of armed forces as compared to last year.
5. Black overdose death rate double that of white.

Some trends are newly identified or seen in Stark County while others have been previously identified. Aside from Stark County, increases in deaths involving stimulants have been identified as national trends in the United States in recent years, adding to the cumulative need for new strategies and additional resources.

2025 Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations made by the Overdose Fatality Review Committee. Some of the committee is made up of multi-sector partners with expertise in substance use disorders and/or currently engaging with substance use disorder patients. Recommendations are divided into the following categories: systemic, agency-specific, population-specific, and OFR process improvement and should be implemented by utilizing evidence-based practices and/or strategies.

Systemic

No recommendations identified in this category.

Agency-Specific

1. Increase utilization of peer support services within the ERs.
2. Increase education on the role of re-entry and parole-based programs.

Population-Specific

1. Education and awareness regarding trauma informed care.
2. Provide rural communities with education on the importance of MAT/MOUD.
3. Provide already existing transportation options to providers for those living in rural communities.
4. Provide resources to spouses, children and parents of those who have lost someone to overdose.
5. Research innovative ways to engage patients who have high no-show rates to treatment.

2025 Recommendations Continued

OFR Process Improvements

1. Increase representation of courts or professionals within the criminal justice system on the OFR committee.
2. Research reasons why methadone is not listed on the OARSS report.

2025 Summary of Implementation

Below is a list of action items that have been implemented in 2025 to address some of the recommendations. The list is not inclusive and was compiled by the OFR Committee.

- AVO is working on streamlining a referral process from Aultman ER to a SUD coordinator either same day or next day in the office.
- Stark County TASC receives funds from the State Opioid and Stimulant Response (SOS) grant through StarkMHAR to support utilization of peer support services with the ER.
- StarkMHAR hosted several trauma related trainings in CY2025.
- AVO is in the beginning stages of collaborating with southern counties/urban areas of Stark to expand their services which will improve education on MAT/MOUD and provide transportation through peer supporters within urban communities.
- SCHD sent a Health Alert Network (HAN) with the 2025 Transportation Guide to mental health providers and free clinics.
- SCHD is collaborating with the Coroners office to develop Safe Home kits to be distributed at the time of death to family members. This will include medication disposal bags, gun locks and mental health resources.
- StarkMHAR distributed adult and children's grief books at the 2025 Overdose Awareness Day events and other local providers also shared about their services on this day.
- AVO has implemented scheduling techniques to help show rates and also provides transportation to those to help them engage in programming.



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Next Steps

The Overdose Fatality Review committee continues to increase membership representation in diverse sectors. The OFR coordinator invites new organizations to join based on the committee's input. Committee members are encouraged to bring data to the meeting to share on the individual cases being reviewed or aggregated data in general.

Goals for next year include:

- Reviewing the Community Response Plan, confidentiality agreements, bi-laws, and the data collection processes.
- Increase representation of those in recovery and public safety professionals serving on the committee.
- Conducting the individual case reviews through collaboration with treatment agencies, coroner's office and other members of public safety, sharing information during the meeting.



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