

Overdose Fatality Reviews

A Coordinated, Multi-Agency Response



Communities are using **overdose fatality reviews (OFRs)** to improve and strengthen responses to the overdose epidemic through public safety and public health approaches.

What Is an Overdose Fatality Review?

In practice, OFRs involve the analysis and review of aggregate data and a series of individual death reviews by a multidisciplinary team to effectively identify system gaps and innovative, community-specific overdose prevention and intervention strategies. Combining community data with information about a decedent's life cycle and experiences facilitates a deeper understanding of the risk factors, circumstances, and missed opportunities that may have prevented an overdose death.

The information generated from OFRs allows jurisdictions to see patterns of need and opportunity across agencies and systems. Details collected cultivate recommendations to prevent future similar deaths and improved coordination across public safety and public health agencies.

What Is the Goal of an OFR

The goal is to use a multidisciplinary understanding to generate and implement recommendations to address system, agency, population, research, and policy needs. This is accomplished through:

- ◀ Building a community of multi-disciplinary partners to collaborate across agencies.
- ◀ Recognizing and addressing gaps and barriers in services.
- ◀ Identifying underlying causes of substance use disorders.
- ◀ Determining prevention strategies targeting opioids and other substances.
- ◀ Developing recommendations for policy and program changes at local and state levels.

Who Participates in OFRs?

Common core members of an OFR include:

- ◀ Medical examiner or coroner
- ◀ Public health professionals
- ◀ Public safety agencies, including first responders and the criminal justice system
- ◀ Health care providers
- ◀ Behavioral health providers
- ◀ Child services



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What is the Review Process?

Analysis and Review of data to understand overdose and substance abuse trends, select cases to review, and provide information for case findings and recommendations.

Facilitation of a series of confidential, individual death reviews by a multidisciplinary team to effectively identify system gaps, missed prevention and intervention opportunities, and innovative community-specific prevention and intervention strategies.

Implementation recommendations by presenting recommendations to a governing committee that supports and provides resources for implementation and a framework for accountability for action.

How are Sites Funded and Trained?

Funding for OFR sites is provided through several funding mechanisms that may vary by municipalities. Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) ([Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program](#) (COSSUP)), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC (Overdose Data to Action)), and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) offer funding to support OFR implementation. Many jurisdictions utilize funds available from opioid settlements as supplemental support for OFR initiatives.

For more information on funding resources or launching an OFR, visit the OFR Tools website, www.OFRTools.org.

Additional resources are frequently shared among peers. To stay in the know, we encourage you to join the OFR Message Exchange, www.OFRtools.org/Exchange.

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About IIR and COSSUP

IIR serves as the connecting point for COSSUP TTA efforts and collaborates with BJA leadership and fellow TTA providers to work directly with COSSUP site-based grantees. IIR's role includes guidance and contributions by subject-matter experts in priority COSSUP areas of focus; coordination of the COSSUP TTA network's cadre of experts and providers; publication production and design of COSSUP resources; planning, coordination, and delivery of national-level trainings and working group meetings; COSSUP Resource Library development and maintenance; coordination of distance-learning opportunities and resource dissemination; and other complementary activities. To learn more about COSSUP, visit www.cossup.org and follow us on Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter).

About BJA

BJA provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. To learn more about BJA, visit www.bja.gov and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and X (formerly known as Twitter) (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

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