



February 2018 | A quarterly newsletter from Public Health Madison & Dane County

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## Systems in Place for Short-Term Rental Licensing

Due to the growing popularity of house sharing and vacation rental websites like Airbnb or Vacation Rental by Owner (VRBO), many residents are offering short-term rentals to tourists in their homes. Wisconsin law allows the rental of one to four sleeping accommodations, which can be rooms or an entire home or cabin. The legal term for this is a Tourist Rooming House (TRH) and all Dane County Tourist Rooming Houses must be licensed by Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC) and inspected annually to verify the operation meets all health and safety requirements of Wisconsin law. They are also required to pay sales tax and a nightly room tax if their local government collects room tax. The City of Madison and a few other local governments in Dane County do.



Traditionally, it has been hard to track unlicensed TRHs. Prior to 2017, the City of Madison estimated there were approximately 400-500 in the city, with only a handful being licensed. With the goal of getting hosts to follow the rules and comply with health, safety and other requirements in the law, the City of Madison contracted with a software company to locate and identify these locations. To meet the demand for additional

licensing, PHMDC hired a Rental and Lodging Specialist, Donna Magdalena, last summer to inform hosts of the laws and licensing required for short-term rentals on their property, and assist them in becoming compliant

The regulatory landscape for short-term rentals in Dane County involves over a dozen state, county, and local city, village and/or township regulations. Donna has collected and processed the various zoning requirements in the townships, villages, and cities throughout Dane County, created fact sheets, and placed [information on our website](#) to help hosts. She licenses and inspects the properties as well as handles questions and complaints about short-term rentals and does outreach in the community.

As a result, in a few short months, we have moved from 28 licensees at the end of 2016 to 100 through January 2018. We expect this number to increase throughout 2018.

## PHMDC Receives Funding to Conduct Overdose Fatality Reviews

Dane County is one of six counties selected by the WI Department of Justice to receive funding, training, and support to develop a drug overdose fatality review program. The program is a partnership between public health and public safety agencies with the goal of sharing data and expertise to identify missed opportunities for prevention and intervention, and develop strategies that address the problem.



### **What Will An Overdose Fatality Review Program Do And What Are the Benefits?**

An overdose fatality review consists of local community organizations providing a thorough, confidential review of resident drug and overdose deaths. In addition, a system will be implemented for data collection, and recommendations will be made for strategies to prevent future deaths. Other expected benefits of the reviews are:

- Promote cooperation and coordination among agencies and community organizations involved in investigations of drug overdose deaths or in providing services to surviving family members;
- Develop recommendations for policies, programs, or laws to prevent overdose deaths and best serve people at risk for an overdose;
- Improve referral services;
- Identify missed opportunities for prevention and gaps in the system, and use lessons learned to inform local and state overdose and opioid misuse prevention strategies;
- Increase outreach to families, service providers, and other audiences about prevention and treatment services.

### **Why Is It Important?**

Fatal and near-fatal drug overdose is a significant public health issue in Dane County and across the nation. Over the last decade, the rate of drug overdose deaths in Dane County

more than doubled, from 9.3 per 100,000 in 2007 to 19.3 per 100,000 in 2016. In 2016, 85 of the 100 drug overdose deaths involved an opioid. Dane County has experienced an increase in overdose death rates for all classes of opioids (prescription, heroin, and synthetic opioids). The rate of heroin-related deaths has increased faster than prescription opioid-related deaths. There has been a 643% increase in the number of heroin related deaths. In 2007, 7 Dane County residents died from a heroin related death, while 52 died in 2016.

PHMDC will serve as the lead agency and build on existing partnerships and initiatives to develop the Overdose Fatality Review Team. Partners so far include: Dane County District Attorney, UW Hospital, Connections Counseling, Dane County Human Services, Dane County Sheriff, Madison Police, Madison Fire, Dane County Medical Examiner, and Dane County EMS, AIDS Resource Center, the Medical College of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. More partners will be added as the program moves forward.

## Encouraging Community Support for Breastfeeding

There are numerous health benefits for moms and babies who breastfeed through their first year. However, racial disparities—due in part to historic trauma and systemic discrimination—exist in Dane County in whether women begin to breastfeed and also in how long they breastfeed.



Our goals in 2017 centered on addressing barriers women face in their decision, ability, and desire to breastfeed. We approached this from a systems lens—addressing the issue from multiple angles—and acknowledged it is especially important to ensure that women of color and those in low-income communities are supported in their decision to breastfeed and have safe, clean places to do it.

Our work toward this goal included:

**Guiding childcare sites to become breastfeeding friendly.** We trained childcare staff and provided guidance in making childcare facilities more breastfeeding friendly by assuring there is a supportive breastfeeding policy and a comfortable place for mothers to breastfeed or pump their milk in privacy. Along with this, we provided training for Madison College students in the Early Childhood and Technical degree programs in order for future childcare providers to feel equipped to support breastfeeding.

**Strengthening our partnerships and providing funding to community-based organizations.** Following an evaluation that indicated the need for supporting culturally and linguistically sensitive breastfeeding in our community, we provided funding to three community-based organizations skilled in this area: African American Breastfeeding Alliance (AABA), Centro Hispano, and Harambee Village. These organizations have long-established relationships with community members and deep levels of community trust,

making them critical partners for PHMDC.

**Encouraging food establishments to create Mother's Rooms.** After learning about the barriers to breastfeeding that many women face when returning to work or being out in the community, our Environmental Health Food Safety Team, who license food establishments, recommended that operators of new or remodeled food service places create Mother's Rooms for breastfeeding and pumping in their facilities. The Food Safety Team has added information in their plan review letters explaining the benefits of having a Mother's Room for both customers and their employees, and is providing assistance to food establishments choosing to do so.

In 2018, we aim to build on our collaboration with community partners to address root causes and inequities facing our community around breastfeeding. We also intend to focus on assisting businesses and workplaces to reduce barriers to breastfeeding.

## Partnering to Improve Black Men's Health

Over the past year, we have had the pleasure of partnering with Aaron Perry, CEO and Founder of the



Rebalanced Life Wellness Association (RLWA) on the shared goal of reducing negative health outcomes for Black men in Dane County. Black men face significant disparities that affect their physical, mental, and sexual health. As examples:

- Black men in Wisconsin are diagnosed with diabetes at twice the rate of White men;
- Black men in the United States are less likely than White men to access mental health services;
- Rates of sexually transmitted infections are much higher in Blacks than in Whites in Wisconsin.

These disparities are rooted in inequitable social conditions, including segregated neighborhoods, fewer educational and economic opportunities, and high rates of incarceration.

One of RLWA's initiatives is the creation of the Men's Health and Education Center co-located in a barbershop, JP's Hair Design. The barbershop is a trusted, comfortable, convenient place where Black men can talk about, among many other things, health challenges.

The Center provides referrals, blood pressure screenings, information on health topics, and opportunities to promote positive health and well-being. PHMDC has provided oral health screening services as well as immunizations at the Center.

In addition, RLWA and PHMDC have co-created a data brief on [The Social & Health Conditions of Black Men](#), meant to gain understanding, stimulate discussion, and support a movement to reduce health disparities.

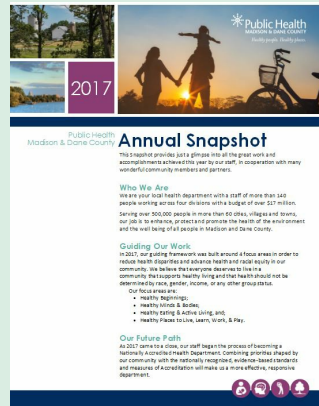
In 2018 we look forward to continuing our partnership with RLWA, by sponsoring a keynote speaker at the Men's Health Conference to address inequities in tobacco use.



## Working Toward Accreditation

PHMDC is joining health departments across the nation in the movement toward pursuing national voluntary accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)!

PHMDC is committed to advancing the quality and performance of our health department so that we can better serve our community and advance health and racial equity. We are building the systems and processes necessary to meet the rigorous, nationally recognized standards and measures, with the goal of becoming accredited in 2021. This will be a long, but worthwhile, journey, so stay tuned for more updates along the way!



## Our Annual Snapshot

We are excited to share with you our Annual Snapshot for a look into some of the highlights and accomplishments of 2017.

The report takes a peek into our daily work and what we did last year to advance our community goals of:

- Healthy Beginnings
- Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies
- Healthy Eating, Active Living
- Healthy Places

Kudos to our dedicated and talented staff and community members and organizations who work together to improve and protect the health of our community.



*Healthy people. Healthy places.*

