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2023-2024 Delaware County Suicide Fatality Review Annual Report

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Overview and Purpose

The Delaware Public Health District (DPHD) is the lead agency tasked with convening and facilitating the Delaware County Suicide & Overdose Fatality Review (SOFR) Team. In 2021, suicide and overdose fatality reviews were formalized in Ohio Revised Code (ORC), thus the Delaware County Commissioners appointed the Delaware County Health Commissioner to establish a hybrid suicide and overdose fatality review committee under the authority of ORC 307.6410. The purpose of the Delaware County SOFR Team is to decrease the incidence of preventable suicide and overdose deaths through review of fatalities conducted by a multidisciplinary team of professionals and subject matter experts. The reviews are used to generate data driven prevention recommendations, which are shared with stakeholders involved with the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Coalition and The Partnership for a Healthy Delaware County.

Objectives and Guiding Principles

- Identify specific barriers and systems issues involved with suicide and overdose deaths.
- Identify risk factors and trends in suicide and overdose deaths for future prevention and intervention efforts.
- Identify strategies for enhancing protective factors.
- Recommend policy, system, and environmental changes and evidence-based strategies for local implementation.
- Promote cooperation, collaboration, and communication between all agencies engaged in suicide and overdose prevention, education, and treatment efforts.

Each SOFR meeting is conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- The goal of the SOFR team is to reduce deaths due to overdose and suicide.
- Overdose and suicide deaths are preventable.
- Substance use is a chronic, treatable disease.
- Use of multi-sector data will inform response strategies.
- Continually evaluate and improve SOFR processes.
- Use of person-first language to create an environment of dignity and hope.
- Respect for ALL.

SOFR Meeting Frequency and Structure

The Delaware County SOFR Team meets on a quarterly basis and held meetings on 9/18/24, 10/23/24, 3/5/25, and 3/12/25 to review the outstanding 2023 suicide and overdose deaths and complete the reviews for the 2024 suicide and overdose deaths.

The Delaware County Suicide & Overdose Fatality Review Team Protocol, including a Team Charter, has been developed and is currently under review with plans to finalize the protocol by April 2025.

Team Members and Partner Agencies

The Delaware County SOFR Team consists of the following key community partners:

- Jen Keagy, Deputy Health Commissioner at Delaware Public Health District
- Dr. Mark Hickman, Physician at Central Ohio Primary Care and Delaware County Coroner

- Charles Carlson, Chief Medicolegal Death Investigator at Delaware County Coroner's Office
- Monica Weaver, Detective at Delaware County Sheriff's Office
- Mike Bolen, Detective Sergeant at Delaware Police Department
- Kristan Warren, Community Impact Director at Delaware-Morrow Mental Health and Recovery Services Board
- Emily Lipp, Epidemiologist at Delaware Public Health District
- Aly Hillier, Community Health Specialist at Delaware Public Health District and representative of the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Rachel Held, Probation Officer at Delaware County Adult Court Services
- Bob Peterson, Investigator at Delaware County Prosecutor's Office
- Jeff Sell, Protective Services Administrator at Delaware County Job & Family Services
- Bridget Robinson, Crisis Engagement Coordinator at HelpLine
- Gabbie Schilling, Hotline Supervisor at HelpLine
- Kim Tuner, Coordinator at Mid-Ohio Traumatic Loss Response Team
- Alicia Cowles, Field Responder at Mid-Ohio Traumatic Loss Response Team

Review Process and Utilization of Specific Data Sources

The suicide and overdose deaths for Delaware County residents are extracted through the ODH Data Warehouse by the DPHD Epidemiologist monthly and are cross-checked with suicide and overdose deaths on file with the Delaware County Coroner's Office. Once the list is finalized, it is sent to the SOFR Team members to review and gather any relevant information prior to the meeting. DPHD staff submit records requests to law enforcement, hospitals, out of jurisdiction coroner's offices, and local health department vital statistics offices as needed. The Delaware County Coroner sends all autopsy and toxicology reports to DPHD. The DPHD maintains a Microsoft TEAMS group for the SOFR that is HIPAA-compliant and secure where all files are uploaded and organized.

The SOFR Team has access to the following data sources: death investigation reports, autopsy reports, coroner/medical examiner reports, toxicology reports, law enforcement incident reports, birth/death certificates, and obituaries. Access to information related to criminal history, probation, criminal history, and social services provided are limited to Delaware County agencies regardless of whether the decedent received services outside of the county. Medical and mental health records have been challenging to obtain due to non-response of the health systems and/or the fact that the decedent could have contact with multiple health systems. The Delaware-Morrow Mental Health and Recovery Services Board only has access to case information for clients that have accessed services within their network of providers; this information is limited to dates of service and reason for service and does not include any detailed visit information.

SOFR Data and Findings

Note: The data shared in this report reflects cases that are complete and closed or otherwise noted. For 2022 deaths, one case was redacted. Data for 2024 is still considered preliminary and may change as Coroners have six months to complete reports. Any additional 2024 suicide death cases that are confirmed and finalized will be reviewed at future meetings.

The following table provides an overview of the total suicide deaths among Delaware County residents from 2023-2024.

Total Suicide Deaths

Total	2023	2024*
Number of deaths	15	22
Number of deaths reviewed by committee	15	22
Number of deaths not reviewed	0	0

The following tables provide a summary of demographic information for the deaths reviewed, including age, sex, race, and ethnicity.

Age of Suicide Deaths

Age Groups	2023 (n)	2023 (%)	2024 (n)	2024 (%)
0-9	0	0%	0	0%
10-14	1	7%	1	5%
15-19	0	0%	1	5%
20-24	1	7%	2	9%
25-34	4	27%	0	0%
35-44	2	13%	1	5%
45-54	3	20%	7	32%
55-64	2	13%	4	18%
65+	2	13%	6	27%

Sex of Suicide Deaths

Sex	2023 (n)	2023 (%)	2024 (n)	2024 (%)
Male	13	87%	16	73%
Female	2	13%	6	27%

Race/Ethnicity by Sex of Suicide Deaths

Race/ Ethnicity by Sex	2023 (n)	2023 (%)	2024 (n)	2024 (%)
American Indian / Alaskan Native	0	0%	0	0%
Male	0	0%	0	0%
Female	0	0%	0	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%
Male	0	0%	0	0%
Female	0	0%	0	0%
Black	0	0%	0	0%
Male	0	0%	0	0%
Female	0	0%	0	0%
Hispanic	2	13%	0	0%
Male	1	7%	0	0%
Female	1	7%	0	0%
White	15	100%	22	100%
Male	13	87%	16	73%
Female	2	13%	6	27%

Identified Trends

- Most deaths (78%) occurred among males.
- 45-54 years old was the most affected age group followed by 65+ and 35-44 years old.
- The age range of deaths was 13-83 years.
- 100% of residents who died in 2023 and 2024 identified as White; 13% of those residents identified as Hispanic.
- The two most common methods of suicide deaths were by firearm (59%) and suffocation (27%).
- Common risk factors – history of depression, history of PTSD, history of drug abuse/alcoholism, chronic pain/chronic illness diagnosis (e.g., cancer), little or no mental health counseling/treatment, preparation/getting affairs into order, previous suicide attempts, easy access to firearms, sexual orientation/gender identity issues, and social isolation.

Recommendations

- Finalize and implement the Delaware County Suicide & Overdose Fatality Review (SOFR) Team Protocol.
- Improve data collection and reporting, with a focus on risk and protective factors.
- Create protective environments by reducing access to lethal means among people at risk of suicide.
- Increase awareness of the national 988 hotline and local 211 hotline, which anyone (especially youth) can call, text, or chat if they are worried about themselves or a loved one who may need crisis support.

- Ensure availability and accessibility of LGBTQ and gender-affirming spaces and activities. Stress the importance of youth having trusted, accepting adults in their life along with supportive peers.
- Increase awareness that cyberbullying can have a significant negative impact on mental health like traditional bullying.
- Increase suicide prevention best practices for high-risk populations such as men and older adults.

Next Steps

The DPHD staff will access the ODH Data Warehouse monthly to pull suicide and overdose deaths, verify the cases with the coroner, and will establish a quarterly schedule for review meetings. New members will be added to the Delaware County SOFR Team as appropriate. As the Delaware County SOFR Team moves forward, recommendations and strategies will be put into action with the overall goal to reduce suicide and overdose deaths among Delaware County residents.