

2025 La Crosse County Overdose Fatality Report

Executive Summary

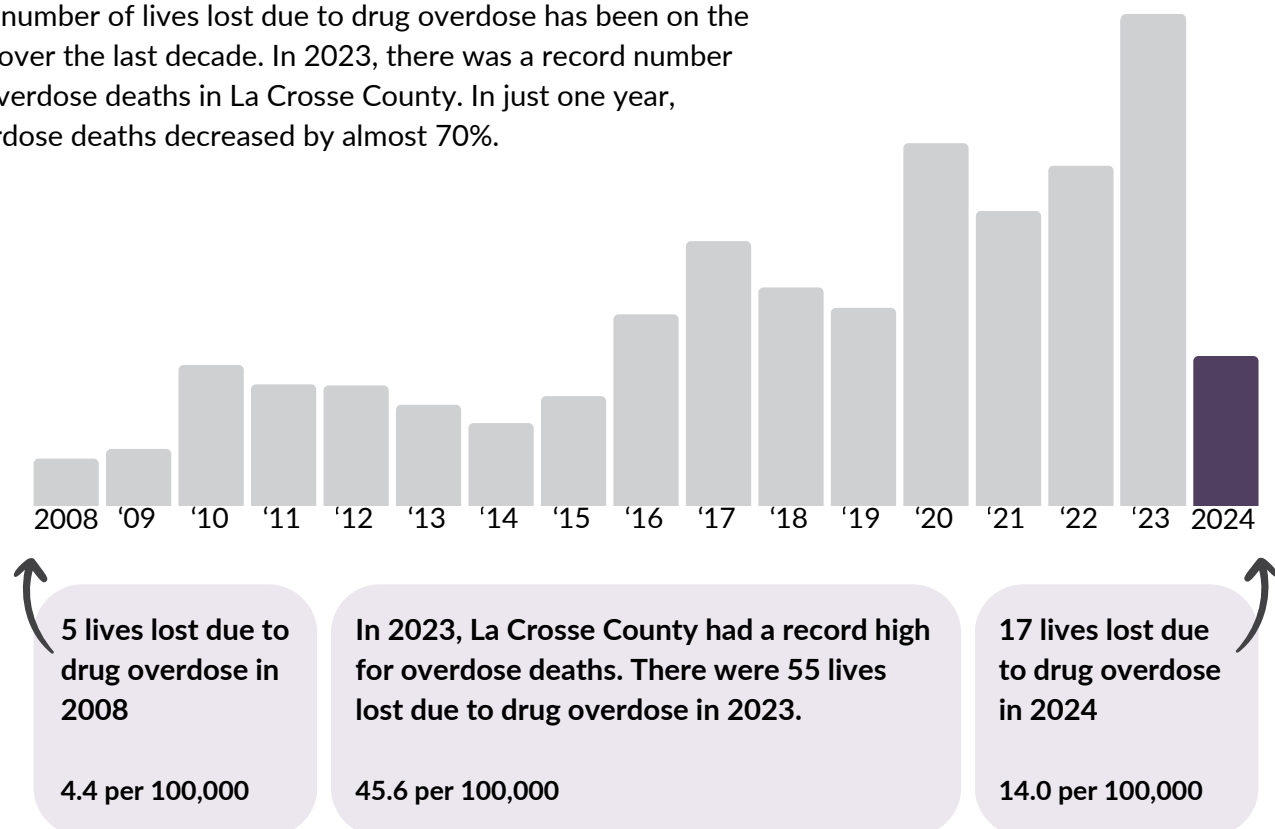
La Crosse County is committed to advancing the shared goal of preventing overdose deaths and building a stronger, more connected community. In 2024, La Crosse County lost 17 community members to drug overdose, a rate of 14.0 per 100,000. Over 75% of deaths involved multiple substances, with fentanyl and other synthetic opioids playing a major role.

To address overdose deaths, our community recommendations focus on the importance of reducing stigma, promoting harm reduction, increasing bystander response, and strengthening community connections. This report provides a brief update related to overdose death data trends, key findings, and progress toward community recommendations. We aim to foster a greater understanding of this issue in order to reduce overdose deaths and support those affected.

Data Trends

How many lives were lost?

The number of lives lost due to drug overdose has been on the rise over the last decade. In 2023, there was a record number of overdose deaths in La Crosse County. In just one year, overdose deaths decreased by almost 70%.



Key Findings

Based on the data and analysis presented in this report, the following are key findings:

- Substance use remains a serious public health concern nationwide, impacting communities like La Crosse County.
- Stimulant use, including methamphetamine and cocaine, continues to be a major concern in La Crosse County. Many overdoses involve both opioids and stimulants, highlighting the importance of community awareness, prevention, and support for people using multiple substances.
- Multiple factors contribute to overdose deaths, requiring a multi-faceted approach to prevention and intervention.
- Access to treatment and harm reduction services is essential to reducing overdose deaths.

76% 

of people who lost their life due to a drug overdose in 2024 had more than one substance in their system at the time of death

100% 

of drug overdose deaths in 2024 involved synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl.

Progress in 2025

In 2025, La Crosse County and our partners worked together to strengthen prevention, expand resources, and reduce stigma. Alliance to HEAL has been working on many activities this past year. Here are some ways we have worked together to address substance use this year:

- Partnered with law enforcement to reduce youth access to alcohol through compliance checks in City of La Crosse and City of Onalaska.
- Educated local leaders and worked with local municipalities to pass hemp-derived THC ordinances in 4 municipalities.
- Completed a community survey to better understand how parents and youth view substance use among teens.
- Launched a county-wide stigma reduction campaign to promote compassion and understanding around drug overdose.
- Shared harm reduction education and resources at community events throughout the year, including Homeless Connect, the Bridging the Gap Treatment Fair, R.E.A.C.H. Center staff, Viterbo nursing students, and with Bangor First Responders.
- Expanded access to Narcan (naloxone) so more people can respond in an emergency.
- Developed a 10-year Opioid Settlement Plan to expand community treatment, support families, and improve justice system outcomes

These efforts demonstrate the community's continued dedication to preventing overdose and building a supportive, responsive network of care.

Conclusion

The overdose crisis affects all of us, and everyone has a role to play in keeping our community safe. While La Crosse County has seen a decrease in overdose deaths, our work is not done. We can all help by learning the signs of overdose, carrying naloxone, supporting friends and neighbors in recovery, addressing challenges like housing and mental health, and sharing accurate information to reduce stigma. By staying vigilant, supporting those affected, and working together with evidence-based strategies, we can prevent future deaths, break the stigma, and build a safer, healthier La Crosse County.