



## Knox County Health Department

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### **International Overdose Awareness Day to Take Place August 31**

*Knoxville, Tenn.* - Each year, thousands of people die from drug overdose. Last year, in Knox County alone, 293 lives were tragically cut short due to an overdose. In an effort to raise awareness of overdoses and reduce the stigma associated with drug-related deaths, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is recognizing International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31.

To further raise awareness, KCHD plans to release the All4Knox Strategic Plan this fall. The intent of this plan is to address the opioid and overall substance misuse epidemic in Knox County. All4Knox is a joint City/County initiative that began at the direction of Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs and former City of Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero in mid-2018, and continues under Mayors Jacobs and Kincannon. Since then, key stakeholders from the city, county, health department, Metro Drug Coalition and members of the community have developed strategies for specific sectors of the community. Those strategies contribute to the overall Strategic Plan. More details regarding this plan will be released soon.

“We knew if we were going to successfully confront this issue, we had to come together as a community, have frank discussions and develop a unified plan to take back the lives taken by this epidemic,” said Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs.

“The impacts of the overdose epidemic are far-reaching and we must all stay the course and work together to reverse this devastating trend,” said City of Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon. “The City of Knoxville will illuminate the pedestrian bridge over Henley Street, in purple, to recognize all those lives lost to drug misuse and to help initiate more meaningful conversations around International Overdose Awareness Day.”

“Sadly, there are many families in our community that know first-hand the bitter reality of losing a loved one to overdose or a drug-related death,” said KCHD Senior Director and Public Health Officer Dr. Martha Buchanan. “Raising awareness and reducing stigma, while helping folks get the care they need, is a mission we remain committed to, especially during times like these.”



In honor of International Overdose Awareness Day, people are encouraged to use the hashtag #OverdoseAware or #EndOverdose on social media photos and posts to help build momentum for the mission. For more information visit, [www.overdoseday.com](http://www.overdoseday.com).

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance misuse, there are a range of support services available, including a new Harm Reduction program at KCHD. This program offers case management and linkage to care services for people at-risk from the consequences of substance misuse. The goal of the program is to provide non-judgmental support, education, and linkage to care services including referrals to harm reduction, substance abuse treatment, mental health and social services. For more information about the program, the public may contact Harm Reduction Navigator Kelli Shoopman at 865-215-5022 or [kelli.shoopman@knoxcounty.org](mailto:kelli.shoopman@knoxcounty.org).

Other resources include:

- **Tennessee REDLINE (1-800-889-9789):** This is a toll-free information and referral line that provides alcohol, drug, and other addiction information and referrals to all citizens of Tennessee at their request.
- **Tennessee Statewide Crisis Line (855-274-7471):** This is a free call system available 24/7 to help anyone experiencing a mental health crisis. All calls are routed to a trained crisis specialist within your area.

### **About Knox County Health Department**

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. As a chief health strategist for the community and with more than 260 employees, KCHD's broad scope of work includes convening partners to improve community health, identifying community health threats, investigating disease outbreaks, conducting extensive outreach and education, preparing for public health emergencies, providing and connecting the public with medical care, enforcing food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

