

Turning the Tide for Grieving Families: Marion County OFR Subcommittee's Efforts to Improve Grief Connections

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January 19, 2023



MARION COUNTY
PUBLIC
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Introduction

- Location – Marion County, IN (urban county, consists of the city of Indianapolis)
- Population – 971,102 (2021)
- Marion County OFR established in November 2020 and is led by Marion County Public Health Department (Epidemiology)
- Number of overdose deaths per year – 500 (on average), 826 in 2021
- Legislation – SOFR legislation in Indiana was signed into law on March 18, 2020, and took effect July 1, 2020
- Number of overdose cases reviewed – 43 as of December 2022
- One fun fact – We have very talented and creative OFR team members (marathon runner, podcaster, dancer, play writer)

Learning Objectives

- Identify opportunities to form subcommittees based on the recommendations generated in the OFR meetings
- Identify strategies to address grief experienced by family members who lost their loved ones to overdose, through OFR subcommittee work

Presentation Outline

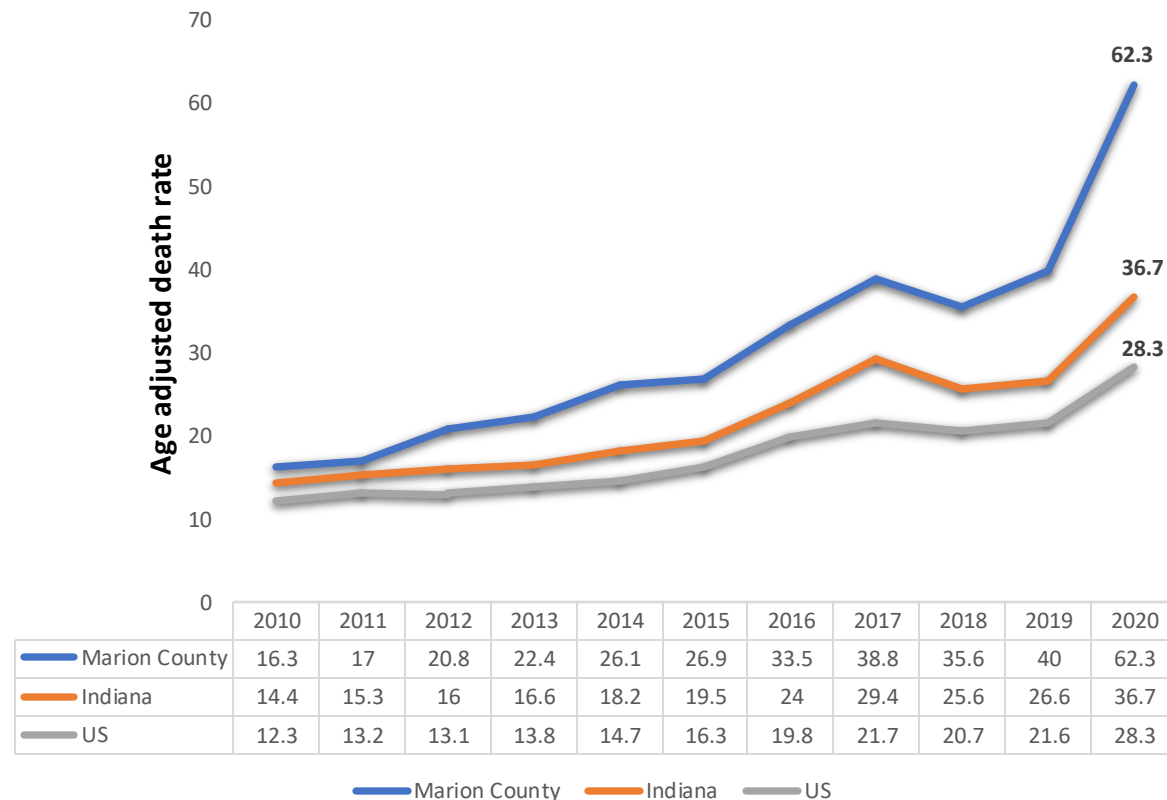
- Overview of Marion County overdose death trends
- Overview of Marion County overdose fatality review team
- Grief support subcommittee
 - Structure and operations
 - Grief resources
 - Social worker and their role
 - Future goals and work in progress
 - Lessons learned
- Q&A

Marion County Overdose Death Trends

Overdose deaths in Marion County rising steadily in the past decade with a sharp rise from 2019 to 2020

- In 2020, Marion County experienced over 600 fatal drug overdoses
- Age-adjusted rate of 62.3 per 100,000 people, as compared to the state rate of 36.7 per 100,000 people in 2020
- Males, Caucasians, and young adults (25 to 34 years of age) are affected the most

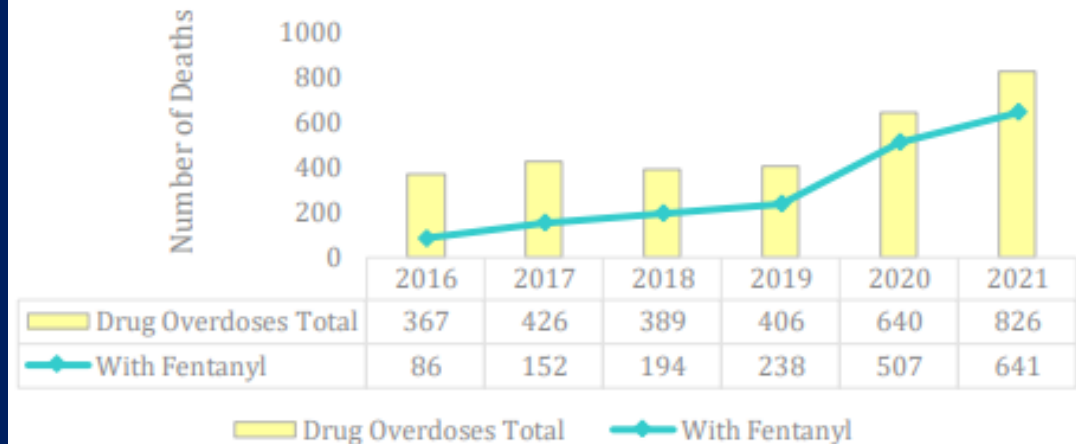
Marion County overdose death rate compared to IN and US



Nearly 80% of the drug overdose deaths involve fentanyl

- Fentanyl-related deaths in Marion County have risen to about 500 each year, accounting for over 80% of all overdose deaths
- In 2021, opiate-related drug intoxication deaths made up 83% of all overdoses in Marion County
- In 6 years, there has been a 125% increase in total overdose deaths and a 645% increase in the number of fentanyl-related drug intoxication deaths

PREVALENCE OF FENTANYL IN DRUG INTOXICATION DEATHS
2016-2021



Marion County Overdose Fatality Review Team

Overview

- Marion County formed a multidisciplinary overdose fatality review (OFR) team in November 2020
- Meets the last Friday of each month virtually
- Discusses two to three cases with accidental overdose deaths in Marion County
- **Funding source:** State-funded Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant
- **Leading Organization:** Marion County Public Health Department, Epidemiology
- **Purpose:** To uncover circumstances around Marion County overdose deaths and recommend changes so that such deaths can be prevented in the future

Goals



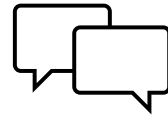
Identify

- Missed opportunities of preventing overdose deaths
- Gaps in system



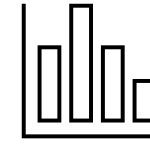
Collaborate

- Build working relationships between local stakeholders



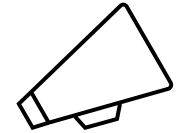
Recommend

- Changes in policies, programs, or law that can help prevent overdose deaths



Inform

- Local and state overdose and opioid misuse prevention strategy based on the findings and data

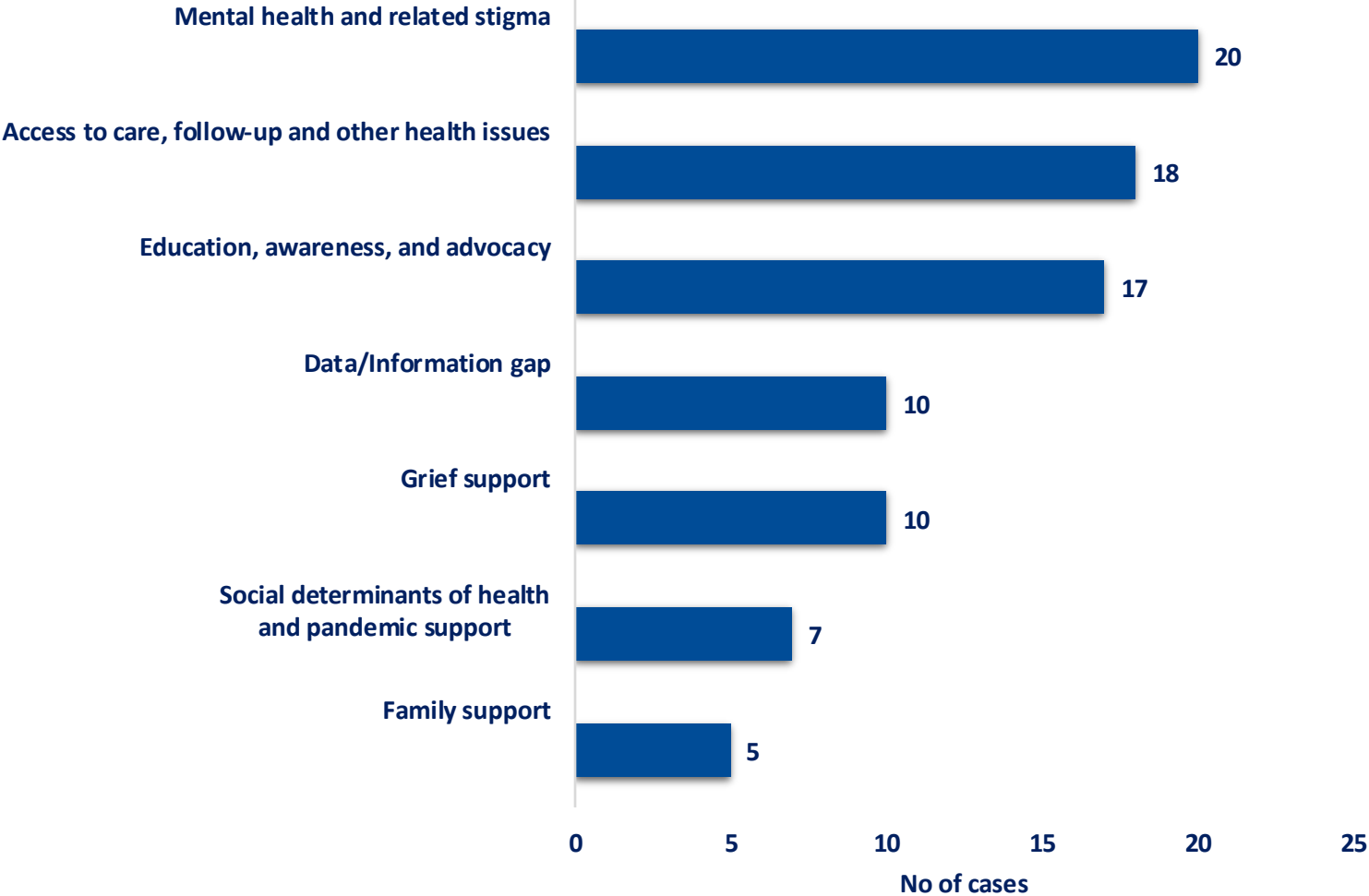


Aware

- Make public aware of the hazards of overdose and available resources

Cases Discussed and Emergent Themes

A total of 43 cases discussed from November 2020 to December 2022. Majority of the decedents reviewed were males (66%), Caucasians (72%), and in the 21–40 age range (64%). At least 75% were either high school graduates or less, and 30% were never married.



Subcommittees

Grief support

- Headed by the chief deputy coroner
- Educating, empathizing, and supporting the grieving family members

Access to care

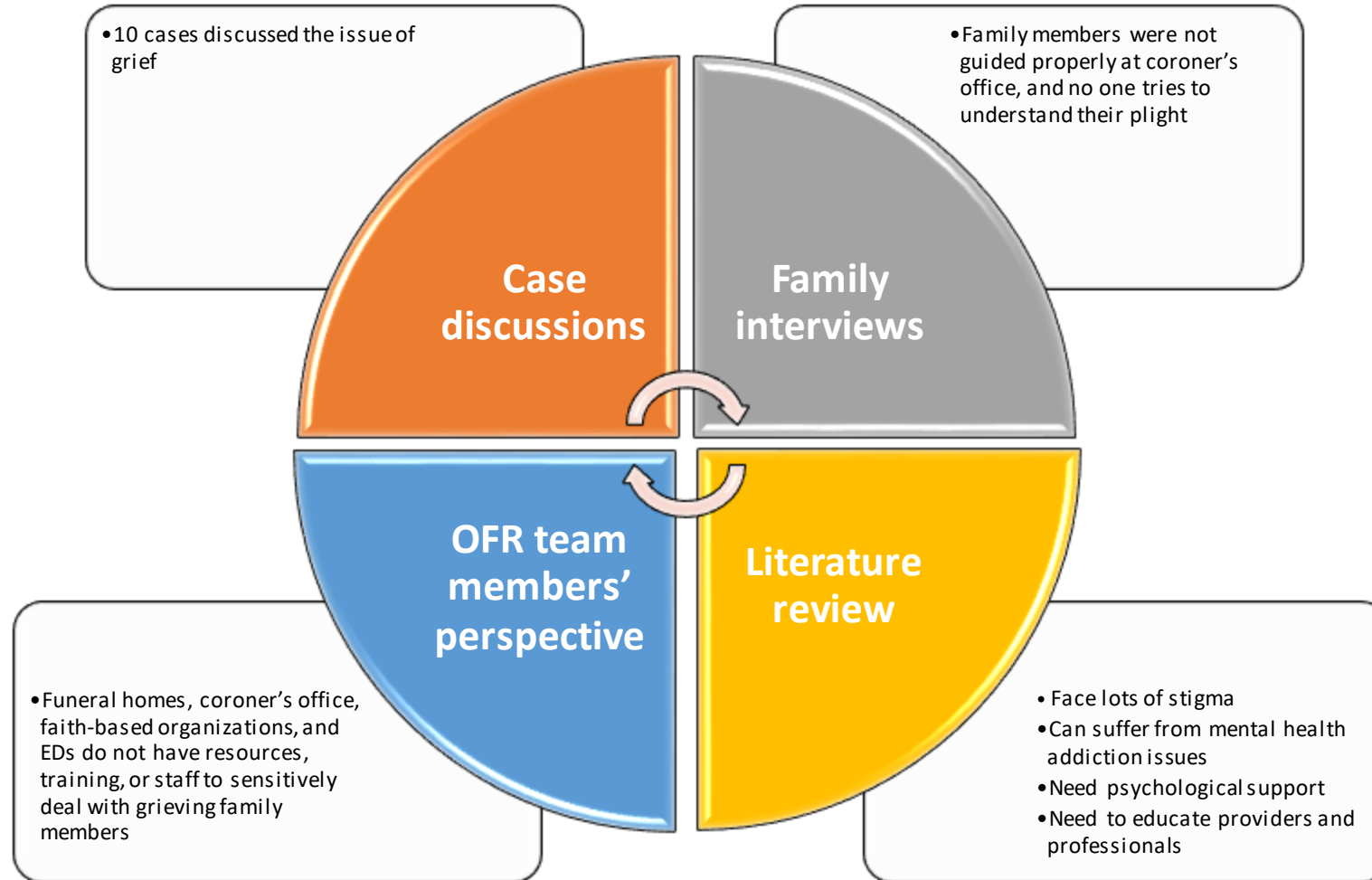
- Headed by IU health faculty
- Reviewing community resources and identifying barriers to access to health care in populations with SUD

Advocacy, outreach, and information

- Headed by social worker from Indiana Addiction Issues Coalition
- Collaborating with IU School of Public Health and spreading SUD awareness among youth and students

Grief Subcommittee

Identification of Grief Support as the Potential Area



Grief Subcommittee—Structure and Operations

- The subcommittee consists of:
 - Social worker from the local health department
 - Crisis specialist from one of the largest hospitals in Marion County
 - Chief Deputy Coroner with the Coroner's Office
- The subcommittee meets quarterly
- Barriers identified:
 - Scarcity of resources at the local level to share with the grieving families
 - People do not know about whatever resources are currently available
 - Lack of training especially at the coroner's office to empathetically deal with the grieving family members

Grief Resources

- Identified and made a list of local resources already present
- Made sure that all the links were working
- Collaborated with organizations that are at the forefront of grief support work
- Prepared a brochure that contains information on:
 - Local online and in-person support groups
 - Local bereavement services and programs
 - National grief resources
 - All relevant links and contacts
- Updated the information on the website

Grief Support Brochure

GRIEF AND LOSS RESOURCES:

OVERDOSE LIFELINE:

<https://www.overdoselifeline.org/lifeline-for-loss/>
Monthly Support Group; Loving someone with substance use disorder comes with a great deal of challenges and heartache. Society judges individuals who misuse substances and the family experiences this stigma and shame too. When we lose a loved one to a drug overdose the ability to grieve is thwarted by this shame, stigma and judgment imposed by society. Overdose Lifeline recognizes the need for an understanding community to provide support from a loss. Lifeline for Loss is a monthly support group for anyone experiencing this loss.

FACEBOOK GROUP: GRASP-Grief Recovery After Substance Passing

COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK: Community Home Health is pleased to offer you many bereavement services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are available for support, initial grief counseling by phone or virtually, and connections to further community resources. We can assist individuals and families. Please see our new listing of virtual support groups below, which are open to all. These groups are safe, confidential, and open to anyone in the community. We really care about you and would like to be a part of your healing journey! Our groups are listed on our web page at www.ecommunity.com/grief. The link to join each group listed next to the group. At the scheduled time the group is to start, they will simply click on the "Join" icon. For more information or bereavement support, call Intouch Bereavement and Grief Support at 317-521-4646 or toll free at 800-404-4852. You can also e-mail us at INTouch@Community.com. This is the contact number to also schedule an individual virtual counseling session with a grief counselor. All of their support is free.

Please see the virtual schedule: Tuesday 1 to 3 p.m. - Loss of Spouse or Significant Other; Weekly widow and widower group; Thursday 6 to 8 p.m. Loss of Parent; Friday 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Loss of an Adult Child

GRIEF SHARE: Grief Share is a 13-week, faith-based, program focused on helping people learn how to understand their grief and move forward again. Grief Share groups meet weekly and consist of three elements: video seminars with experts, support group discussions, and work-based personal study and reflection. Grief Share seminars and support groups are led by people who understand what you are going through and want to help. Find a group in Indiana for meetings from their official website or by calling the phone number listed below. Phone number: 800-395-5755

<https://www.griefshare.org/countries/us/states/in/cities/indianapolis>

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.: The Compassionate Friends offers friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child at any age from any cause. With more than 600 chapters and more than 25 closed Facebook pages, it remains the largest self-help bereavement support organization in the U.S. Local chapters offer monthly, peer-to-peer support meetings. Often special events for bereaved families such as a Walk to Remember, a butterfly release, or lantern launch are planned to allow the families to celebrate the lives of all the children gone too soon. These local chapters also often publish periodic chapter newsletters, maintain a website, or host a Facebook page. Chapters can be found by going to the chapter locator on the national website and simply inputting your zip code. The Compassionate Friends also has an Online Support Community of a variety of closed Facebook pages and also chat

rooms occurring daily.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/chapter/central-indiana-chapter/>. Additional information can be found on the national website at www.compassionatefriends.org. By going to the website, you can request a packet of information to be emailed or mailed to you or a friend. Additionally, there are more than three dozen grief related brochures, and an award-winning, online magazine, We Need Not Walk Alone.

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE

PREVENTION: The organization aims to save lives and bring hope to those who are affected by suicide. The website offers a variety of practical resources and educational materials, as well as in-person and virtual support groups across the country. <https://afsp.org/ive-lost-someone>

BROOKE'S PLACE:

<https://www.brookesplace.org/index.php/brooke-s-place-programs/grief-support-groups>
For children and adolescents, sharing their experience with peers can provide healing for those grieving the death of a loved one. Brooke's Place provides peer support groups for young people ages 3 - 29, who have experienced the death of a significant person.

FERNSIDE CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN: The nation's second oldest children's grief center, remains today a national leader in providing grief support services and outreach and education to the community and families. An affiliate of Hospice of Cincinnati, Fernside services complement Hospice of Cincinnati's comprehensive bereavement program by addressing the unique needs of children. All services are free of charge: <https://www.fernside.org/>

SHARE PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS SUPPORT:

Share is a community for anyone who experiences the tragic death of a baby. They serve parents, grandparents, siblings, and others in the family unit, as well as the professionals who care for grieving families. Their services include bed-side companions, phone support, face-to-face support group meetings, resource packets, private online communities, memorial events, training for caregivers, and so much more. <https://nationalshare.org/>

PURPOSE 4 MY PAIN: Grief and support following violent/overdose death, their services include: RESOURCE HUB - We can recommend a therapist or alternative [healthcare treatment](#). We can also assist with rent, utilities, self-care needs, funeral expenses, and other needs as reviewed by our board. SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP: S.C.A.R.S. (Siblings Changing and Restoring Society.) Siblings provide support to each other to get through tragedy preventing them from experiencing the grief journey alone by pouring love and creating a space for restoration to our ~~SIBLING~~ **WOMEN'S PAIN SUPPORT GROUP:** You don't have to journey alone. Our grief support group meets every 2nd Saturday of the month from 2-4pm. We meet via Zoom every other Thursday at 8pm. <https://www.purpose4mypain.org/>

Contact: DeAndrea Yates-Dycus
Purpose4mypain@yahoo.com
(317) 414-6997

REDEMPTION OUTREACH SERVICES INC.:

Grief and wrap-around support. <http://www.indrosi.org/>
Contact: Demetrica Bruno
Redemption.outreach.1@gmail.com
(317) 418-9267

Marion County Coroner Staff

Marion County Coroner
Leandrea JM. Sloan, MD.

Chief Deputy Coroner
Aifrena T. McGinty, MBA

Deputy Administrator
Marchele Hall

Senior Deputy Coroners
Michele Willis
Pam Young
Jarrett Hiatt

Deputy Coroners
Mallory Malczewski
Jasmine Melendez
Makyla Morris
Dave Graman
Jennifer Suarez
Theodore Veira
Jessica Miller
Rebecca Raco
Amber Jaynes
Lydia Griffiths
Krystal Conzab
Mya Hoffman
Rachel Chambon
Kendra Sumville
Matthew Durthaler
Shaelyn Kelley

Messages from the Coroner of Marion County, Indiana



Information to assist you during this difficult time.
Marion County Coroner's Office
521 W. McCarty Street
Indianapolis, IN 46225
(317) 327-4744
<http://www.IndyGov.org/Coroner>

Source: Marion County Coroner's Office. Information can be found on <https://www.indy.gov/activity/resource-center>.

Sharing Grief Resources

By deputy coroners
at the scene of
death investigation

By social worker
while talking to the
family members
over the phone

Via the coroner's
office website for
general public

Social Worker and Her Role

- Hired in early 2022
- Motive was to connect to and educate the grieving family members
- Calls the family members, empathizes with them, gives information about the resources, answers any questions that they might have
- Follows up with them after a few days
- Response so far has been great
- People open up much more easily with her than any other staff member

Future Goals and Work in Progress

- Measuring and evaluating the impact
- Will be reaching out to the funeral homes with brochures beginning this year
- Collaborating with faith-based organizations and other organizations of color
- Planning to translate the resources into various languages
- Deputies will be undergoing trauma informed care training
- Deputies will also call the families that might be missed by social worker

Lessons Learned

- You cannot reduce the pain/loss a person is going through, but you can offer support
- People need to be heard, and they want to share; we just need to know the right kind of tools
- Timing is the key – connecting with them at various stages of grief is important
- Follow-up is important
- Trauma informed care should be given to every staff member dealing with mental health and substance use cases
- Collaboration with other organizations doing similar work can be very helpful
- Data collection, analysis, and evaluation are important if you want to know the impact of your efforts

**“Though nothing can bring back the hour
of splendor in the grass, of glory in the
flower, we will grieve not, rather find
strength in what remains behind”**

—William Wordsworth

Acknowledgements

- Grief Support Subcommittee
 - Alfie McGinty, Chief Deputy Coroner
 - Toby Miller, Substance Use Outreach Services MCPHD
 - Justin Phillips, Overdose Lifeline
- Marion County OFR Team
- Marion County Coroner's Office
- OD2A Epidemiology Team

Thank you

Contact Information

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