

Overdose Fatality Review Team Charter

ONslow COUNTY

This Charter establishes the Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Team (“OFRT” or “Team”) and describes the background and purpose of the Team; defines the principles under which the Team will operate; assigns membership and responsibilities; and establishes policies and procedures for the operation of the Team.

SECTION 1: Background

Fatal or near-fatal drug and overdose is a significant public health problem in North Carolina. In 2017, 1,953 fatal opioid-involved overdoses occurred in the state. A rate of 19.8 deaths per 100,000 persons compared to the average national rate of 14.6 deaths. To support the development of effective strategies for preventing and responding to overdoses, it is necessary and appropriate to review and analyze all available information related to overdose deaths in a jurisdiction. The creation of a multidisciplinary, multi-agency overdose fatality review team will enable public health authorities to receive information and expert consultation from a wide array of stakeholders while preserving the confidentiality of protected information, including personal health information.

SECTION 2: Scope

2.1 Purpose

The purposes of forming the Onslow County OFRT are to:

- Develop an understanding of the causes and incidence of overdose deaths in the county
- Define effective localized strategies for coordinating services related to overdose prevention
- Recommend changes to law, policy, and practice that relate to drug overdoses
- Inform public health and public safety of emerging trends in overdose events
- Promote cooperation and coordination among agencies that investigate drug overdose deaths and provide services to families
- Develop plans for enhancing efforts of organizations that partner in local OFRs

2.2 Objectives

To fulfill the purposes of the Onslow County OFRT, the Team will:

- Establish policies and procedures for pooling all available information on overdose decedents from state and local government agencies, law enforcement agencies, private entities, etc. that maintain confidentiality
- Conduct multidisciplinary, multi-agency reviews of available information about a decedent
- Identify points of contact between deceased individuals and healthcare, social services, criminal justice, and other systems
- Identify the specific factors that put individuals at risk for drug overdose
- Improve coordination and collaboration between member agencies/entities
- Make recommendations to local authorities for changes to statute, regulation or agency policies and procedures to further the development of overdose prevention initiatives

SECTION 3: Confidentiality

All team proceedings are strictly confidential.

Much of the information provided to and reviewed by the OFRT, including investigative records of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, is confidential, privileged and protected from or limited in disclosure under state and federal laws and regulations.

In general, team members and staff shall not disclose any confidential information reviewed by the OFRT or the content of OFRT deliberations unless required to do so by law; in the performance of official duties as an employee of a state or local agency; as specifically authorized by action of the team recorded in the notes of the meeting.

All Team members and other individuals granted access to confidential or privileged information will be required to sign the Onslow County OFRT Confidentiality Agreement (see in Appendix), which will be kept on file at the Onslow County Health Department. No review of protected information shall occur without all attendees having signed the Confidentiality Agreement.

SECTION 4: Membership

Team membership may include the following agencies:

- Health Department

- Prosecuting Attorney
- Medical Examiner
- Local Hospital
- Law Enforcement
- Mental Health Agency
- Emergency Medical Services
- Behavioral Health Services
- Health care professional specializing in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of substance use disorders
- Jail or local detention center
- Parole, Probation, and Community Corrections
- Department of Social Services
- Peer Recovery/ Peer Support
- Any other individual necessary for the work of the local team, recommended by the local team and appointed by the county health officer

Teams may also request the presence of an individual at a meeting that has information relevant to the team’s purpose, but that individual must sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

A list of current Team members, including full name, organizational affiliation, position and contact information, is included as Appendix A.

SECTION 5: Procedure

5.1 Meetings

The Onslow County OFRT will hold meetings quarterly.

Meetings of the Onslow County OFRT are closed to the public. The Team may hold a public meeting; however, it cannot contain any information that discloses:

- The name of a deceased individual, his or her family members, caretakers, or guardians
- The name of an individual convicted of a crime that caused a death or near fatality
- Any agency involved with the deceased individual or an individual convicted of a crime that caused a death or near fatality

5.2 Records

The Coordinator will ensure that minutes are recorded at each meeting.

Minutes should record, at a minimum:

- Information about each case that was reviewed, including:
 - Age, sex, and race of the deceased
 - Substances involved in death
 - Time spent reviewing the case
 - Systems with which the deceased interacted
 - Key observations from the review
- List of meeting attendees
- Observation and recommendation tracking chart

5.3 Reports

Fatality Review Reports are done on an annual basis, and may include:

- Discussion of individual cases
- Steps taken to improve coordination of services and investigations
- Steps taken to implement changes recommended by the local team within member agencies
- Recommendations on needed changes to state and local laws, policies, or practices

Confidentiality Agreement

ONslow COUNTY OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

The undersigned members understand and acknowledge that the Overdose Fatality Review Team (OFRT) reviews highly sensitive case information regarding drug overdose fatality. Members bring their diversity of background and expertise to the OFRT to review records of cases of overdose fatalities, identify system problems, recommend preventive action, make changes to prevent future fatalities, and to identify and address gaps in community services.

Through their signatures, the undersigned acknowledge and agree that the privacy of the individuals and their families should be strictly maintained. This agreement specifically includes that:

1. Information learned through the team is confidential, and may not be shared outside the team meetings, except as specified;
2. Information may only be shared by an OFRT member with the member's home agency on a need-to-know basis regarding a current client, referred case, or a system improvement;
3. If OFRT members keep personal notes or files which contain confidential information, such notes are protected by confidentiality rules and must be safeguarded;
4. A breach of confidentiality is a misdemeanor and civil offense, punishable by fine and/ or subject to lawsuit; further, an invited participant who receives client information during the OFRT meeting and fails to comply with the rules of confidentiality shall be denied further participation in team reviews, and shall be dismissed from the OFRT.

The undersigned agrees to abide by the terms of this confidentiality policy.

Name:

Agency:

Signature:

Date:

Affiliation Agreement

ONslow COUNTY OVERDOSE FATALITY REVIEW PROGRAM

Agency: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: North Carolina Zip: _____

The Onslow County Health Department and _____ (agency) are entering into an agreement on _____ (date) for the Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Program. This is a voluntary program in which Onslow County stakeholders will come together throughout 2020-2022 in a program to examine data regarding drug overdose in Onslow County.

1. _____ (agency) will provide one staff to be the main contact for the Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Program. An alternate is permissible. This person will receive the confidential information on the decedents and be responsible for the following:

- a) Receiving confidential information.
- b) Check the clinical system and electronic health records of the agency to see if the decedent had engaged at any point
 - If the agency has information on the decedent, a form will be filled out and brought to the meeting
 - If the agency does **not** have information on the decedent, they can either respond that there was no engagement and not come to the meeting or come to the meeting to provide general information

2. _____ (agency) understands that this information is for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the overdose fatalities in Onslow County. The information is confidential. The Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Program will not be responsible for any clinical documents. The Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Program will only collect the de-identified data.

3. _____ (agency) CEO or designee and the main contact person are to sign a confidentiality agreement for the 2020-2022 term of the program. The designated contact person will sign a confidentiality agreement at every meeting attended.

4. Designated Agency Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

5. Alternate Designated Agency Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Agency Signature

Sophia Hayes, Project Coordinator
Onslow County Overdose Fatality Review Team

Date

Date