

**POLK COUNTY WELLNESS COALITION**  
**OPIOID TASKFORCE**  
**Update and Call to Action**  
**2017-2018**

While prescription opioids serve an invaluable role for the treatment of cancer and chronic pain, their overuse for acute and chronic non-cancer pain as well as the increasing availability of heroin and illicit fentanyl, have contributed to the highest rates of overdose and opioid addiction not only in Polk County but also in U.S. history. Evidenced-based strategies must be included in the solutions to address these issues and to promote high-quality care for those with pain. This report is a response to that need. This report offers information and a path forward for Polk County stakeholders and residents who are committed to addressing injuries and deaths associated with opioids and other substance abuse in Polk County.

The creation of the Polk County Opioid Taskforce, (2016) a sub-group of the Polk County Wellness Committee (PCWC), resulted from several local factors, however, perhaps the most salient factor was upon learning that, for the first time in history, *deaths from drug overdoses surpassed deaths from traffic crashes*. The opioid crisis affects all of us, not just those caught in its grip. It has destroyed lives, ripped families apart, weakened our communities, and prevented us from taking full advantage of our greatest resource—our people. We can't afford to lose a single person. There is no single solution to this grave public health threat, but we know where to start. *“This isn't just a law enforcement issue, a public health issue, a courts issue, treatment provider issue or just a community issue. This is all of our issue and we need everyone's help to combat it”* (Sheriff James Tadman, 2019). Thus, using best practice strategies, The Polk County Wellness Coalition Opioid Taskforce is engaging the whole Polk County community to find and implement local solutions.

- We must acknowledge that opioid addiction is a disease that requires comprehensive treatment. Closing the path to addiction means addressing the over-prescription of legal opioids and the proliferation of illegal opioids such as heroin and drugs laced with fentanyl.
- We must build a comprehensive public health response so that families, first responders, and community groups have the support necessary to turn the tide on the epidemic, and in the meantime, they do not have to single-handedly bear the impossible economic and emotional burdens.
- We must work collaboratively across all community sectors to create a community of resilience to equip the population with tools and experiences to handle life's stressors with positive coping mechanisms, preventing chronic diseases before they begin.

This report contains:

- ◆ Polk County Wellness Coalition Opioid Taskforce Community Action Plan
- ◆ Reported, currently available data from Local, State and Federal sources
- ◆ Changes implemented and reported by stakeholder to reduce opioid misuse and death
- ◆ Polk County Rate of opioid prescriptions per 1,000 residents 2015-2017 in relation to Heroin Meth use in Polk County during same time period.
- ◆ Polk County Wellness Coalition Opioid Taskforce Infographic
- ◆ Polk County Wellness Coalition Opioid Taskforce current known partners
- ◆ Recommendations for best practice strategies that will most effectively combat this crisis

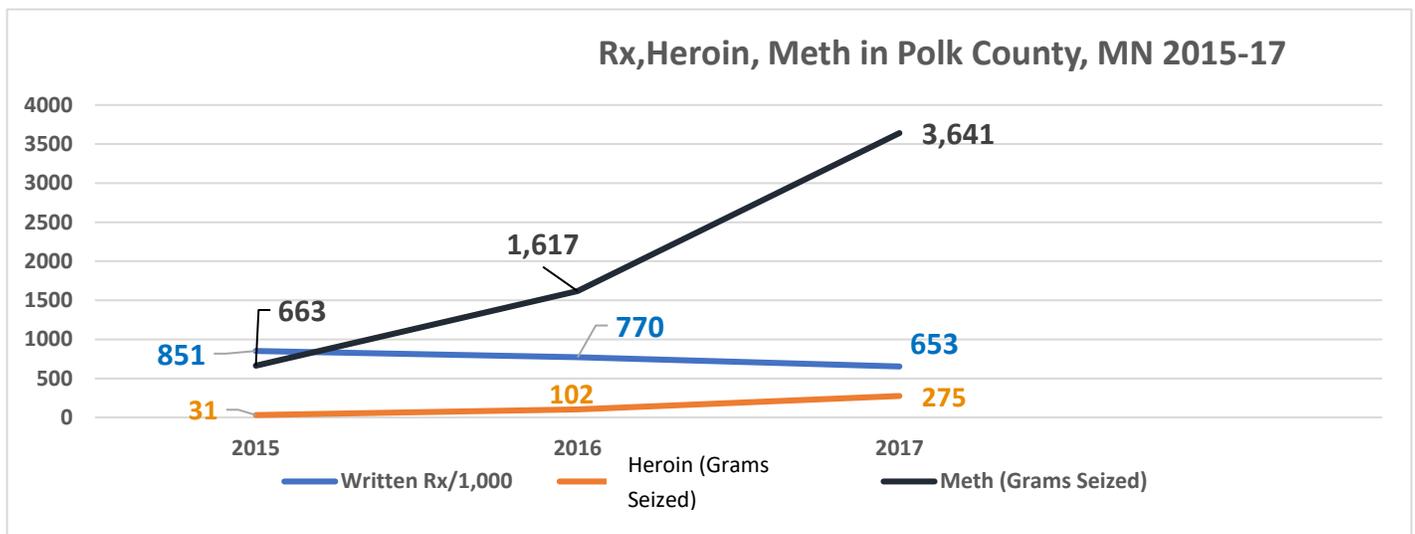
## **Polk County Wellness Coalition Opioid Taskforce Partners**

- Polk County Public Health
- Polk County Environmental Services
- Polk County Social Services
- Polk County Sheriff's Office
- Polk County Attorney's Office
- Polk County District Court
- Healthier Fosston
- UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences
- EGF PD
- Crookston PD
- Minnesota State Highway Patrol
- Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force
- Tri-County Community Corrections
- Riverview Health/Recovery
- Essentia Health Fosston
- Altru Clinic – Crookston
- Northwestern Mental Health Center
- Climax School District
- Fertile School District
- WEM School District
- Crookston School District
- EGF School District
- Fisher School District
- Fosston School District
- Tri Valley Opportunity Council
- Crookston National Guard
- Minnesota Prevention Resource—Region 1
- City of Crookston
- City of Fertile
- City of Fosston
- University of Minnesota Crookston
- University of Minnesota Extension Service
- Wonderful Life Foods
- Contact Level 5 Services
- Ultima Bank-Fosston
- Fosston Chiropractic Center
- Biermaier Chiropractic Center
- Nord's Pharmacy
- Trinity Lutheran Church
- Northwest Regional Development Center
- Dean Vikan
- Carol Greg

*\*This report is not intended to be all inclusive of the work in Polk County, but rather a summary of the ongoing efforts made aware to Polk County Public Health.*

## CALL TO ACTION/Next Steps

- Continue the work of the PCWC Opioid Taskforce as per community action plan.
- In addition:
  - Reduce barriers as identified by justice system and other partners.
    - Lack of Quality Treatment Centers-in close proximity to provide care for individuals with dual diagnosis (mental and chemical). *i.e. during court- person may agree to treatment-opportunity, but w/2-week delay-something happens, reoffend or missed opportunity*
    - Lack of Housing-to stabilize and support community members in their recovery process
    - Lack of Employment Opportunities-that will hire convicted felons
    - Lack of Transportation-and ability to obtain a driver's license to get to work, treatment, support meetings and for daily living needs
  - Harm Reduction
    - Community access to Naloxone
    - Safe syringe services (Needle Exchange)
  - Decrease Infectious Diseases resulting from substance use
  - Collect and use local data as per Community Action Plan, etc. in further planning including Results Based Accountability (RBA)
  - Increase Resilience of Community Members to deal with stressors of life and mitigate toxic childhood stress. *As the table below indicates, our current opioid crisis is now being overshadowed by a new crisis.* We must position our policies, systems and the environment of our communities and individuals to respond to stressors.



*Table above details the number of opioid prescriptions written per 1,000 residents for Polk County in 2015-2017. It should be noted that there was a decrease of 23% in the number of prescriptions written in Polk County from 2015-2017. This represents a significant reduction in the number of prescriptions written (MN Prescription Monitoring Program). Unfortunately, as noted in the table, the use of meth has increased significantly and represents a serious public health concern that must be addressed as we move forward with our work.*