

Expanding Partnerships to Address Overdoses: An Update from the Madison SPI

The Madison, Wisconsin, SPI formally implemented their Madison Addiction Recovery Initiative (MARI) on September 1, 2017. The Madison SPI created MARI in response to the rise in opioid-related overdoses and fatalities in Madison. MARI also intends to reduce the negative consequences that may result from arrest and incarceration for low-level drug-related offenses, such as difficulty obtaining services, housing, and employment. MARI is a collaborative effort between the Madison Police Department (MPD), Public Health Madison and Dane County, Safe Communities of Madison-Dane County, the Dane County Department of Human Services, and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

The program refers individuals who overdose or commit low-level drug-related offenses to the MARI Assessment Hub for medication-assisted and behavioral drug treatment as an alternative to jail. MARI additionally connects participants to recovery coaches through the MARI Assessment Hub. If MARI participants successfully complete six months of treatment, MPD does not file charges for the initial incident. As of January 2019, MPD referred 115 eligible individuals for assessment through MARI. Of those, 73 individuals contacted the MARI Assessment Hub and began treatment. In January 2019, the MARI program had a 25 percent graduation rate of all eligible individuals referred for participation, with 29 individuals having successfully completed six months of participation in MARI and 24 individuals continuing to participate in treatment.

Since the inception of the MARI program, the Madison SPI expanded their work to reduce and prevent harm related to opioid use. In January 2019, MPD partnered with the Dane County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) to allow DCSO deputies to make referrals to the MARI program along with MPD officers. Additionally, MPD has created a Community Outreach initiative, which pairs an MPD officer with a member of the MARI Assessment Hub to reach out to individuals identified through MARI who have not scheduled a treatment assessment. The Madison SPI uses these in-person visits to encourage individuals to contact the MARI Assessment Hub, offer resources and treatment options, and provide training on and distribution of naloxone. The Madison SPI has also begun to partner with the Madison-area ED2 Recovery program, which connects individuals who have overdosed to recovery coaches while they are still in the emergency room. The partnership with ED2 Recovery will create more in-depth involvement with individuals who have experienced an overdose. The Madison SPI hopes this involvement will encourage them to remain participants in MARI and successfully graduate. Members of the MARI team regularly participate in outreach efforts, including presenting at local conferences on addressing the opioid crisis, appearing in the media, and collaborating with local organizations to provide training and education on naloxone and opiate use.

The Madison SPI will continue to encourage MARI participation and collaborate with local service agencies to promote treatment and reduce overdoses. For more information on the MARI program, refer to the [Madison SPI site page](#).