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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex County Health Department urges community support as drug overdoses increase.

Elizabethtown, NY. The Essex County Health Department (ECHD) has received reports of seven recent overdoses - one fatal and six non-fatal - resulting from the misuse of both prescription and illicit drugs since November 1, 2023. To date in 2023, we have lost seven people to fatal drug overdoses in Essex County. There have been at least thirty non-fatal reported overdoses as well.

The recent increase in overdose reports received by the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) in just twenty days is very concerning," stressed Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the Essex County Health Department (ECHD). "Drug overdoses do not discriminate; they affect people of all races, classes, and locations. As the holiday season is upon us, it is important to support persons with substance use disorder and everyone living with conditions that impacts their mental health. One way to do this is to connect individuals with the local resources available to them. Let's all do our part in helping those in need during this sometimes difficult and stressful season." expressed Beers.

"Our department is active in prioritizing prevention efforts and local responses to the abuse of prescription (Rx), heroin, and other drugs in Essex County. We gather community partners and co-chair the Essex County Heroin and Other Prevention Coalition (known as ECHO)." stated Beers. ECHD notified the ECHO members of the recent increase in overdoses and they want the community to know:

Doug Meyer, Director of Services for Mental Health Association in Essex County, Inc. said "You are not alone and your life matters. MHA is focused on the full range of solutions needed to address addiction and mental health including, for the first time, a local 988 crisis lifeline. Remember, these folks are your sons, daughters, parents, cousins, and neighbors."



DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH PROMOTION & PLANNING- Jessica Darney Buehler, MPH

Kristy Sprague, District Attorney for Essex County expressed, "The sharp increase in drug overdoses is heartbreaking. We can shift the way society thinks about addiction while identifying actions that individuals and communities can take to prevent and treat these conditions."

Dave Reynolds, Essex County Sheriff stated, "We've worked very hard to streamline our current reporting systems and get more accurate and timely information out on this constantly evolving issue. Better data helps us respond more effectively and helps our community-based organizations target the areas with the most need."

"Mental health and substance use disorders are a public health concern in Essex County. We at ECHD – along with our many essential partners – are committed to building support within our communities and connecting people with the tools and resources they need and deserve," stressed Jessica Darney Buehler, ECHD's Director of Health Planning and Promotion.

ECHO agencies have programs and resources in place to help:

- Dial 988 – 24hrs a day – mental health lifeline
- Narcan Kit Request, training, and refills
- Detox Centers, Recovery Support
- Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

Learn more about those supports on our website: <https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/echo/>

Learn more about how ECHD and our partner organizations are advancing solutions:

<https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/community-health-assessment/>

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