SUBSTANCE USE ACTION COALITION OF WAUKESHA COUNTY

2026

VISION

The Waukesha County Substance Use Action Coalition (SUAC) envisions a healthy, connected community where individuals are empowered to make safe choices around substance use, recovery is supported, and everyone can access the care and support they need to thrive.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Waukesha County SUAC is to save lives and strengthen community health by addressing substance use together through collaboration, data driven strategies, and community led action.



The Substance Use Action Coalition meets quarterly, bringing members together through two virtual meetings and two in-person gatherings annually.

MISSION

SUAC supports Waukesha County residents by mobilizing community partners to reduce the harms of substance use, increase access to treatment, and support recovery through education, collaboration, and bold action.

(Formerly known as the Heroin Task Force. We're working on an updated website.)

www.suacofwc.org

WEBSITE

YOUTUBE

ABOUT US

The Waukesha Substance Use Action Coalition is dedicated to a coordinated and comprehensive approach that builds an alliance of community partners and creates conditions that reduce the impact of substance use. HTF engages stakeholders across sectors to break the cycle of substance use through community action, shared responsibility, and hope, informed by data and insights from the county's Overdose Fatality Review.

Over the past several years, SUAC has worked collaboratively across Waukesha County with a shared vision to reduce the impact of the opioid epidemic through a collective community approach. The task force advances Overdose Fatality Review recommendations by translating findings into action — supporting prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and system improvements that help prevent future overdose deaths.

Action Teams

Action teams are dedicated to addressing challenges that span across different sectors and partners. Their primary goal is to tackle projects that have cross-sector implications. Explore the four action teams and how their work is driving impact.

STIGMA REDUCTION

Reduce stigma associated with drug and alcohol use and substance use disorder.

What the Team Does

- Promotes stigma-reduction strategies across key sectors, including healthcare, law enforcement, and education
- Guides speakers and presenters to use compassionate, person-first language when discussing substance use disorder
- Encourages understanding and empathy for people impacted by substance use and addiction

Action Team Highlights

- Developed a stigma-reduction Code of Ethics for HTF guest speakers
- Engaged law enforcement leaders in conversations about person-first language
- Hosted national stigma reduction experts
- Conducted a partner survey to assess stigma awareness and reduction strategies
- Launched a HTF LinkedIn page to advocate for stigma reduction and share educational content

LINKEDIN

SUPPORT & RECOVERY

Provide recovery support for both individuals and their families battling substance use disorder.

What the Team Does

- Supports individuals during reentry and transition while incarcerated and after release
- Works to ensure people with substance use disorder have access to life skills training and recovery supports
- Continues to strengthen access to life-saving harm reduction strategies

Action Team Highlights

- Developed a Community Resource Guide in collaboration with community partners
- Conducted focus groups with individuals in recovery to better understand needs and gaps in services
- Partnered with Waukesha County HHS leadership to support recovery-focused efforts within the jail system
- Support local recovery events and vigils

The fight against opioid misuse in Waukesha County and Wisconsin overall shows promising progress, but we still need your help!



CHIP SUBSTANCE USE

Identifying opportunities through partnership to support system-level change.

What the Team Does

- This action team works with Waukesha County Public Health as part of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to address substance use and the social factors that affect health
- Works to reduce opioid-related deaths among Waukesha County residents ages 18–44 by expanding access to life-saving interventions
- Examines and advances access to stable housing for individuals living with substance use disorder
- Strengthens cross-sector partnerships to address substance use, housing instability, and recovery together

Action Team Highlights

- Created an interactive simulation ***(Choose Your Own Adventure: Advancing Partnerships at the Intersection of Housing & Substance Use)*** to build empathy and systems understanding
- Supported funding for a Peer Specialist position at WCS, initially funded by CHIP and extended through 2026
- Contributed ongoing content to the SUAC LinkedIn page to support stigma reduction

METRICS & MEASUREMENT

Create a culture of data-driven decision-making within the HTF and improve the accuracy, transparency, and effectiveness of substance use and overdose prevention initiatives.



Action Team Highlights

- Launched a survey to better understand the needs of individuals currently using substances and those in recovery
- Engaged the impacted community to ensure resources, information, and interventions are responsive and relevant
- Identifying which resources are being used, which are needed, and where gaps exist
- Generating a unique dataset to inform future service development and resource placement decisions
- Anticipated findings in 2026, with potential to guide planning and system-level improvements

What the Team Does

- Develop and deliver SUAC training on data literacy, data governance, privacy, and success metrics
- Gather input to define shared metrics aligned with SUAC priorities and establish processes for baseline, ongoing, and accessible data
- Support action teams with guidance, resources, and data tools to identify priority populations, implement strategies, and track progress
- Build a data-driven culture to improve accuracy, transparency, and effectiveness of prevention efforts

Our action teams actively seek partnerships, support, and advocacy to advance this work.



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