



Department of Justice

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U.S. Attorney's Office teams up with law enforcement and other community partners to recognize overdose victims

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA – Monongalia County Health Department is one of five cities in the Northern District of West Virginia to observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week by placing 50 purple flags outside its headquarters to commemorate those who have lost their lives because of drug use.

West Virginia remains No. 1 in overdose deaths per capita in the United States, according to data collected from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the 32 counties in the Northern District of West Virginia, an average of 300 people dies each year of drug overdoses.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is partnering with law enforcement and others in the community in the Northern District of West Virginia to recognize overdose victims as a part of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

“Substance abuse disorder is rampant in our district and across the state, and in the past year, has been compounded by the pandemic and the isolation, job loss, and uncertainty that came with it. The victims of drug overdoses are someone's loved ones,” said Randolph J. Bernard, Acting U.S. Attorney, Northern District of West Virginia. “We want to recognize these tremendous losses as we continue to work to get these illegal substances off the streets.”

The U.S. Attorney's Office will be placing purple flags, one for each death in the Northern District of West Virginia, in several locations across the District to recognize the hundreds of sons, daughters, parents, grandchildren and friends who lost their lives last year because of illegal drug sales.

Flags will be placed with our partners in:

- Wheeling — at Wheeling's Heritage Port, in partnership with the City of Wheeling.

- Morgantown — at Monongalia County Health Department in partnership with the Monongalia County Quick Response Team (QRT), a multi-agency group that works to alleviate opioid use and get individuals connected to services and treatment.
- Martinsburg — at the Martinsburg Police Department in partnership with Martinsburg Police
- Bridgeport — at the Bridgeport Police Department in partnership with the Bridgeport Police
- Elkins — at the Elkins City Building in partnership with the City of Elkins.

“We’re excited to place these flags at Monongalia County Health Department to help illustrate the toll of substance use disorder,” said Brittany Irick, MCHD grant writer and coordinator of the Monongalia County QRT. “While we’re happy with the progress the QRT has made in the past two years, we know we still have work to do.

“In the meantime, we want to honor those who have lost their lives because of this disease.”

The week, which is celebrating its 40th year this year, began on Sunday, April 18 and runs through Saturday. The theme is “Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.” For more information on the week, go to <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/national-crime-victims-rights-week/overview>.

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