



# NEWS

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**Contact:** John Corcoran, 610-278-3061

[jcorcora@montcopa.org](mailto:jcorcora@montcopa.org)



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### **Montgomery County Receives \$1 Million Grant to Combat Drug Overdoses**

**Norristown, PA (October 25, 2018)** - The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety has received a \$1 million grant to develop an Emergency Medical Overdose Surveillance System (EMODSS) to develop improved strategies for combatting the opioid overdose epidemic and other drug related problems that have plagued the county, the region and the nation for the past several years.

The three-year grant was awarded by the federal Office of Justice Programs to form a multi-disciplinary group with representatives from numerous law enforcement, health and social services agencies to develop a plan for collecting data in one cloud-based system that all agencies can access and use in combating the drug overdose epidemic. The grant covers the cost of hiring a project manager, data analyst and technician to implement and run the system.

“We are proud of the inroads we have made so far in fighting the opioid epidemic here in Montgomery County,” said Dr. Val Arkoosh, Chair, Montgomery County Commissioners. “This grant gives us a valuable data-driven tool that will help save lives and combat the stigma surrounding substance use disorder.”

Montgomery County has experienced a 40 percent rise in opioid overdose deaths from 2015 to 2017. There were 736 confirmed cases of drug overdoses in Montgomery County in 2017 and 245 of them were fatal, according to the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety. The number of fatalities in 2017 was down slightly from 249 in 2016 and those numbers continue to trend in the right direction this year. There were 114 overdose deaths in the first six months of 2018 compared to 127 deaths in the first half of 2017.

EMODSS will compile data about drug use patterns of both non-fatal and fatal overdose victims in real-time and enable the immediate analysis of all the available data without having to wait months or longer for reports to become available. The ability to more quickly identify communities and individuals at greatest risk for drug misuse, abuse and overdose will help the County’s Opiate Response Task Force to brainstorm, plan and implement data-driven responses to further reduce drug overdose deaths.

Partners in the project include the Montgomery County Commissioner’s Office, Solicitor’s Office, District Attorney’s Office, County Detectives, Coroner’s Office, Public Health Office, Drug and Alcohol Office, Mental Health Office, Managed Care Solutions Office, Performance and Planning Office and the County Overdose Taskforce, the Philadelphia-Camden High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.