Poisoning is a public health problem affecting the health & safety of our community.

- Poisoning has increased for the last ten years and has surpassed motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of injury death. Between 2005 and 2009, there were 282 deaths.

- Between 2006 and 2010, there were almost 7000 people that went to the hospital (including emergency department visits) with poisoning.

- The majority of all poisonings (deaths - 85%; unintentional poisoning hospitalizations* 67%) are due to prescription, over-the-counter, and illicit drugs.

- For those that end up in hospital, the drugs of biggest concern are in the opiate and hallucinogen group, in particular opiate pain medications, esp. Oxycontin, Vicodin & morphine. **Opiates are overprescribed, easily available, and can result in dependence & abuse or can lead to use of other drugs.**

- There has been a dramatic increase in opiate hospitalizations, including emergency department visits, over the past 10 years.

- Drug poisoning/overdoses (resulting in death, hospital admissions or police arrests) are county-wide.

[Data Source: Public Health Madison & Dane County]
• There is an alarming increase in Madison EMS calls, where Narcan injections were given (mostly used to reverse opiate overdose), especially among 20-29 year olds. [Data source: Madison Fire & EMS]

• Police reports of drug overdoses and deaths show an increase in the past 5 years, especially with heroin. According to 2011 data, as of September 17th, heroin overdoses have already more than doubled those in 2009. [Data source: Dane County Narcotics & Gang Task Force]

• Two thirds of the drug overdose arrests, within the opiate & hallucinogen drug group, are due to heroin (198). A number of drug overdoses also include opiate pain medications. [Data source: Dane County Narcotics & Gang Task Force]

• Dane County funded AODA treatment programs have shown a steady increase in clients with opiate problems, over the past 10 years. (There were over 100 in 2000 compared to over 300 in 2009.

* An unintentional poisoning is a poisoning in which the individual exposed to the substance is not attempting to cause harm to himself or herself or others. It can result from misuse and abuse of prescription or recreational drugs, overuse of drugs prescribed for medical reasons and exposure to chemicals, gases, vapors, venoms, biological toxins, and other substances.

For further questions about data, including original charts, contact Lisa Bullard-Cawthorne at 444-3542 or email lbulardcawthorne@publichealthmdc.com