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Contact:

Jose Arballo Jr., RUHS-Public Health

Senior Public Information Specialist

Office: 951.358.5599 Cell: 951.71.3705

Email: jarballojr@ruhealth.org

Riverside Health officials awarded \$7.1 million grant to improve surveillance of opioid-related overdoses

A \$7.1 million federal grant awarded to Riverside University Health System-Public Health will help local officials improve tracking of opioid-related overdoses and better allocate resources.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently awarded RUHS-Public Health the three-year grant to enhance surveillance of overdose morbidity and mortality in Riverside County. Officials will use data to guide overdose prevention efforts to target people who have experienced adverse childhood and community experiences (ACEs/ACERs), said Kim Saruwatari, director of Public Health.

“The funding will help Public Health gather critical information that will help prevent tragedies and the senseless loss of life cause by opioids,” said Saruwatari. “We already know this epidemic strikes everywhere, but we will now be better able to determine where to target precious resources.”

Data will be used to determine the frequency of ACEs/ACERs on overdose incidences in Riverside County and create more responsive and collaborative

prevention efforts to address the upstream causes of substance use disorders and overdose.

In 2018, there were 142 opioid-related deaths in Riverside County, compared to 77 in 2007. There were 431 drug-related deaths in Riverside County during 2018, compared to 214 in 2007.

The grant, nearly \$2.4 million a year for three years, will fund the creation of a monthly overdose death review team, develop rapid response to overdose outbreaks, and enhance analysis and dissemination of hospital emergency department and 911 ambulance response.

RUHS-Public Health is partnering with Riverside EMS Agency, Riverside County Sheriff-Coroner's Office, RUHS-Behavioral Health, and IEHP.