



## HELP US ALL TO LIVE LONGER, BETTER

By 2027, preventable premature deaths will be reduced by 10%.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

People are dying too young. Goal 3 work targets deaths due to drug overdose, suicide, and/or mental health. Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) is a way to measure premature deaths, many of which are preventable. When someone under the age of 75 dies, his or her death is considered premature because the average life expectancy in the United States is 75 (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

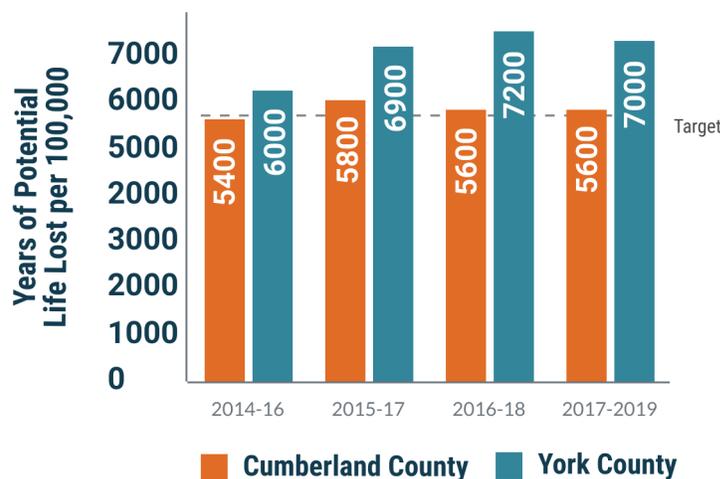
Each premature death adds to YPLL by counting the number of years before 75 at which they die (see chart). The YPLL is a rate per 100,000 people and is adjusted for population growth and age. The rate emphasizes deaths of younger people. Most people who die by overdose and suicide are younger than those who die by chronic diseases such as heart disease or cancer. If we can prevent a 15 year old from dying of suicide or a 40 year old of dying from a drug overdose, we can reduce premature deaths and our YPLL will decrease (MaineHealth, 2018 Health Index Report).

Age at death	Years added to YPLL
1 year	74
25 years	50
74 years	1
78 years	0

### WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

Cumberland County is holding steady at 5600 years of potential life lost (2017-2019). During the same period, York County had 7000 years of potential life lost. We know that overdose deaths are one of the leading causes impacting this measure. Cumberland County lost 97 residents to overdoses in 2020; the average age of death was 43. In Maine and nationwide an upward trend in suicide started pre-COVID and has likely been worsened by our increased isolation during the pandemic. Additionally, before the pandemic, we were seeing progress for Black and African American populations, but they are still more likely to die prematurely. This tracks back to a variety of inequities including a persistent lack of access to quality healthcare to treat chronic health conditions.

### SOUTHERN MAINE: YEARS OF POTENTIAL LIFE LOST (YPLL)



# WHAT'S BEING DONE TO CLOSE THE GAPS

- To decrease the YPLL, we must prevent premature deaths. The Thrive2027 Council and Goal 3 Cabinet support broad strategies that focus on preventing, intervening, treating substance misuse, mental illness, and suicidal ideation and supporting recovery. Broad strategies include: 1) providing access to prevention and treatment services; 2) preventing, identifying, and treating effects of childhood trauma; 3) promoting awareness and reducing stigma; and 4) identifying and supporting individuals at highest risk.
- United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM) is dedicating its staff to coordinate Thrive2027 and directing its financial investments, as well as advocacy and volunteers, to support Thrive2027 strategies.
- UWSM is funding efforts that provide mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery for youth and adults, school-based health clinics that provide assessment and counseling, a learning collaborative aimed at helping local organizations become trauma informed, peer support programs for individuals struggling with mental illness or substance use disorder, and domestic violence work that reduces exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- UWSM is partnering with the Maine chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness to provide a national evidence-based Mental Health First Aid training free to community members.

## HOME TEAM PROVIDES LIFE-SAVING HUMAN CONNECTION



In a year when more people are suffering from substance use disorder and dying of drug overdoses, Milestone Recovery's HOME Team is seeing the positive effects of human connection. Brooks and Courtney, the pair behind the Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) Team, seek out individuals experiencing homelessness or substance use disorder. They provide food and water, connections to services, make medical referrals, and sometimes simply start a conversation. "We've gotten to know them so well, we have them on our personal phones. We see HOME Team as a partner," says Officer Dan Knight, Community Policing Officer, Portland Police Department.



The pandemic has made HOME Team's work more essential than ever. "The resources for our population diminished. Places closed down; shelters couldn't take as many people," Courtney reflected. Through support from United Way of Southern Maine, HOME Team has increased access to medical and substance use care through medical care referrals.

Since 2017, HOME Team has responded to more than 27,700 calls, served 2,000 unique individuals, made 200 medical referrals, and engaged in 485 substance use referrals. With support from UWSM, services like HOME Team are helping more people live longer, better lives.

Contact HOME Team at **207-838-8904** to request services. [Watch HOME Team's story.](#)

## YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU!

### ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Ensure that employees understand behavioral health benefit and that co-pays for mental health services and physical health care are equal.
- Train management and human resource professionals on how to refer employees for substance use disorder and mental health treatment.
- Post the National Suicide Prevention hotline number (1-800-273-8255) or the [Maine Crisis Line](#) (1-888-569-1112) in your staff room.
- Become a mental health or recovery friendly workplace.

### PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND INDIVIDUALS

- Serve as a mentor to youth to help model positive coping and problem-solving skills.
- Ensure that medication and firearms in your home are safely stored.
- Advocate for the implementation of evidence-based social-emotional curricula in your children's schools.
- Learn to recognize the warning signs of substance misuse and suicide at a free Mental Health First Aid training. Contact [nmisra@uwsme.org](mailto:nmisra@uwsme.org) for more information and upcoming dates.