



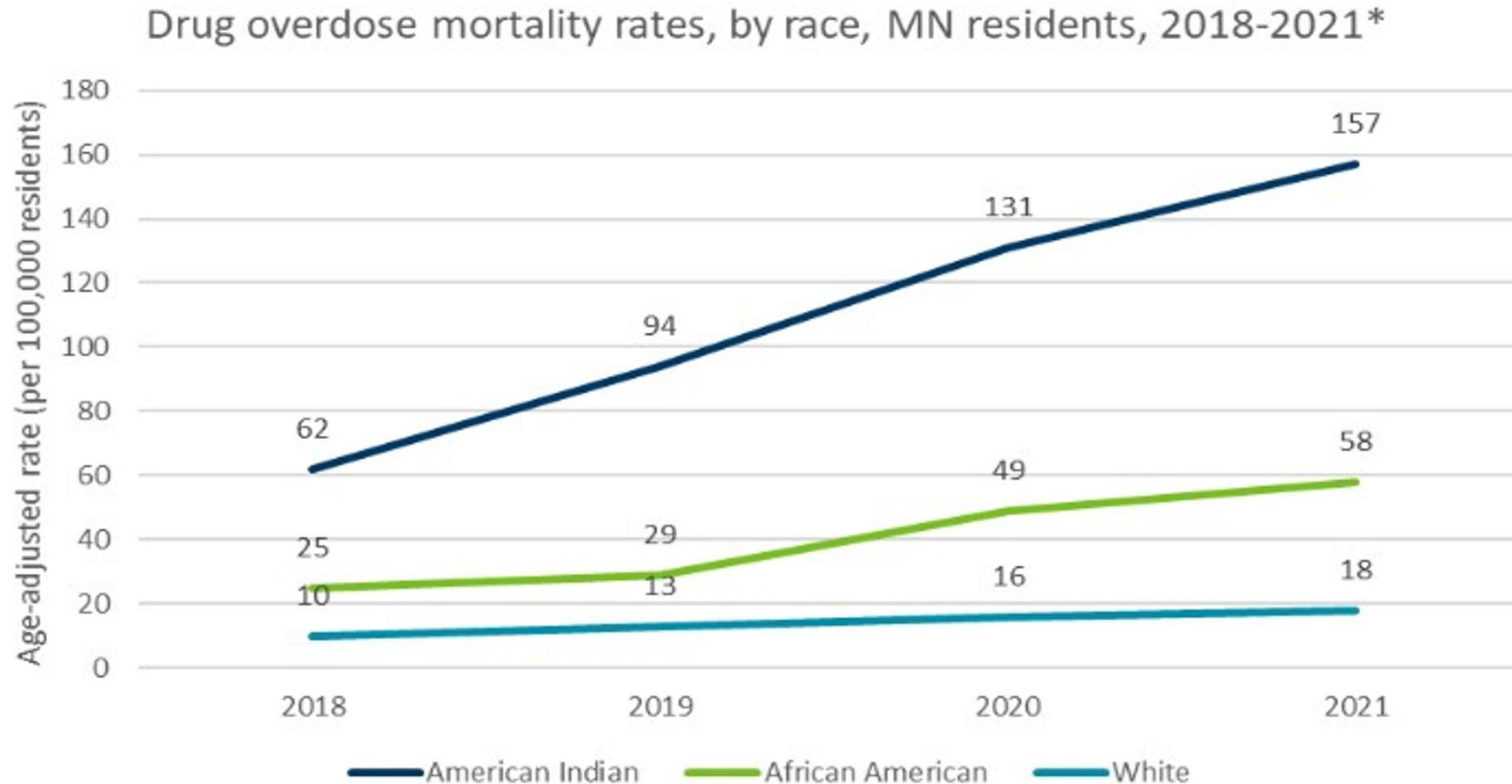
Strengthening Partnerships with State Public Health and  
Increasing Stakeholders' Knowledge by Identifying Underreporting of Somali  
Overdose Deaths Through Overdose Fatality Reviews

**Pearl Evans**, MDH Prevention Program Administrator

**Masno Abudulayah**, Alliance Wellness Center OFR Coordinator

**Why and how we established  
a culturally specific OFR for  
the Somali community  
in Minnesota.**

# Racial Disparities in Minnesota



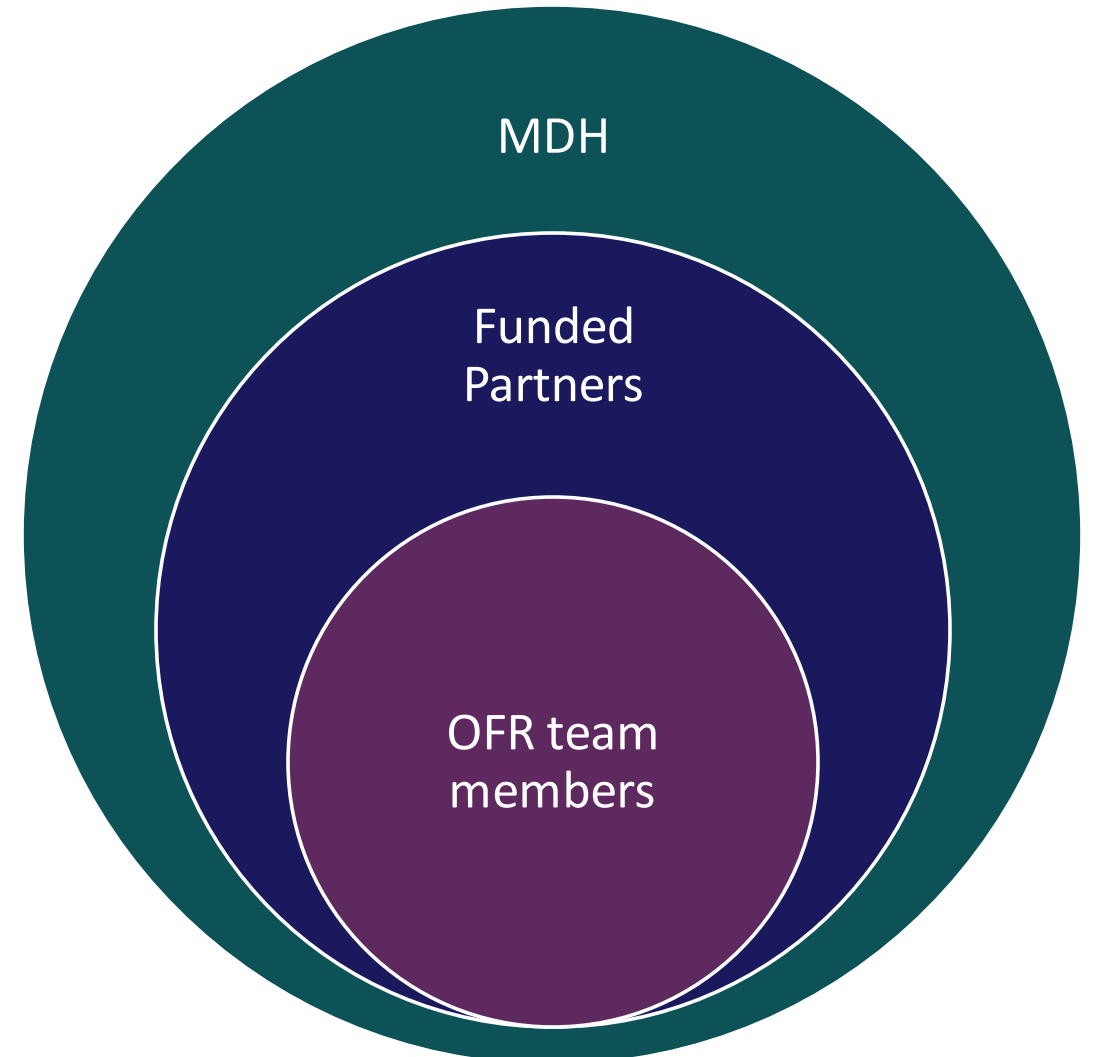
**MN OFR projects are led by partners.  
MDH provides technical assistance.**

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funds the EMS projects.

Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC)  
funds the culturally specific projects.

# Statutes and Data Sharing

- MN does **not** have OFR-specific legislation
- Existing statute covers MDH-funded partners
- Legal Guidance / FAQs



# MN's Culturally Specific OFR Teams

- **White Earth Behavioral Health**
  - Tribal health center in greater Minnesota.
- **Alliance Wellness Center**
  - Urban substance use disorder treatment center serving Somali Minnesotans in the Metro.

# Equipping the Field

- **Minnesota OFR Implementation Guide**
  - MN-specific version of IIR guide
- **Community of Practice Trainings**
  - Using the Implementation Guide
  - Using REDCap

# Stigma in the Somali Community

## “Ceeb” and the Generational Gap

"From my past experiences in dealing with families and people who are seeking help, or people who have already come here for treatment, one of the biggest issues is stigma."

*- MN-based peer recovery specialist*



# Pre-OFR Work

- **Building capacity**

Adapting our evidence-based model for the Somali community.

- **Learning together**

Stakeholder interviews revealed challenges of language, stigma, capacity, & confidence to conduct a Somali OFR.

- **Problem solving**

Why were so few Somalis represented in OD death records?

# OFR Team Members

## **County:**

Medical Examiner  
Attorney's Office  
Sherriff's Office  
Public Health Office  
Health care provider

## **Municipal:**

Public Safety Office  
Public Health Office

## **Federal:**

HIDTA

## **Community:**

Community clinics  
Youth activists

# Overview of Cases

- **Five decedents** were reviewed
  - 2 males, 3 females
  - Ages: 18-32

**All had multiple ER visits for nonfatal overdoses.  
All had previous encounters with law enforcement.**

# Recommendation In Action

## **Recommendation:**

Embedding a full-time, culturally specific social service professional, licensed alcohol and drug counselor, social worker, or peer recovery specialist who speaks the Somali language into the Hennepin County system.

# Recommendation In Action

## **Recommendation:**

Increasing Somali youth knowledge on the dangers of fentanyl-laced substances has the potential to promote behavior change and reduce stigma of talking about substance use disorder in the community.

# Thank You!

**Pearl Evans**

[Pearl.evans@state.mn.us](mailto:Pearl.evans@state.mn.us)

**Masno Abdulaya**

*masno@alliancewellnesscenter.com*