

# CALVERT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 980  
975 Solomons Island Road, N  
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678

Laurence Polsky, MD, MPH, F.A.C.O.G.  
Health Officer

Champ Thomaskutty, MPH  
Deputy Health Officer

Sharon Walser, Director  
Administrative Services

Washington Area (301) 855-1353

Baltimore Area (410) 269-1051

Fax (410) 535-5285

[www.calverthealth.org](http://www.calverthealth.org)



STATE OF MARYLAND

## SENATE BILL 936 EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

*Commemorative Days – Overdose Awareness Day*  
**Laurence Polsky, MD, MPH, Health Officer, Calvert County Health Department**  
*Position: Support – March 16, 2021*

The Calvert County Health Department supports SB 936 and the effort of Sen. Jackson to bring sustained attention to the toll overdose deaths have taken on families across Maryland. This past year, 2,784 of our residents died of acute overdose. 90% of these fatalities involved opioids. Research has shown that most of these people first began using addictive substances in their teens, and the risks of overdose cut across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. Overdose Awareness Day is a reminder that prevention efforts should start early in all homes and schools since no one is immune from drug dependence and misuse.

It is worth considering expanding the commemoration to Addiction and Overdose Awareness Day since in addition to the several thousand Marylanders who died of acute overdose, thousands more die each year from chronic toxicity due to other addictive substances. Annually, nearly 2,000 Marylanders die prematurely due to the chronic effects of alcohol (liver disease, gastrointestinal bleeding, cancers, and neurological damage) and almost 10,000 die from tobacco-induced cancers, heart disease, stroke, and chronic lung disease. In addition, the impacts on families from all types of substance misuse take tragic tolls for years prior to overdose events or deaths from chronic disease.

Regardless of the will of the General Assembly to recognize Overdose Awareness Day or Addiction and Overdose Awareness Day, this annual commemoration will serve as an important reminder to all Marylanders that we must actively work to keep ourselves and our children safe from the misuse of addictive substances.