



Today's Date: August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Gabriella Smith  
Public Relations Officer  
(434) 238-7727

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## **International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) *Together, Central Virginians gather to end overdose***

**Central Virginia** – Since 2020, over 274 individuals in Central Virginia have lost their lives to overdose (VDH, 2023). And today, almost half of adults in the United States say they personally know at least one person who died from a drug overdose (RAND, 2024).

Observed by communities globally on August 31<sup>st</sup>, every year, International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is recognized as a mission to end overdose deaths and stigma by raising awareness of the risks of overdose across the lifespan.

Horizon Behavioral Health and the Central Virginia Addiction Recovery Resources (CVARR) Coalition are jointly hosting an awareness event on Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, International Overdose Awareness Day, on the Lower Bluffwalk, 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Lynchburg, Virginia. The event invites community members of all ages to hear personal stories, messages of hope, music, and hold a candlelight vigil, to honor the life and memory of those who have lost their lives to overdose. Community leaders will read a proclamation recognizing International Overdose Awareness Day, signed by Mayor Stephanie Reed of the City of Lynchburg.

This event offers individuals the opportunity to learn how to respond in the event of an overdose emergency and receive free resources to prevent future overdoses.

Horizon Behavioral Health and allied partners publicly honor the memory of those who have died from overdose, acknowledge the grief of their families and friends, and encourage the community to take action by participating in Opioid Overdose Response Training, which will be provided at no-cost at the event.

“We stand alongside the countless Virginians who are grieving the loss of friends and loved ones to overdose. We see, each day, how this epidemic is impacting those from the very youngest of our community to the oldest. As mothers, fathers, friends, teachers, business owners, professionals, community members, and individuals in all walks of life: we cannot afford to be unaware.” said Melissa Lucy, CEO of Horizon.

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**Horizon Behavioral Health** has been the primary public behavioral healthcare provider in Central Virginia for more than 55 years. Horizon provides services to adults and children, addressing challenges with mental health, substance use and intellectual disabilities. Horizon is accredited by CARF International. This represents the highest level of accreditation that can be given to a behavioral health organization.