

OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



Pilot Projects to Build the Evidence Base for Overdose Prevention and Response

CDC and the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) are working with several ORS states to develop and implement local projects designed to reduce overdoses. Pilot projects will address drug overdose prevention strategies that engage both local public health and public safety. Goals of the project include building the evidence base for effective overdose prevention and response interventions, improving response to the opioid overdose epidemic, and leveraging the ORS structure to enhance community-level public health and public safety collaborations. NACCHO and CDC work closely with the ORS teams in each funded pilot project site to develop, execute, and evaluate the pilots. The projects in seven funded jurisdictions are as follows:

Central Vermont Medical Center (VT)

As a previous recipient of a NACCHO ORS pilot project planning grant, the Central Vermont Prevention Coalition (CVPC) developed the "Building Safe Harbor" project with partners from EMS, hospitals, harm reduction, and recovery sectors. The project's goal was to design a post-overdose system of care to enhance access to treatment and recovery services, ultimately reducing fatal overdoses. With this second year of ORS Pilot Project funding, the CVMC team is now ready to translate these planning efforts into action through Project BEACON (Building Engagement and Aftercare through Cellphones for Overdose Navigation), which focuses on the following program goals:

1. Engaging high-risk individuals in overdose prevention services, especially those not accessing services, by increasing Narcan Leave Behind Kit (LBK) distribution.
2. Creating linkages to aftercare support, including local harm reduction resources, evidence-based treatment for substance use disorder (SUD), and recovery support.
3. Shifting EMS culture to incorporate, value, and practice harm reduction principles through education to enhance care and outcomes for people who use drugs (PWUD).

From [2017-2021](#), Washington County consistently ranked in the top 5 Vermont counties for fatal ODs and saw a 20% increase in the number of fatal ODs through [May 2023 over May 2022](#). In 2022, the [top three substances](#) involved in fatal ODs were fentanyl (93%), cocaine (49%), and xylazine (28%). Project BEACON presents a unique opportunity to unite public health and public safety partners in implementing a post-OD system of care that builds upon existing infrastructure, addresses survivor needs, and aligns with best practices.

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The Courage Center (SC)

The Courage Center (TCC) was awarded a fourth year of funding to build upon its post-overdose outreach and peer support services project, the Coordinated Overdose Response and Engagement (CORE) in Lexington, South Carolina. Previously TCC has focused on building partnerships and to better reach and engage people involved in the criminal legal system and those reentering the community post-incarceration, as well as enhancing partnerships with their EMS and local hospital. In the next year of funding, TCC will focus on expanding their services to Richland County. South Carolina experienced a 7.98% increase in overdose fatalities over the last 3 years and is 9.6% higher than the national average OD fatality rate, with Richland County being 1 of 25 counties showing increasing rates of overdose fatalities. Total overdose deaths in Richland County have risen from 85 in 2018, to 137 in 2021 with 82 of those deaths attributed to fentanyl.

End Overdose (CA)

End Overdose is a non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, California working to end drug-related overdose deaths through education, medical intervention, and public awareness. By receiving their second year of ORS Pilot Project funding, End Overdose seeks to expand upon their previous work and provide their Overdose Prevention and Response Training to student populations. Specifically, the End Overdose team seeks to train peer health advocate students at the 41 Wellbeing Center sites in LA County, including 27 sites serving the LA Unified School District (LAUSD). Additionally, they aim to reach students in 4 Montebello Unified School District (MUSD) High Schools. From 2019 to 2020 in Los Angeles County, overdoses increased 200% for those ages 0 to 11 and 333% for those ages 12 to 17 years old, and at least 7 teenage students overdosed on fentanyl-laced pills between August 2022 and September 2022. These statistics show the dire need for an overdose-prevention-and-response education and resource distribution program for students in Los Angeles County. By focusing on outreach and educational efforts in middle and high schools in Los Angeles County, End Overdose hopes to increase students' ability to recognize and respond to an overdose.

Kankakee County State Attorney's Office (IL)

Through this ORS pilot project, Kankakee Forgives and the Kankakee County State Attorney's Office aim to enhance health equity, inclusion, and elevate individuals with lived experience by implementing a Trauma-Informed, Recovery-Oriented System of Care with a train-the-trainer initiative led by persons with lived experience. The voices of people with lived experience will be elevated throughout the planning, implementation, and expansion while also training them to respond to mental health needs in the community. This initiative will address the critical need for quick access to mental health services while focusing on strengthening the system of care based on trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, equity-based metrics.

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Kankakee County, IL faces a rising trend in overdose deaths. In 2022, the county recorded 51 overdose deaths, with overdose deaths primarily among Caucasian individuals aged 30 to 60. The urgent need for mental health services in Kankakee County is underscored by the shortage of providers, long wait times, and documented gaps in services. In Kankakee County, the ratio of population to mental health providers is 660 residents to one mental health service provider, which is higher than the state ratio of 410 to one and national ratio of 380 to one.

Louisiana Office of Public Health (LA)

The goal of Louisiana Office of Public Health's pilot project is to reduce local level overdose mortality by engaging local harm reduction team partners with lived experience in substance use, to plan and implement a jail-based, pre-release overdose prevention, harm reduction education, and naloxone distribution program. In addition, this program will offer on-site rapid infectious disease testing, substance use and mental health screenings, direct linkage to care and harm reduction services upon discharge. The end goal of this planning grant will be development and implementation of the wrap-around pilot program Calcasieu Parish Correctional Center, following with expansion to other jail systems in their five parish Region.

Region V Office of Public Health serves 5 Parish areas within Louisiana. Over the past few years these parishes have been hard hit by five federally declared disasters. These natural disasters, coupled with the pandemic, exacerbated mental health crises, homelessness, and substance use in their region. Although all populations in Louisiana have been impacted by the overdose epidemic, with Louisiana being ranked third in overdose deaths in 2021, people who are or have been incarcerated are disproportionately affected accounting for at least a quarter of the deaths in Calcasieu Parish (Calcasieu Parish Coroner's Office).

Prevention Point Philadelphia (PA)

Prevention Point Philadelphia (PPP) is using the ORS Pilot grant to enhance its Substance Use Treatment program STEP (the Supportive Treatment and Engagement Program), which pairs Physician administered medical treatment and Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) alongside Complex Case Management and Recovery Support Services (RSS). The overall program goal is to increase the number of participants in STEP who receive information about all formulations of MOUD, including long acting injectable MOUD (Sublocade) through hiring of a Peer Sublocade and Induction Ambassador with lived/living experience and in consultation with a Participant Advisory Board composed of PPP participants with lived/living experience with MOUD.

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In 2023, Prevention Point Philadelphia (PPP) served more than 30,000 of the city's most vulnerable residents via a fixed site in the Kensington neighborhood, encompassing 3 zip codes with the highest rates of overdose in the state, and via 10 mobile syringe service sites serving 6 additional zip codes with high rates of overdose fatalities. Despite PPP's incredible provision of harm reduction supplies (8,000,000 sterile syringes and 97,000 Narcan doses in FY23), fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and xylazine continue to result in increases in fatal overdose. From 2017-2022, the number of individuals who died from a preventable overdose in Kensington climbed from 1,200 to nearly 1,300.

Zero Overdose (NY)

Zero Overdose is a non-profit organization located in Ulster County NY founded with the mission to develop, validate, and share innovative tools and trainings that are best practices in overdose prevention so that agencies, communities, and families are more equipped to save lives. With this ORS pilot project funding, Zero Overdose will pilot an implementation project to expand the adoption of Overdose Safety Planning (OSP). OSP is an evidence-informed intervention to reduce overdose deaths and instances of unintentional overdoses, in individuals being released from incarceration in Ulster County, New York. This project has two objectives: 1) train reentry staff and case managers to do Overdose Safety Planning interventions; and 2) provide coping skills and practical skills to individuals reentering through Overdose Safety Plans and mindfulness recovery skills group sessions.

From 2019 to 2020, opioid-related deaths increased in Ulster County by 171%. Barriers to addressing overdoses in Ulster County include the largely rural geographic catchment hindering access to resources and limited inpatient and outpatient services for individuals with more severe cases of opioid use or substance use disorder. While ranking among the highest in opioid burden, Ulster County ranks eighteenth in its outpatient treatment program capacity in New York.