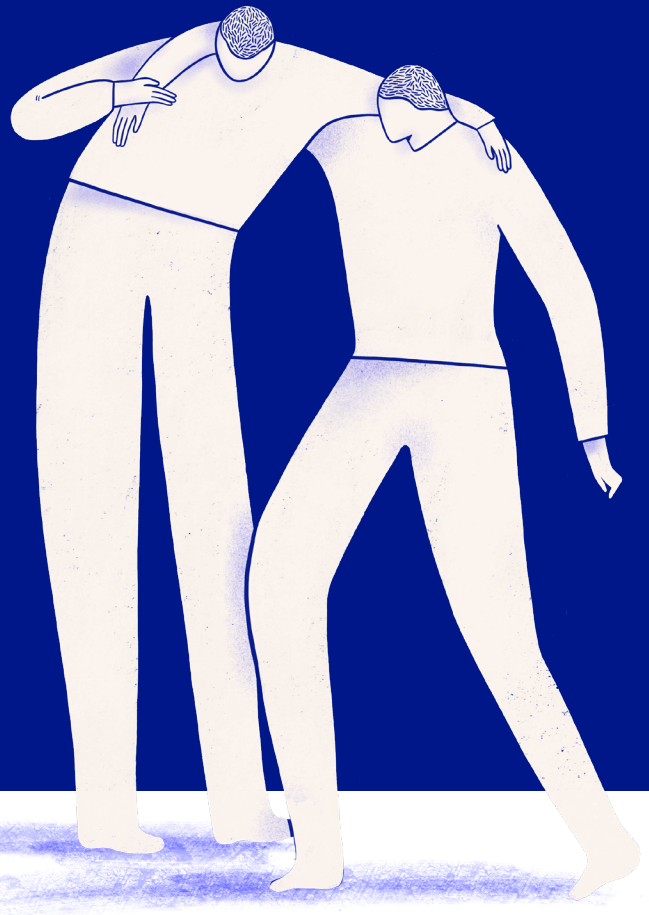


Overdose Prevention



**A public health approach will
reduce deaths from overdose.**

Vital Strategies partners with governments, providers and communities to support health-centered solutions rooted in evidence.

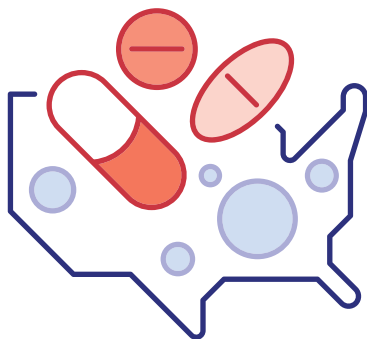
**There is an overdose emergency in
the United States.**

More than 107,000 people died of drug overdoses in 2021, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a single year in the United States. Every overdose death is preventable.

Technical Intervention Package for Overdose Prevention

Vital Strategies

is working to establish effective policy and program models that can be adapted and implemented across the country.



Ensure medication access and availability

Expand availability of lifesaving medications

- 1 Maximize naloxone distribution to people who use drugs and their social networks.
- 2 Make medications for opioid use disorder, particularly Methadone and Buprenorphine, easy to access and maintain in the community for people with opioid use disorder
- 3 Offer Methadone and Buprenorphine medications for opioid use disorder to people in contexts where their vulnerability to overdose is heightened.

High-value, evidence-based strategies for governments to prioritize



Engage communities

Engage communities through communications and mobilization strategies, and support people who use drugs.

- 4 Support mobilization in marginalized communities to prevent and respond to overdose.
- 5 Through paid and earned media campaigns, change the narratives on drug use and people who use drugs, soften the policy landscape for a public health response, and increase access to resources.
- 6 Expand and strengthen responsive harm reduction services across communities to address local needs, including authorization and expansion of Syringe Service Programs and resources for safer drug use.



Support, don't punish

Promote and model a harm reduction approach in all systems and sectors, a response to drug use that is supportive, non-carceral, non-punitive, and non-coercive.

- 7 Prevent the criminalization of people who use drugs, including in law and regulation, policing, prosecution, and probation/parole
- 8 Eliminate punitive sanctions for drug use and strengthen a supportive response, ie, in healthcare, child welfare, housing support, financial and food assistance, etc.
- 9 Eliminate coercion and strengthen a supportive response in healthcare, including substance use disorder treatment.
- 10 Establish and expand integrated civilian/community crisis response for drug-related and mental health emergencies.

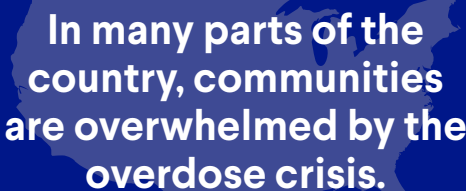
OVERDOSE PREVENTION

Our Overdose Prevention Program is bringing a comprehensive approach to reduce overdose deaths in seven states: Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Vital Strategies is the lead partner for states' work in the Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative, launched in 2018 to tackle the overdose crisis in the United States. We are bringing a comprehensive approach to reduce overdose deaths in seven U.S. states where fatalities are among the highest in the country. Along with our Initiative partners—Pew Charitable Trusts, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, CDC Foundation, and Global Health Advocacy Incubator—Vital Strategies is working to establish effective policy and program models that can be adapted and implemented across the country.

Overdose and drug use are impacted by multiple systems and sectors, including healthcare, criminal justice, social services, and child welfare. Progress will require leadership and investment from all levels of government, from communities, providers, institutions, and advocates, and include people who use drugs as well as their families and friends. Accordingly, Vital Strategies' approach is multidisciplinary, inclusive, and highly responsive to local conditions and priorities.

Addressing barriers to health for populations who have been historically disadvantaged and marginalized, including Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, requires a special commitment to racial equity. As momentum builds for a health-based approach to drug use, it is important to address how Black, Indigenous, and other people of color experience the collateral consequences of drug use criminalization, including mass incarceration and surveillance, loss of eligibility for public housing and public assistance, poor access to medications such as methadone and buprenorphine, and punitive policies and practices related to child welfare, parole and probation. Progress will require an approach grounded in racial equity.



In many parts of the country, communities are overwhelmed by the overdose crisis.

Emergency medical services and first responders are flooded by calls for rescue and frustrated by the lack of ongoing support for the people they have saved.

Incarceration and punishment related to drug use drive sharp racial disparities in overdose and other harmful outcomes, while doing little to help people and only increasing their vulnerability to overdose.

A patchwork of treatment services leaves too many, including communities of color, without meaningful access to effective care or the ongoing support services they need.

Harm reduction services engage people who are using drugs and are critical to overdose prevention; however, they are typically underfunded and insufficient to meet demand, while often facing hostile policies that impede access.

Stigma around drug use makes people less likely to seek help or to receive the services they need. This stigma is further compounded for people with marginalized identities and experiences related to race, gender, class, sexual orientation and criminal justice involvement.

Learn more at
www.vitalstrategies.org

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