Evidence-Based Strategies and Policies to Address the Drug Overdose Epidemic

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The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Three Waves of the Rise in Opioid Overdose Deaths

- **Any Opioid**
- **Other Synthetic Opioids** (e.g., Tramadol or Fentanyl, prescribed or illicitly manufactured)
- **Psychostimulants With Abuse Potential**
- **Heroin** (Commonly Prescribed Opioids: Natural & Semi-Synthetic Opioids and Methadone)

**Wave 1:** Rise in Prescription Opioid Overdose Deaths
**Wave 2:** Rise in Heroin Overdose Deaths
**Wave 3:** Rise in Synthetic Opioid Overdose Deaths

**SOURCE:** National Vital Statistics System Mortality File.
A growing proportion of ALL drug overdose deaths in the U.S. involve synthetic opioids since 2013.

Source: Mattson, Tanz, Quinn, Karissa, Patel, and Davis (2021), MMWR. 70(6), 202.
Nonfatal Drug Overdoses Increased for All Drug, Opioid, Heroin, and Stimulants During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/nonfatal/states/covid-19.html
Provisional Counts of Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States: 12-Month Ending September 2020

Figure 2. 12 Month-ending Provisional Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug or Drug Class: United States

94,134 reported number of deaths
95,230 predicted number of deaths

30.5% ▲ change in the 12-month ending January 2021

Percent pending investigation: 0.18
* Underreported due to incomplete data

“The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly worsened the overdose crisis in the U.S. and magnified disparities in access to health care, social services and other basic needs experienced by people who use drugs and people with substance use disorders.”

Division of Overdose Prevention

VISION
End drug overdose and related harms

MISSION
To monitor, prevent, and reduce harms associated with drug use, misuse, and overdose

GOALS

ONE: Reduce opioid overdose now

TWO: Identify and address emerging drug trends and associated public health outcomes

THREE: Prevent drug use initiation or drug misuse among youth and young adults

STRATEGIES

Monitor trends
Advance research
Increase public awareness
Partner with public safety and community organizations
Build state, tribal, local, and territorial capacity
Support health systems, healthcare providers, and payers
Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose
Promoting What Works In Communities

CDC reference document showcasing 10 best practices to prevent opioid overdose

Harm Reduction Strategies:
- Targeted Naloxone Distribution
- 911 Good Samaritan Laws
- Syringe Services Programs

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT):
- MAT Prior-Authorization
- MAT in Criminal Justice Settings and Upon Release
- ED Buprenorphine Initiation

Academic Detailing
Fentanyl Toxicology Screening

Harm Reduction

- **Targeted Naloxone Distribution:** Naloxone distribution to community and first responders

- **911 Good Samaritan Laws:** 48 states have passed a version of a Good Samaritan law that provides limited immunity to overdose victims or bystanders*

- **Syringe Services Programs:** Provide access to clean and sterile equipment, tools for the prevention and reversal of overdose, fentanyl test strips, and social and medical resources

*https://pdaps.org/datasets/good-samaritan-overdose-laws-1501695153
Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) or Medication Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

- MOUD (formerly MAT) for opioid use disorder—FDA approved medications
  - Methadone and Buprenorphine: opioid agonists
  - Naltrexone: blocks effects of opioids
- Eliminating Prior-Authorization Requirements for MOUD—payers cover cost as a standard benefit
- Naloxone Distribution in Treatment Centers and Criminal Justice Settings—Naloxone distribution programs in criminal justice and treatment facilities (both inpatient and outpatient)

**NOTE:** HHS released new guidelines in 2021—allows all eligible clinicians to prescribe buprenorphine for OUD for up to 30 patients without federal certification (or “X waiver”)
**Other Strategies**

- **Academic Detailing:** Structured visits to healthcare providers by trained professionals who can provide tailored training and technical assistance, helping healthcare providers use best practices.

- **Screening for Fentanyl:** Standard panel of substances included in routine clinical drug screens (carried out in hospitals, clinics, treatment centers, etc.) should include screening for fentanyl exposure, particularly in jurisdictions where fentanyl is known to be prevalent in the local illicit drug market.

**NOTE:** In April 2021, CDC and SAMSHA announced federal funding could be used to purchase rapid fentanyl test strips (FTS) to help curb dramatic spike in drug overdose deaths largely driven by use of strong synthetic opioids, including illicitly manufactured fentanyl.
Promising State Strategies
CDC RX Awareness Campaign

There is hope. Recovery is possible.

Real stories from real people  Phase 2 - Launched July 2020

Tele  Jeni  David  Britton  Tessa
COVID-19 Specific Projects
Drug Overdose COVID-19 Projects

Youth Substance Use and Messaging Development During COVID-19: understanding how substance use patterns and attitudes have changed among youth during COVID

Novel Harm Reduction and Treatment Strategies to Support Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder: Identifying innovative harm reduction practices to determine scalability and sustainability

cdc.gov/coronavirus
Links to Resources

- Evidence Based Strategies: https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/od2a/index.html
- Overdose Data: https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html
- RxAwareness Campaign Real Stories: https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/index.html
- RxAwareness Campaign Resources: https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/resources/index.html
- Resource Center: https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/resources/index.html
- Information for Healthcare Providers: https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/providers/index.html
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Thank you.

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