

# Harm Reduction in Pennsylvania

HIV Conference - Gettysburg, PA  
*September 14, 2023*



# Today's Objectives

- Review harm reduction and harm reduction tools
- Provide examples of harm reduction at work in PA:
  - State initiatives to expand access to harm reduction tools
  - Community-based harm reduction through SSPs
- Participants will be able to:
  - Describe why harm reduction is a necessary tool for preventing HIV and other health consequences of substance use
  - Understand strategies their organization can use to apply and advocate for harm reduction
  - Know resources they can turn to for more information about harm reduction





# A brief history of harm reduction

# What is harm reduction?

- A public health approach that minimizes negative health and social consequences of a behavior
- Harm reduction strategies are used in all kinds of public health interventions, including HIV:
  - PrEP
  - Testing and treatment
  - Condom distribution



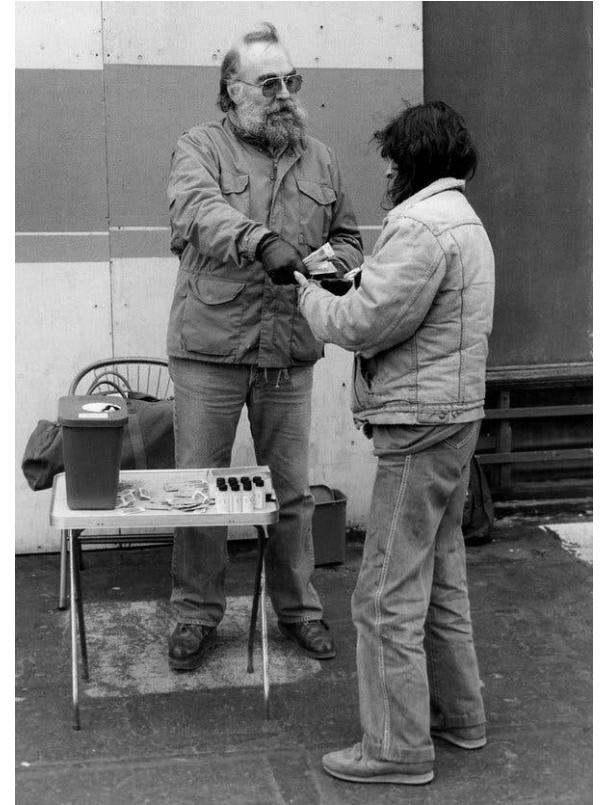
# What is harm reduction?

- In the context of people who use drugs, it is a set of strategies that reduce harmful consequences associated with drug use
- Harm reduction:
  - Accepts that licit and illicit drug use is part of our society
  - Meets people where they are at
  - Also addresses the conditions of drug use



# Harm reduction emerged in response to HIV

- Harm reduction was an early HIV prevention strategy for people who use drugs
- In 1988 Dave Purchase set up a TV tray and a folding chair near a house frequented by people who used heroin in Tacoma, WA
  - He exchanged clean needles for used to anyone who wanted them, no questions asked
  - In his efforts to stop the spread of HIV he started a movement



*Dave Purchase, considered the godfather of harm reduction distributing clean works in Tacoma, WA in the 1980s*

*(photo credit: Doug Wilson, NYT)*

## 30+ years later...

- The federal government has endorsed harm reduction as an evidence-based approach that is critical to protecting the health of people who use drugs
- Federal agencies have incorporated harm reduction into their priorities
  - **HHS:** <https://www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention/>
  - **CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/index.html>
  - **SAMHSA:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction>
  - **ONDCP:** <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/the-administrations-strategy/national-drug-control-strategy/>



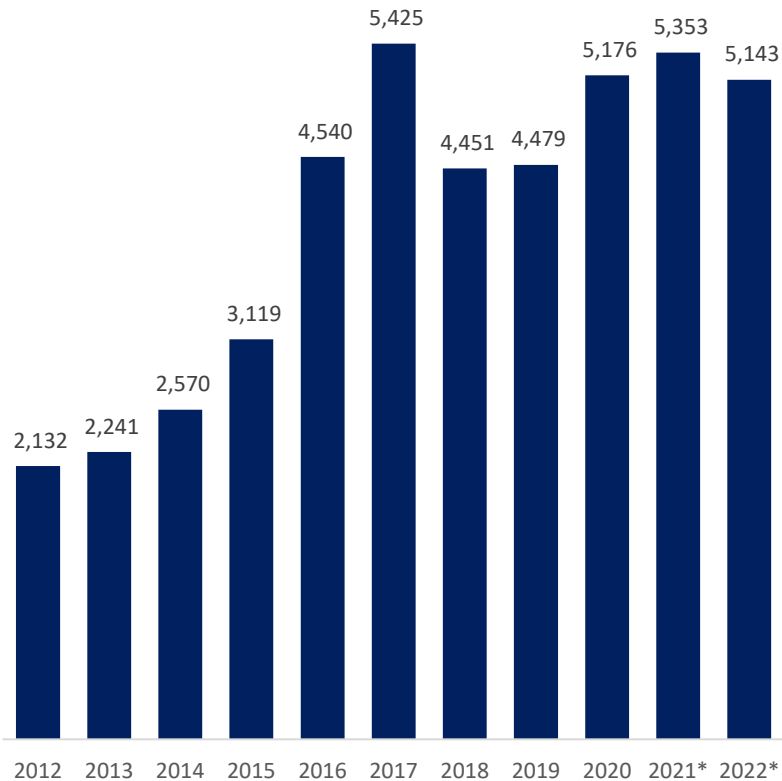
HARM REDUCTION  
**Saves Lives.**

**Why does PA need harm reduction?**

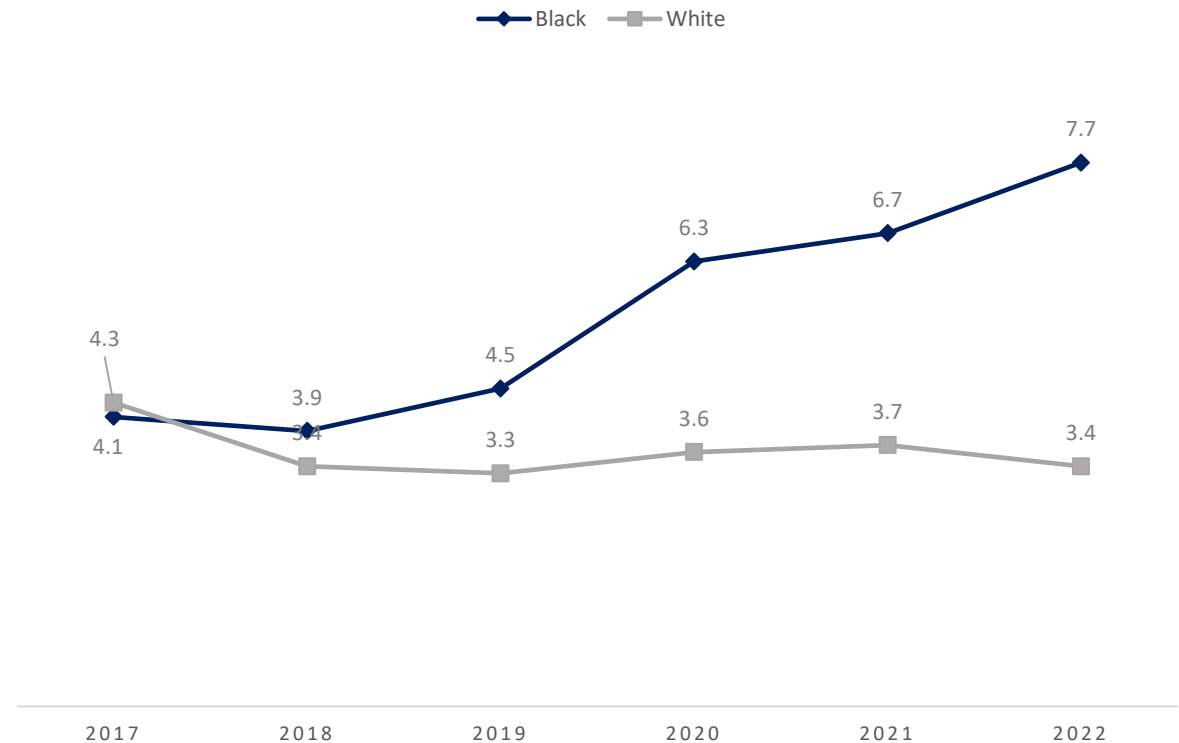


# PA's Evolving Overdose Epidemic

Number of Overdose Deaths Per Year (2012-2022)\*



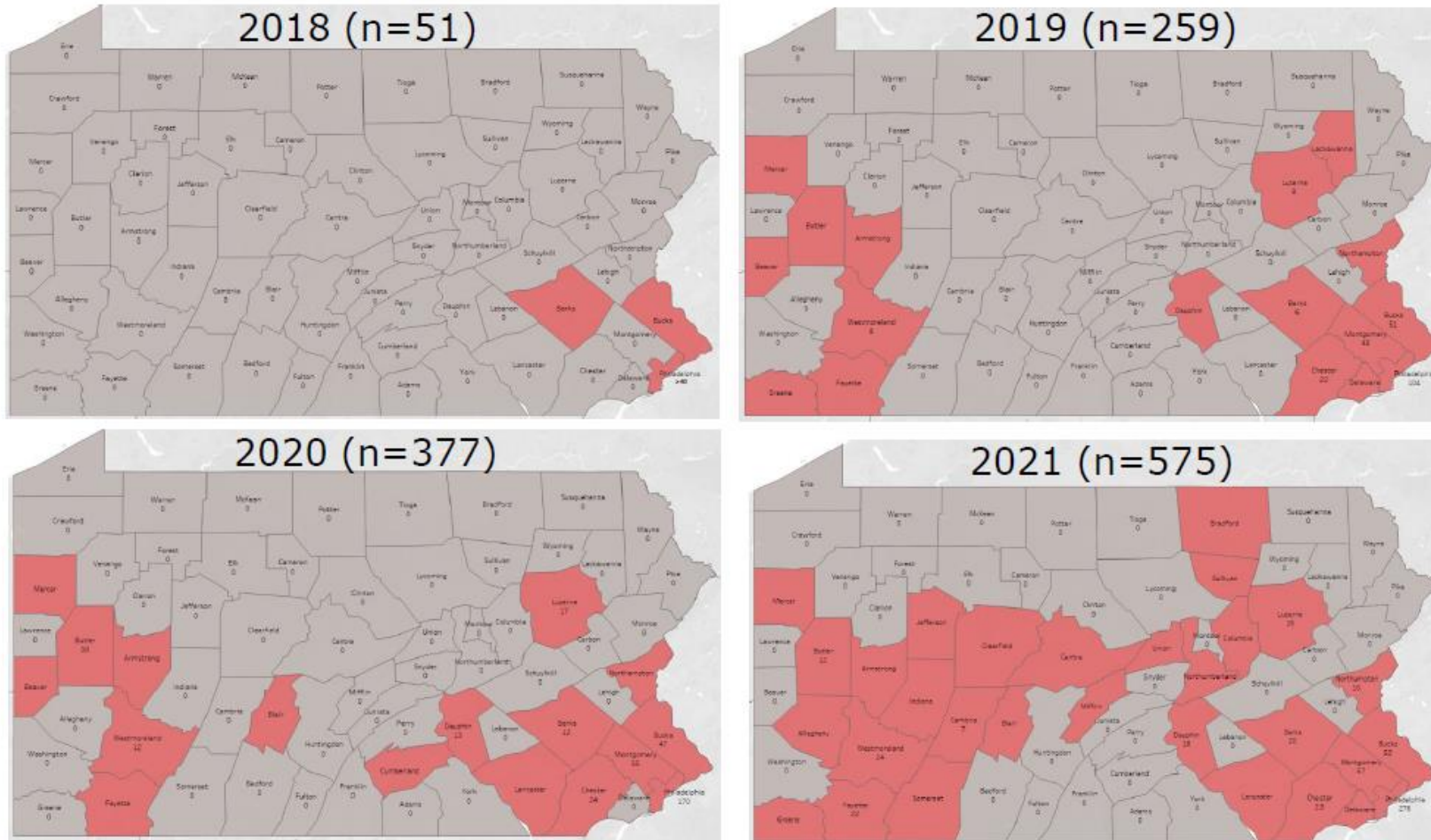
Fatal Overdose Rate, Black vs. White PA'ians (2017-2022)



\*Data source: PA Department of Health, Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention. 2021 and 2022 death data subject to change, based on death record data reported to DOH as of July 2023. Death investigations and overdose death records are often delayed 3-6 months and 2021/2022 counts will likely be higher than currently reported.

# Emerging Overdose Trends: Xylazine

*(n=count where xylazine noted as contributing to death)*

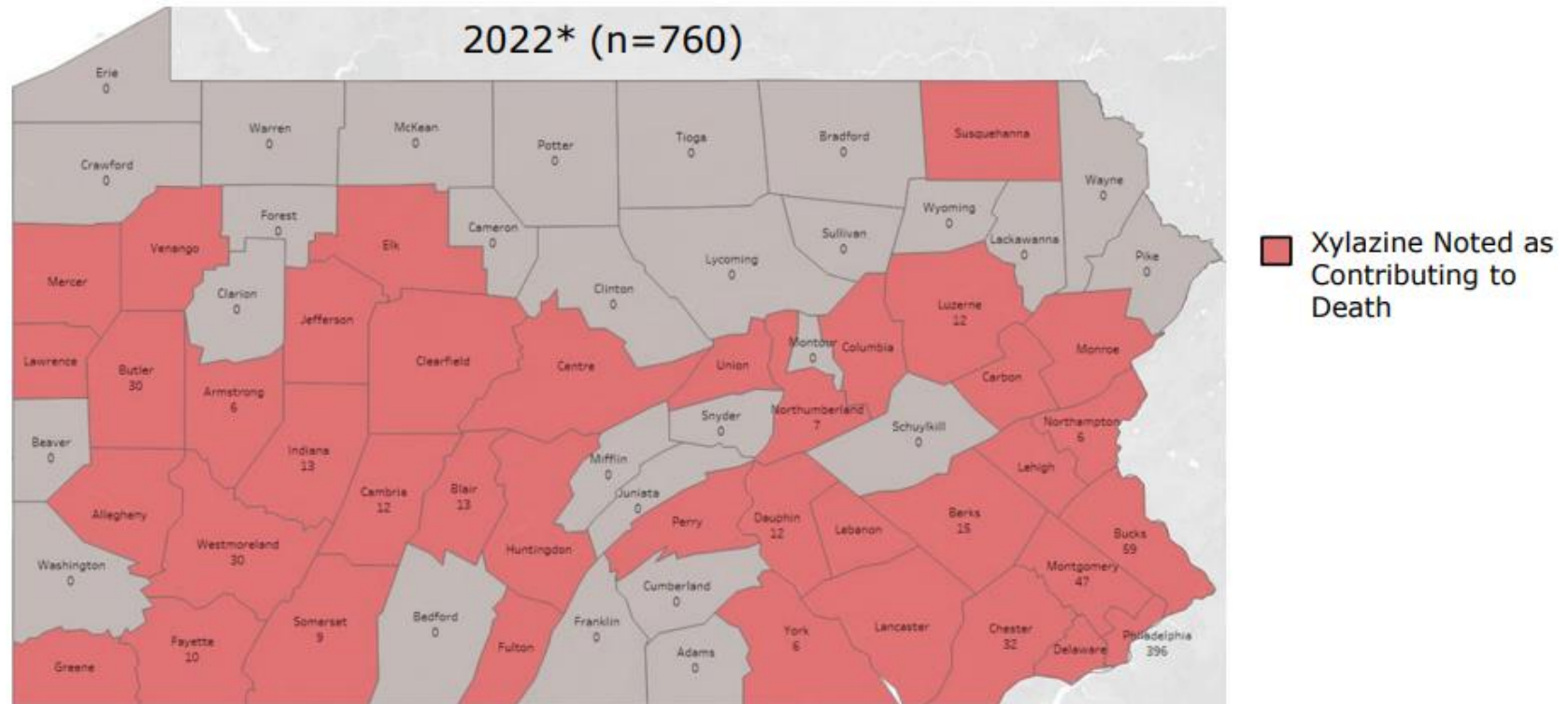


■ Xylazine Noted as Contributing to Death

*DOH data as of July 2023*

# Emerging Overdose Trends: Xylazine

*(n=count where xylazine noted as contributing to death)*



\*2022 death data is preliminary, based on death record data as of July 2023. Please note that death records for overdose deaths are often delayed by 3-6 months and counts may change. Counts do not include suicides or homicides where someone intended to harm another person by poisoning. As of July 2023, ~2% of 2022 overdose deaths are missing drug specificity. Previous years are missing  $\leq 5\%$ .

Please note that all counties participate in DOH's Enhanced Drug Overdose Death Surveillance efforts. A county that is indicated in grey does not necessarily mean that xylazine has not been detected. Counts between 1-5 are suppressed.

# Resource: Overdose Surveillance Data

Pennsylvania ODSMP – Drug Overdose Surveillance Interactive Data Report by  
Pennsylvania Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention (ODSMP)



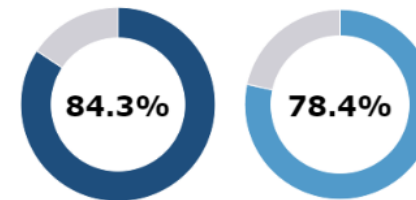
Contents | ED - Time Trends | ED - Demographics | OD - Time Trends | OD - Demographics | OD - Drug Specificity | Enhanced OD Death Data

## Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention Fatal and Non-Fatal Drug Overdose Surveillance | Interactive Data Report

In Pennsylvania,  
there were **5,143**  
drug overdose deaths in 2022  
which was a  
**4%**  
DECREASE  
compared to 2021

### Substances Involved

Of the 5,143 overdose deaths in 2022,



were opioid-related involved fentanyl

[Click for more drug specificity data](#)

### 2022 | Fatal Overdoses

Approximately every



**2 hours**

one Pennsylvanian died from a drug overdose.

**69.9%**  
of decedents were male



**54.2%**  
of decedents died at home



[Click for more enhanced data](#)

The number of fatal drug overdoses has increased since 2012 in Pennsylvania.



*Graphic includes DOH data as of July 2023*

[www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/PDMP/Pages/Data.aspx](http://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/PDMP/Pages/Data.aspx)



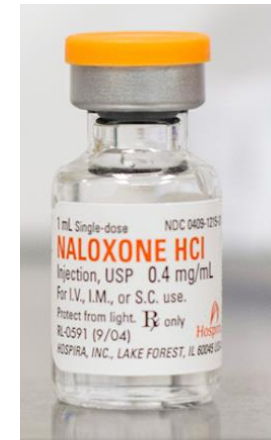
# Harm reduction strategies

# Naloxone

- Rapidly reverses opioid overdoses
- Pennsylvania's [standing order](#) covers several formulations of naloxone
  - Intranasal (4mg and 8mg)
  - Intramuscular (.4 mg)
- Good Samaritan Law (Act 139 of 2014)
  - Protects people who call 911 to report an overdose, and the person who is overdosing



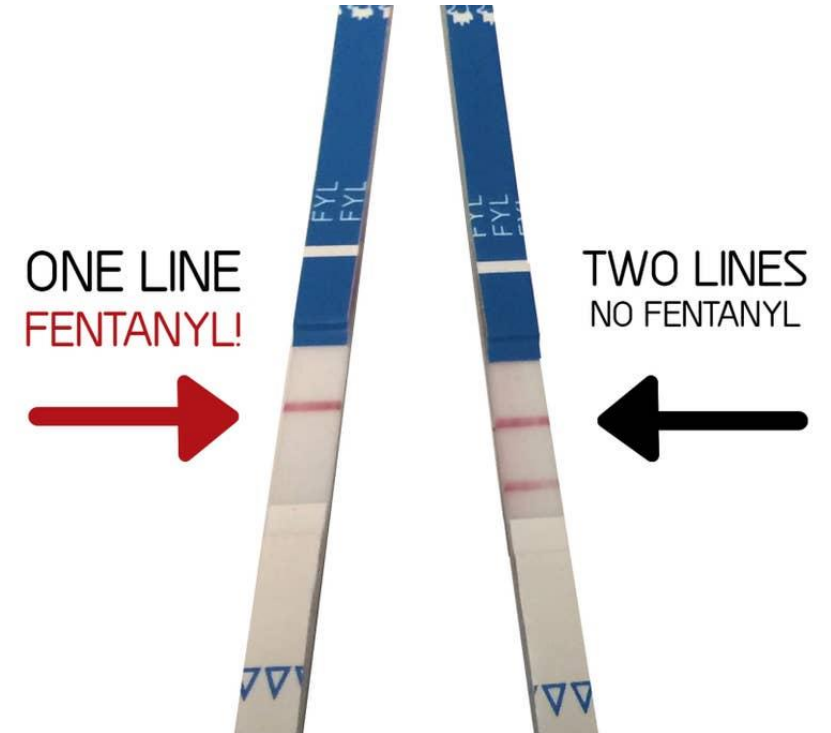
Intranasal



Intramuscular

# Drug Testing Strips (Fentanyl, Xylazine)

- Can detect the presence of adulterants in a sample of drugs
  - Fentanyl is 50x more potent than heroin
  - Xylazine is an animal tranquilizer that is quickly moving into the opioid supply
- In 2022, CDC & SAMHSA announced that federal funding can be used to purchase test strips
- [PA Act 111 of 2022](#) legalized drug checking activities in Pennsylvania



# NEW! PA Overdose Prevention Program

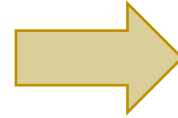
- A collaboration between DDAP and the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency
  - Formerly the Naloxone for First Responders Program
- A one-stop 'shop' for individuals and organizations seeking naloxone and related harm reduction supplies (e.g. test strips)
- Clearinghouse for information, training, and technical assistance to help groups involved in harm reduction work.
- Groups can request naloxone and test strips at:
  - <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/AboutUs/Pages/Pennsylvania-Overdose-Prevention-Program.aspx>

**NOTE: Test strips are intended for personal drug checking and harm reduction purposes only. They should not be used for urine testing or investigative purposes.**



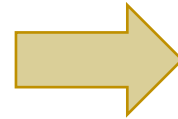
# How Can I Get These Supplies?

Individuals seeking for personal use



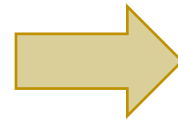
- **Mail-to-home program** (NEXT Distro)
- **Pharmacies** via DOH Standing Order
- **POPP Resource Map** (naloxone + test strips within your community)

Orgs/groups seeking small supply for their own use/distribution (e.g., treatment center for patients at discharge)



- **PA Overdose Prevention Program**
- *Seeking supply from a Recognized Entity via POPP Resource Map*
- *Request Form*

Orgs/groups seeking larger supply for distributing within their community (e.g., harm reduction org)




- **PA Overdose Prevention Program**
- *Apply to be a Recognized Entity*
- *Seek a one-off supply via POPP Request Form*

# Requesting Supplies through POPP

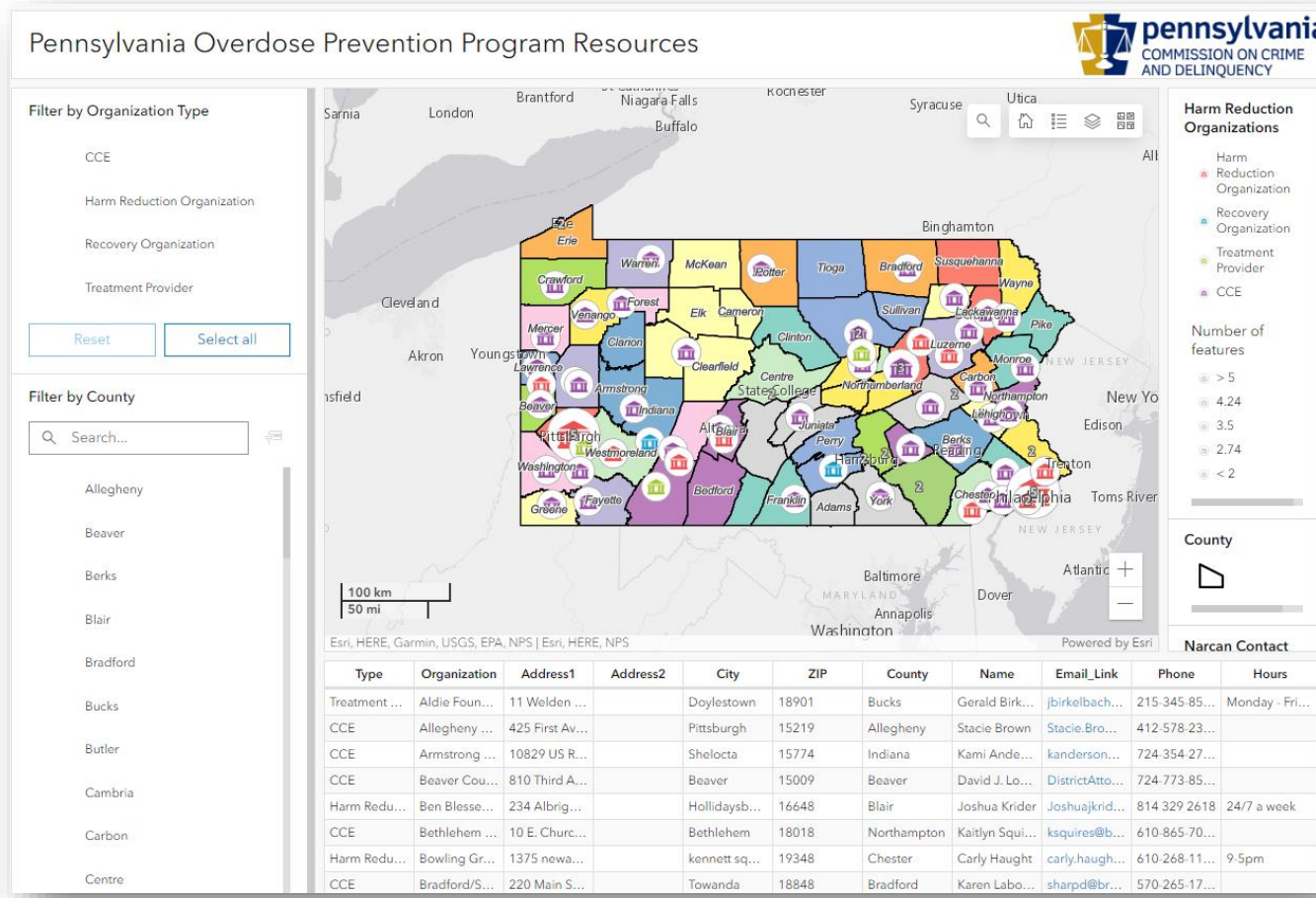
- Groups can request naloxone and FTS/XTS supplies through the [POPP Request Form](#)
  - Quantity of product(s) requested, following instructions provided;
  - Brand preference (if applicable); and
  - Need and planned distribution activities

## PA Overdose Prevention Program Request Form

Description of Need and Planned Use of Requested Supplies

\* 11. Please provide a brief description of your planned distribution activities for harm reduction supplies requested from PCCD, including the type(s) of products you are requesting and why those supplies are needed. (NOTE: Be sure to include any relevant information that will 'make the case' for why you need the type and amount of product(s) you are requesting.)  0

# Interactive Resource Map



- To help Pennsylvanians quickly find what they're looking for, PCCD is building an **interactive PA Overdose Prevention Program resource map** that allows users to search by location, type(s) of resource(s) or service(s), and other relevant data.
- This map will highlight **'POPP Recognized Entities'** who meet PCCD/DDAP criteria for distribution of harm reduction supplies and other services.

# Naloxone Distro: Product Options

## Intramuscular

- 0.4 - 2mg IM
- Also need to order syringes
- Good for distro to people who inject drugs
  - They are comfortable with syringes and are often experienced with overdose reversal techniques



## Intranasal

- 4mg or 8mg IN
- Good for distro to laypeople who may not be comfortable using syringes



# Naloxone Distro: Product Options

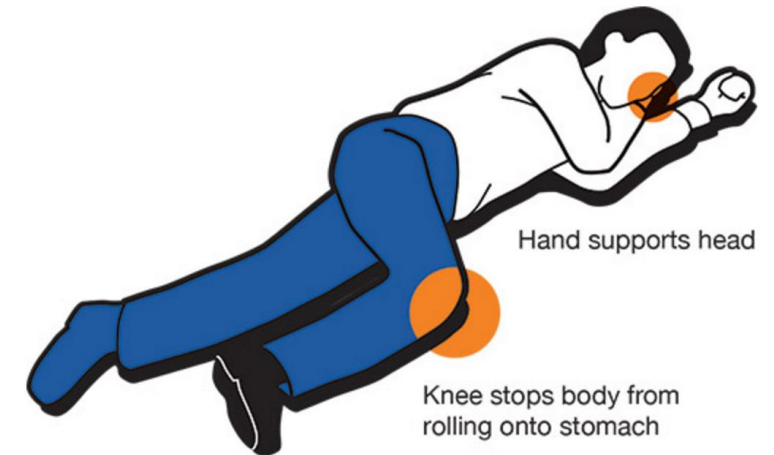
- A higher dose product is NOT always better!
- Data showing need for high doses of naloxone is weak
- Adverse effects associated with higher doses:
  - Precipitated withdrawal including pain, vomiting, diarrhea
  - Aversion to treatment and future naloxone administration

# Using Naloxone: Best Practices

- Use lowest dose necessary
- Assist ventilation for any patient with inadequate respiration
  - Rescue breathing
  - Recovery position
- Wait 2-3 minutes before giving another dose
  - Repeat dosing is occasionally required, most opioid overdoses (including fentanyl) are reversed with traditional doses of naloxone
- Reasons for ineffectiveness
  - Not an opioid overdose
  - Co-occurring sedative toxicity (e.g. benzodiazepines, xylazine, etc.)
  - Irreversible brain injury has already occurred

## The Recovery Position

Keep the Airway Clear



Stay with person. If you must leave them alone at any point, or if they are unconscious, put them in this position to keep airway clear and prevent choking.

# Test Strip Distro: Best Practices

- Give to people who use drugs and people close to them
- Know what drug users in your community need
  - Regular opioid users more likely to know fentanyl is in their drug supply, may have more of a need for xylazine test strips
  - Xylazine test strips have not been shown to be accurate for testing non-opioid drugs
  - Fentanyl test strips useful for non-opioid users (stimulants, party drugs) with no/low fentanyl tolerance who are at high risk for overdose if their drugs are contaminated
- Test strips are **NOT** for urine testing or investigative purposes
  - Test strips are intended as a tool for people who use drugs, **not** to be used punitively
- Contact Julia Hilbert at Prevention Point Pittsburgh for test strip training and education needs: [Julia@pppgh.org](mailto:Julia@pppgh.org)

# Using Test Strips: Best Practices

- Add an amount of substance (powder, rock, crushed pill) about the size of a grain of 2 grains of rice, or residue to a cooker or bottle cap
- Fill the cap with water
- Dip the white end of the test strip in the water
- Hold the strip in the water for 15 seconds
- Lay strip on a flat surface and wait for results

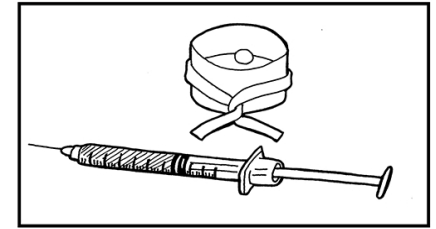
**1 line = Positive**

**2 lines = Negative (even if 2nd line is faint)**

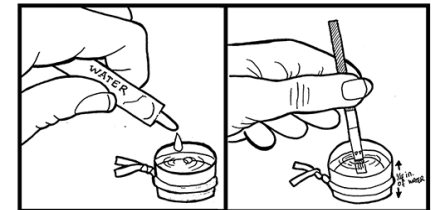
**No lines = Invalid test**

## Directions

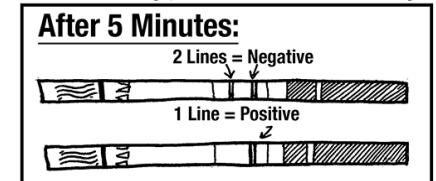
1. Prepare drugs in a fresh, clean cooker
2. Set prepared drugs aside:



3. Add 1/4 inch clean water to drug residue
4. Dip end of test strip in water for 15 seconds



5. Check the strip after 5 minutes. One line means fentanyl, 2 lines means no fentanyl



- \*Test may also be used with baggie residue.
- \*Check any street drug, benzos, crack, meth, etc, as well as all opioids.
- \*If test doesn't result in 1 or 2 lines it's invalid



# PA Harm Reduction Supply Resources:

- PA Department of Health:
  - FAQs, training resources, standing orders
  - [www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Opioids/Pages/Naloxone.aspx](http://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Opioids/Pages/Naloxone.aspx)
- Next Distro
  - Mail distro to individuals
  - [www.nextdistro.org/pennsylvania](http://www.nextdistro.org/pennsylvania)
- Pennsylvania Overdose Prevention Project
  - Bulk orders for organizations
  - <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/AboutUs/Pages/Pennsylvania-Overdose-Prevention-Program.aspx>
- Training or technical support
  - Julia Hilbert @ Prevention Point Pittsburgh: [Julia@pppgh.org](mailto:Julia@pppgh.org)
  - Carla Safronski @ PA Harm Reduction Network: [Carla@PAHRN.org](mailto:Carla@PAHRN.org)
  - Also a good opportunity to build a relationship with your local harm reduction providers and experts!

# Want to learn more?

- DDAP hosting an Emerging Drug Trends Symposium
- **When:** Thursday, November 9th; 8:30am – 4:30pm
- **Where:** Penn Harris Hotel in Camp Hill, PA
- Participants will gain a better understanding of:
  - The latest trends in drug use in Pennsylvania,
  - Changes in overdose trends, including increasing rates of overdose deaths in BIPOC communities, and
  - Best practices to respond to emerging drug trends.



# Syringe Service Programs in PA

*Photo Credit: Lancaster Harm Reduction Project*

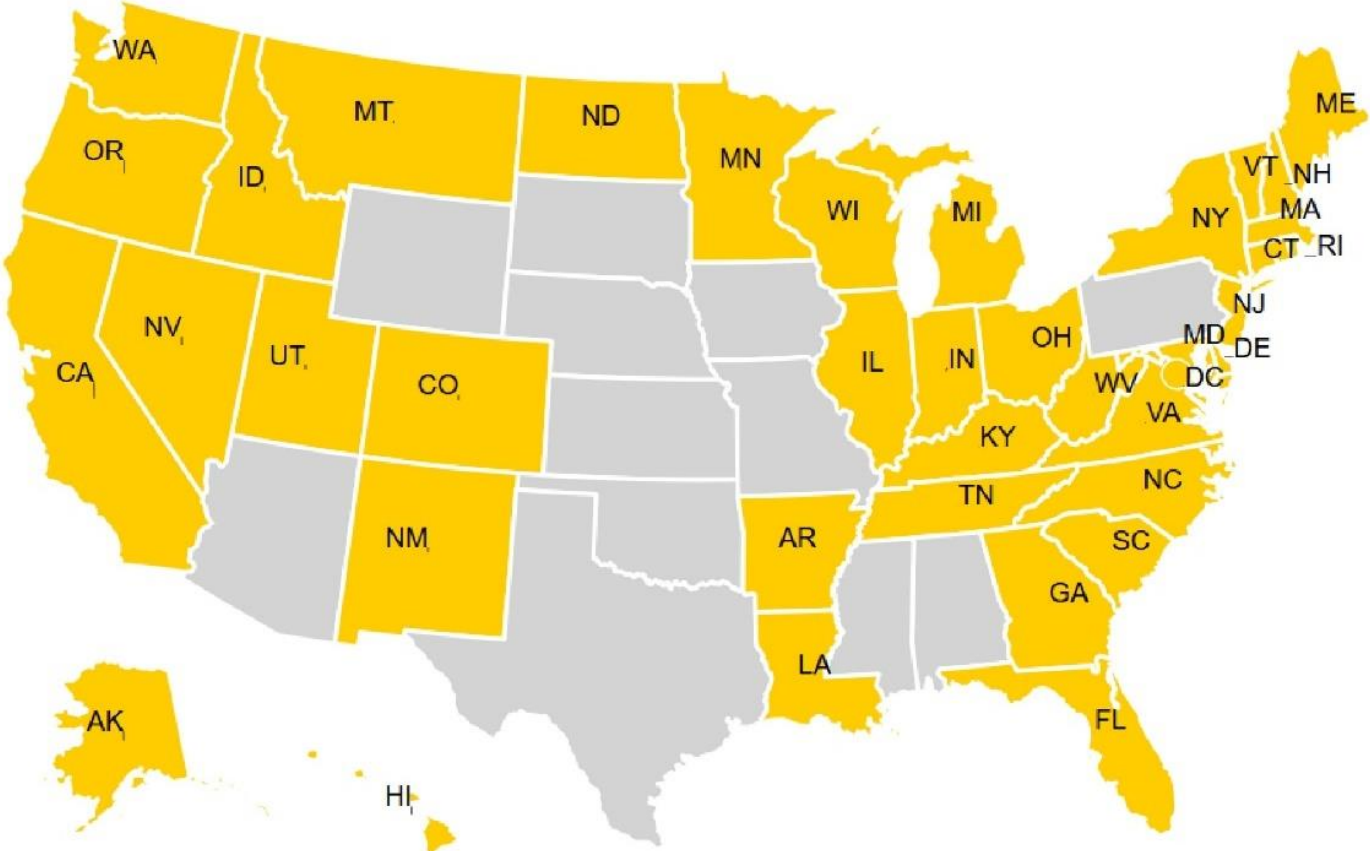
# Syringe Service Programs (SSP)

Community-based programs that provide a range of services:

- Access to/disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment
- Infectious disease screening (HIV, viral hepatitis)
- Vaccination
- Linkage to SUD treatment
- Referral to medical care, mental health services, other supports

# PA is one of 10 states without legal statewide access to SSPs

State Law Allows for the Operation of Syringe Services Programs



The Policy Surveillance Program, Temple University Beasley School of Law. <http://lawatlas.org/>

# Lancaster, Harrisburg & York Harm Reduction Project

## A Syringe Service and Safer Use Program

### What we do:

- Engages street side with individuals in areas where those who may be struggling are congregating or accessing services
- We listen -- taking a person first approach, showing empathy and compassion (no judgement)
- We don't assume and we let the client set the pace
- We make referrals for needed services (food, clothing, housing, medical, etc...)
- We build trust and relationships over time
- We connect individuals to D&A Treatment when/if a client is ready
  - Inpatient, Out-patient, Medication Assisted Treatment, 12 Step -- whatever the client feels they need or are ready for
- Always remember, the Client is the Expert of their own life, they know where they are, what they feel they can currently handle and what they are ready for!

# What Supplies We Offer:

- New syringes (along with necessary supplies for safe injecting)
- Safer Use Smoke Kits
- SHARPS containers
- Fentanyl and Xylazine Test Strips
- Naloxone Overdose Kits (IM and Nasal) w/ Training as Needed
- Wound Care Kits (including Xylazine wound care kits)
- Hygiene Kits
- Medication Lock Boxes
- Condoms
- Sqwincher's (electrolyte replenishing hydration drink)
- Blessing Bags (offered in winter)
  - socks, winter hats, gloves, scarves, mylar blankets, chap stick, etc....)
- Covid Test Kits along with a mask, hand sanitizer and Acetaminophen



# The Possibilities with Increased Resources:

- Expand our service hours
  - Currently our outreach workers in each County work approximately 20 hours per week
- Go from only offering mobile services (out of our personal vehicles) to also having a brick-and-mortar site
  - Would allow for more services to be offered on a day-to-day basis
  - Would also make it easier to provide a wound care clinic with partners, expanded HIV and Hepatitis C testing, possibly become an MAT access point
- Begin a mail-based program that can reach outside of our current service area of Lancaster City, York City and Harrisburg
- More resources also would provide for stability
  - When running solely off donations, you never know when the funding could dry up, leaving clients in a lurch at any moment



## Repercussions of Limited Access to SSPs:

- Higher rates of hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases
- Re-using syringes increases likelihood of abscess, endocarditis and other possible infections that can lead to death if left untreated
- Higher rates of overdoses – both fatal and non-fatal
- Less individuals with substance-use disorder reaching out for help
  - Due to stigma, fear, judgement and poor treatment by others, as well as institutions -- unfortunately, what many are accustomed too

# How can HIV Organizations partner with SSPs?

- If an SSP is unable to conduct HIV or HCV testing on their own, partnering is possible to promote testing
- If an HIV Organization is providing PREP, it's another opportunity to come out and engage clients
- It's an opportunity to engage those whom may test positive into care, as well as case management services or to re-engage a client who may not have disclosed their status or fell out of care back into services
- We can all work together to provide comprehensive services to high-risk populations,
  - It may require leaving the office and getting out of our comfort zone, working together with compromise
  - But it will be for the betterment of our clients, services, and organizations!



**Support SSP Expansion in PA!**  
Advocacy resources at  
[www.pahrn.org/ssps](http://www.pahrn.org/ssps)

# Resources

## Pennsylvania:

- PA Harm Reduction Network: [www.paharmreductionnetwork.org/](http://www.paharmreductionnetwork.org/)
- PA Overdose Prevention Project:
  - <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/AboutUs/Pages/Pennsylvania-Overdose-Prevention-Program.aspx>
- Next Distro: [www.nextdistro.org/pennsylvania](http://www.nextdistro.org/pennsylvania)

## National:

- Drug Policy Alliance: [drugpolicy.org/](http://drugpolicy.org/)
- National Harm Reduction Coalition: [harmreduction.org/](http://harmreduction.org/)
- National Harm Reduction TA Center: [harmreductionhelp.cdc.gov/s/](http://harmreductionhelp.cdc.gov/s/)
- NASTAD Drug User Health Program: [nastad.org/teams/drug-user-health](http://nastad.org/teams/drug-user-health)
- SSP Finder: [nasen.org](http://nasen.org)

# Stay in Touch!

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# HARM REDUCTION

IS



# LOVE

NATIONAL  
HARM REDUCTION  
COALITION

# Thank you!