

Harm Reduction in Pennsylvania

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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 to use to apply harm reduction
 - Know resources 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, such as HIV:
 - PrEP
 - Testing and treatment
 - Condom distribution



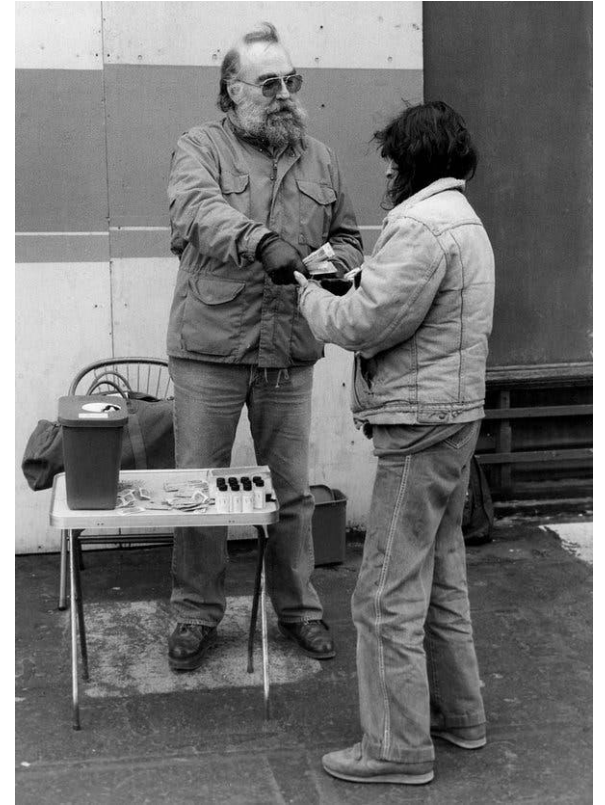
What is harm reduction?

- 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 the 1980s (photo credit: Doug Wilson, NYT)

30+ years later...

- The federal government endorses 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/>

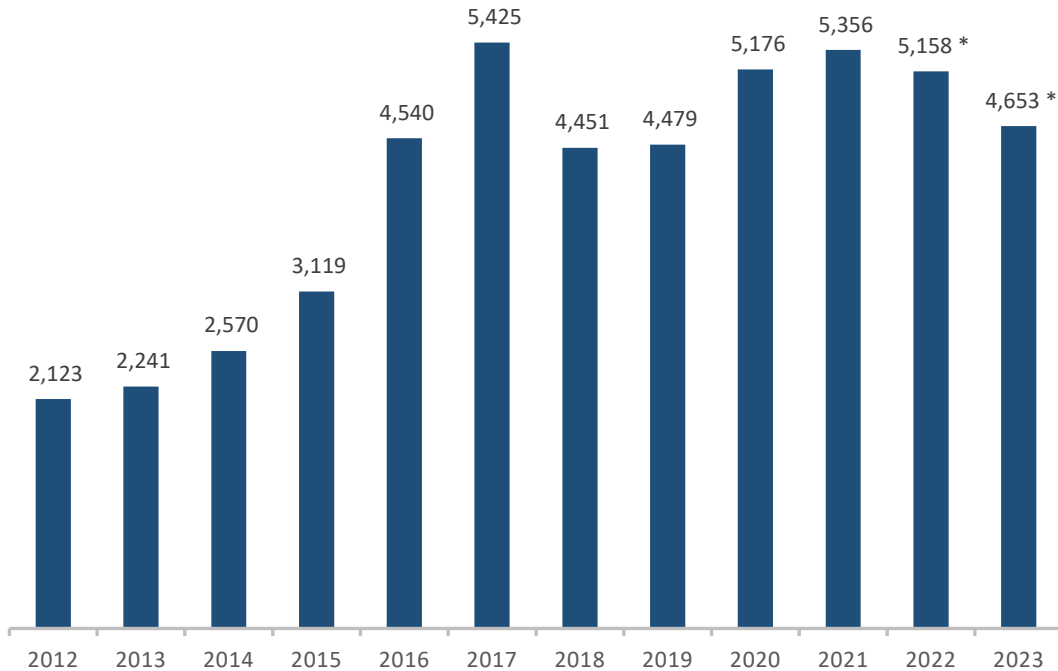


HARM REDUCTION
Saves Lives.

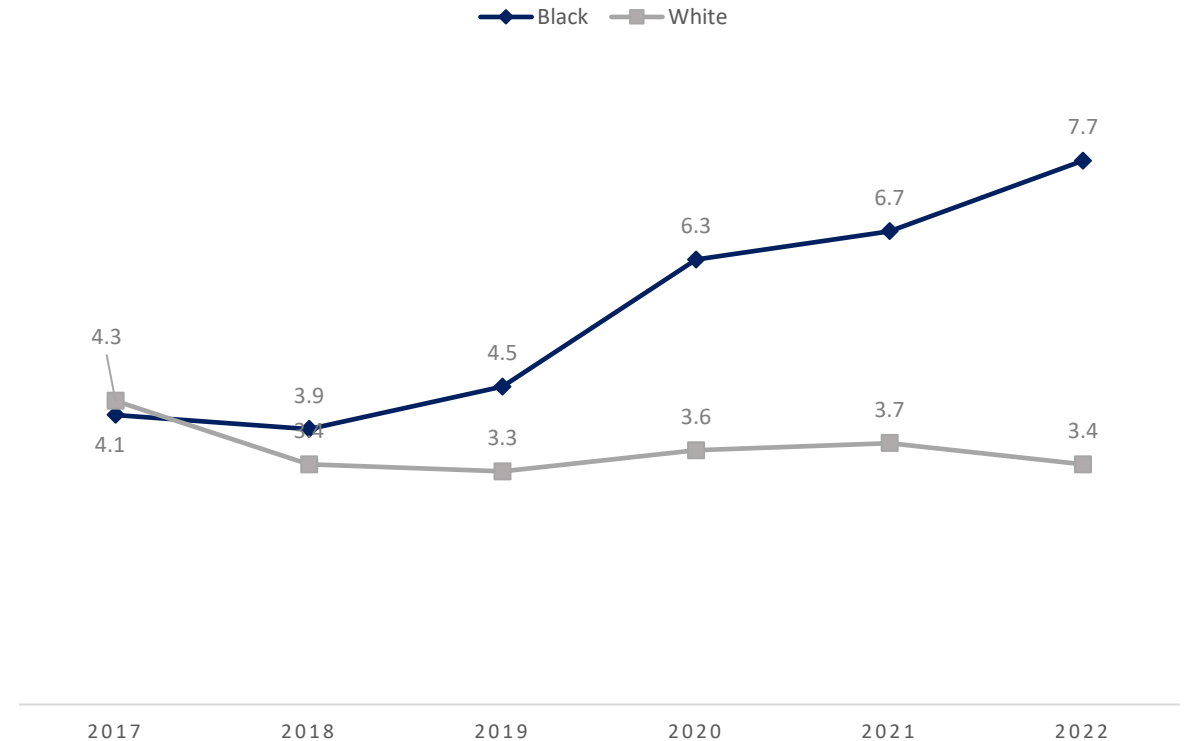
Why does PA need harm reduction?

PA's Evolving Overdose Epidemic

Number of Overdose Deaths Per Year (2012-2023)*



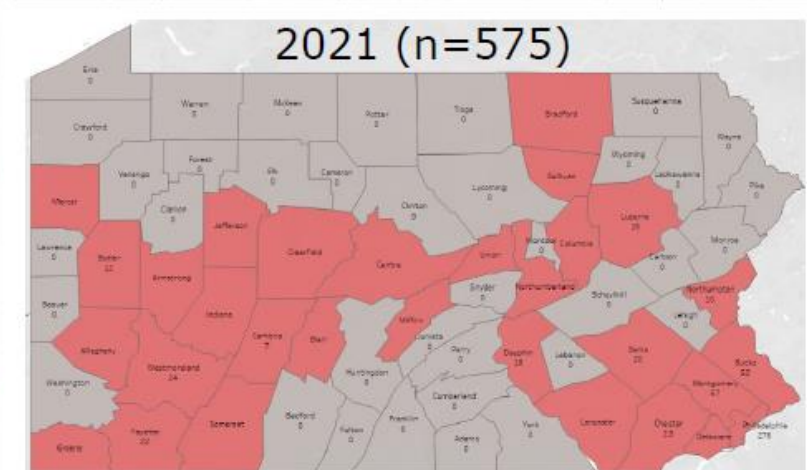
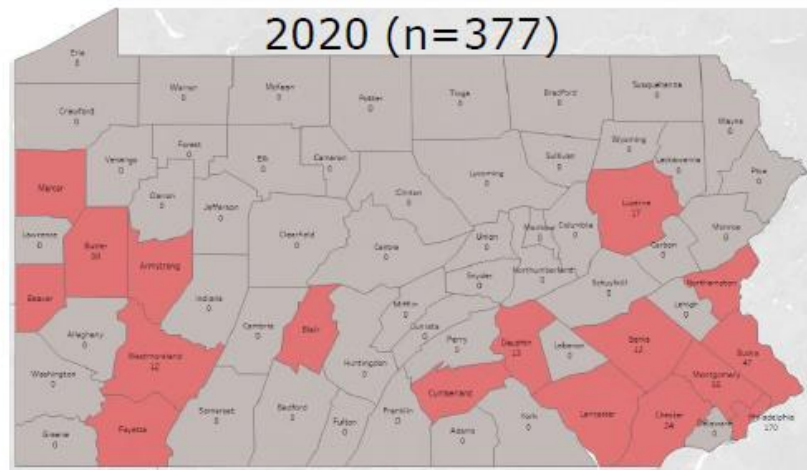
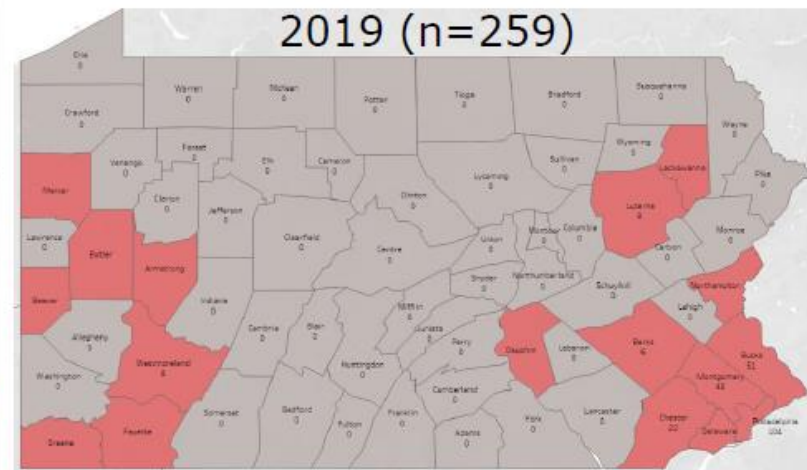
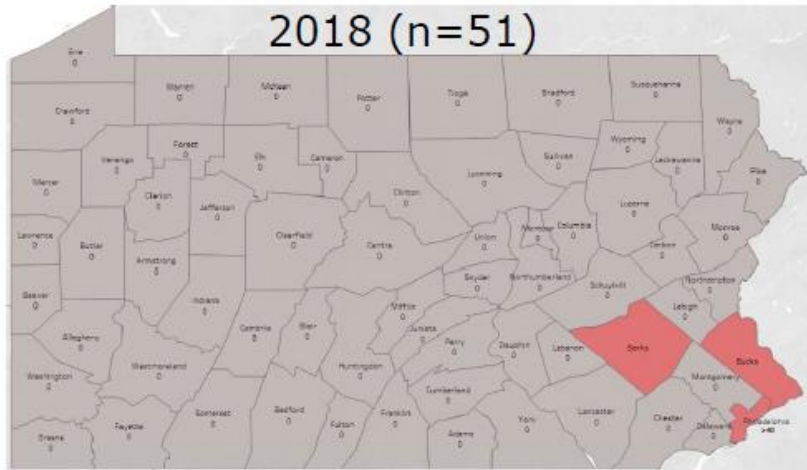
Fatal Overdose Rate, Black vs. White PA'ians (2017-2022)



*Data source: PA Department of Health, Office of Drug Surveillance and Misuse Prevention. 2022 and 2023 death data subject to change, based on death record data reported to DOH as of June 2024. Death investigations and overdose death records are often delayed 3-6 months and 2022/2023 counts will likely be higher than currently reported.

Emerging Overdose Trends: Xylazine

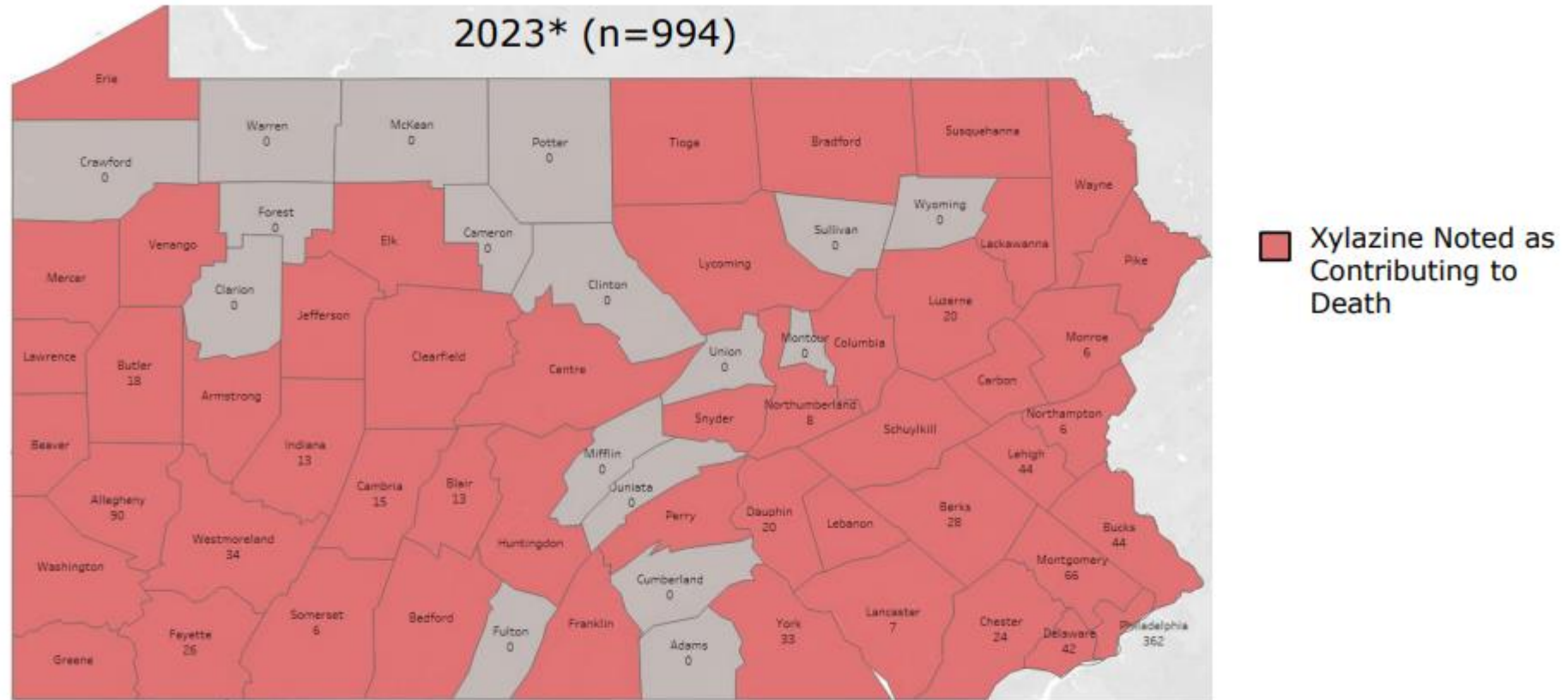
(n=count where xylazine noted as contributing to death)



■ Xylazine Noted as Contributing to Death

Emerging Overdose Trends: Xylazine

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



*2023 death data is preliminary, based on death record data as of March 2024. 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 March 2024, ~6% of 2023 overdose deaths are missing drug specificity. Previous years are missing <5%.

Please note that not all counties participate in our 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 and 5 are suppressed.

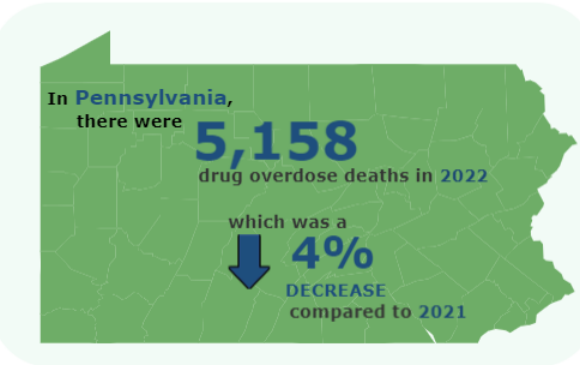
Resource: Overdose Surveillance Data

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



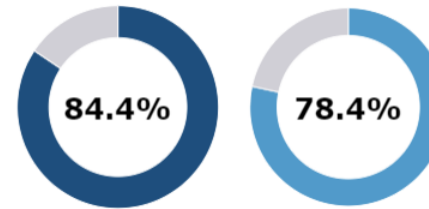
Contents | ED - Time Trends | ED - Demographics | OD - Time Trends | OD - Demographics | OD - Drug Specificity | Enhanced OD Death Data

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



Substances Involved

Of the 5,158 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**



54.4% 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 June 2024

www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/PDMP/Pages/Data.aspx



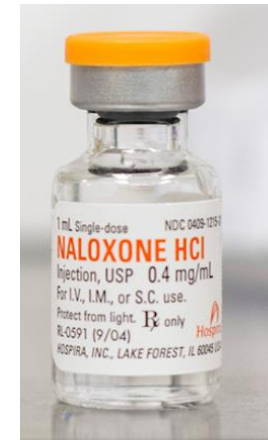
Harm reduction strategies

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



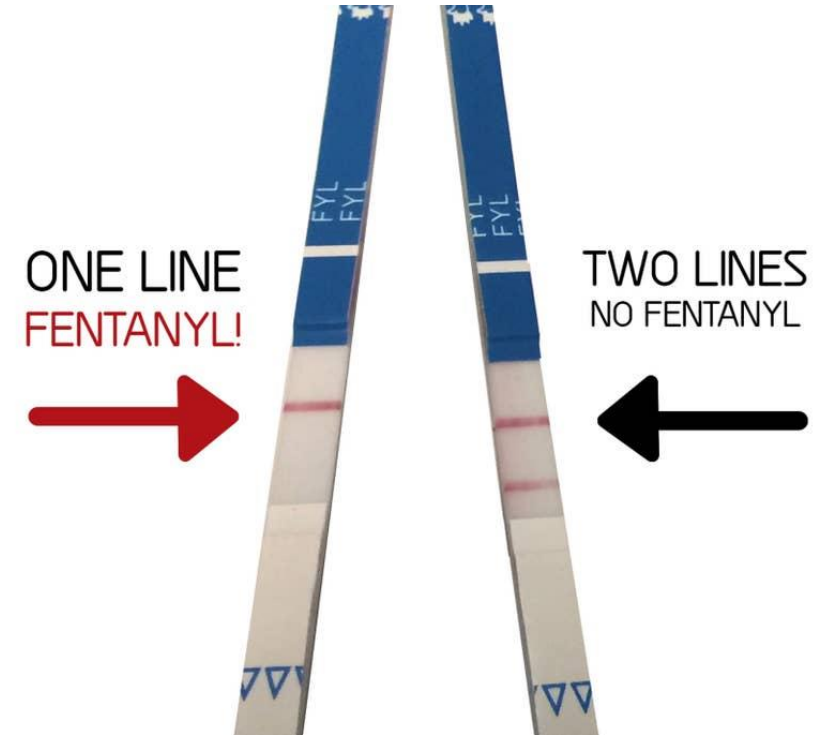
Intranasal



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



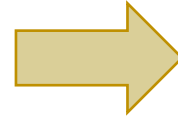
PA Overdose Prevention Program (POPP)

- A collaboration between DDAP and the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)
- A one-stop 'shop' for individuals and organizations seeking naloxone and drug test strips
- Support with for information, training, and technical assistance provided by Prevention Point Pittsburgh
- 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.

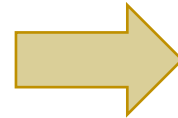
How Can I Get These Supplies?

Individuals seeking for personal use



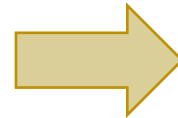
- **Mail-to-home program** (NEXT Distro)
- **Pharmacies** via DOH Standing Order
- **POPP Resource Map** (naloxone + test strips within your community)

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



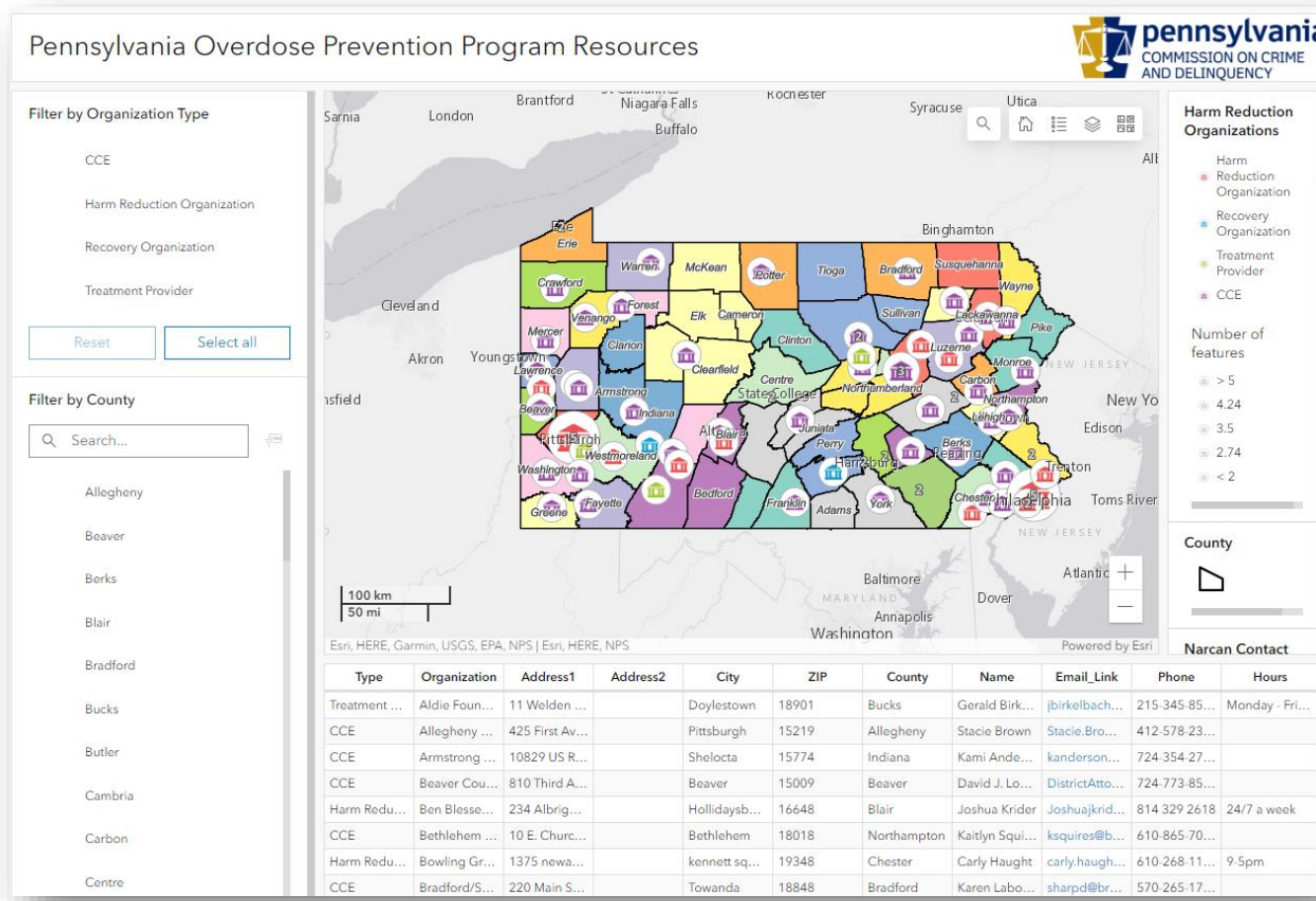
- PA Overdose Prevention Program**
- *Find local Recognized Entities that can provide supplies on the POPP Resource Map*

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*

Interactive Resource Map



- PCCD's *interactive POPP resource map* lets you search by location, type(s) of resource(s) or service(s), and other relevant data.
- This map highlights **'POPP Recognized Entities'** who serve as local points of distribution for naloxone and drug testing strips


Distribution map: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/fbd13a52ce6c439d983d336c084a3e32/>

Requesting Supplies through POPP

- Groups can also request naloxone test strips 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

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

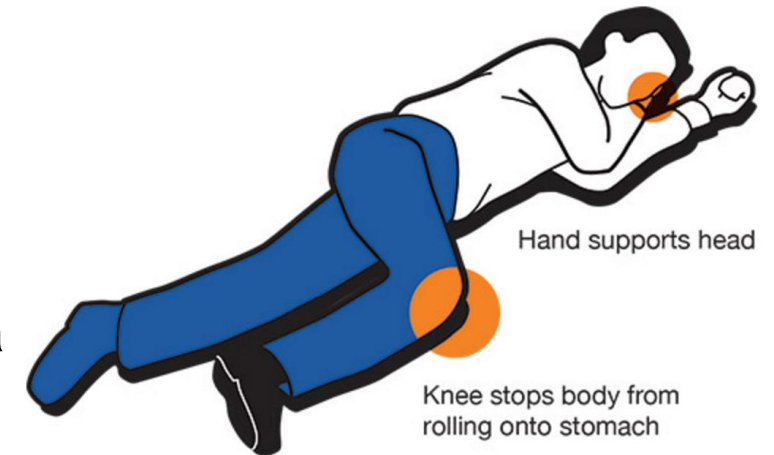
- A higher dose product is NOT always better!
- Data showing need for high naloxone doses is weak
 - NY State comparison of 4mg to 8mg:
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7305a4.htm>
- Adverse effects associated with higher doses:
 - Precipitated withdrawal including pain, vomiting, diarrhea
 - Aversion to treatment and future naloxone administration
- A recent Compassionate Overdose Response Summit developed guidance on naloxone dosing and the role of oxygen in overdose response
 - <https://www.healthmanagement.com/insights/webinars/compassionate-overdose-response-summit-and-naloxone-dosing-meeting/>

Using Naloxone: Best Practices

- Use lowest dose necessary
- Assist ventilation for any patient with inadequate respiration
 - **Rescue breathing is especially important with the current drug supply**
 - 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

PA Harm Reduction Supply Resources:

- PA Department of Health:
 - FAQs, training resources, standing orders
 - www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Opioids/Pages/Naloxone.aspx
- Next Distro
 - Mail distro to individuals
 - 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
 - Carla Safronski @ PA Harm Reduction Network: Carla@PAHRN.org
 - Also a good opportunity to build a relationship with your local harm reduction providers and experts!



Syringe Service Programs in PA

Photo Credit: Lancaster Harm Reduction Project

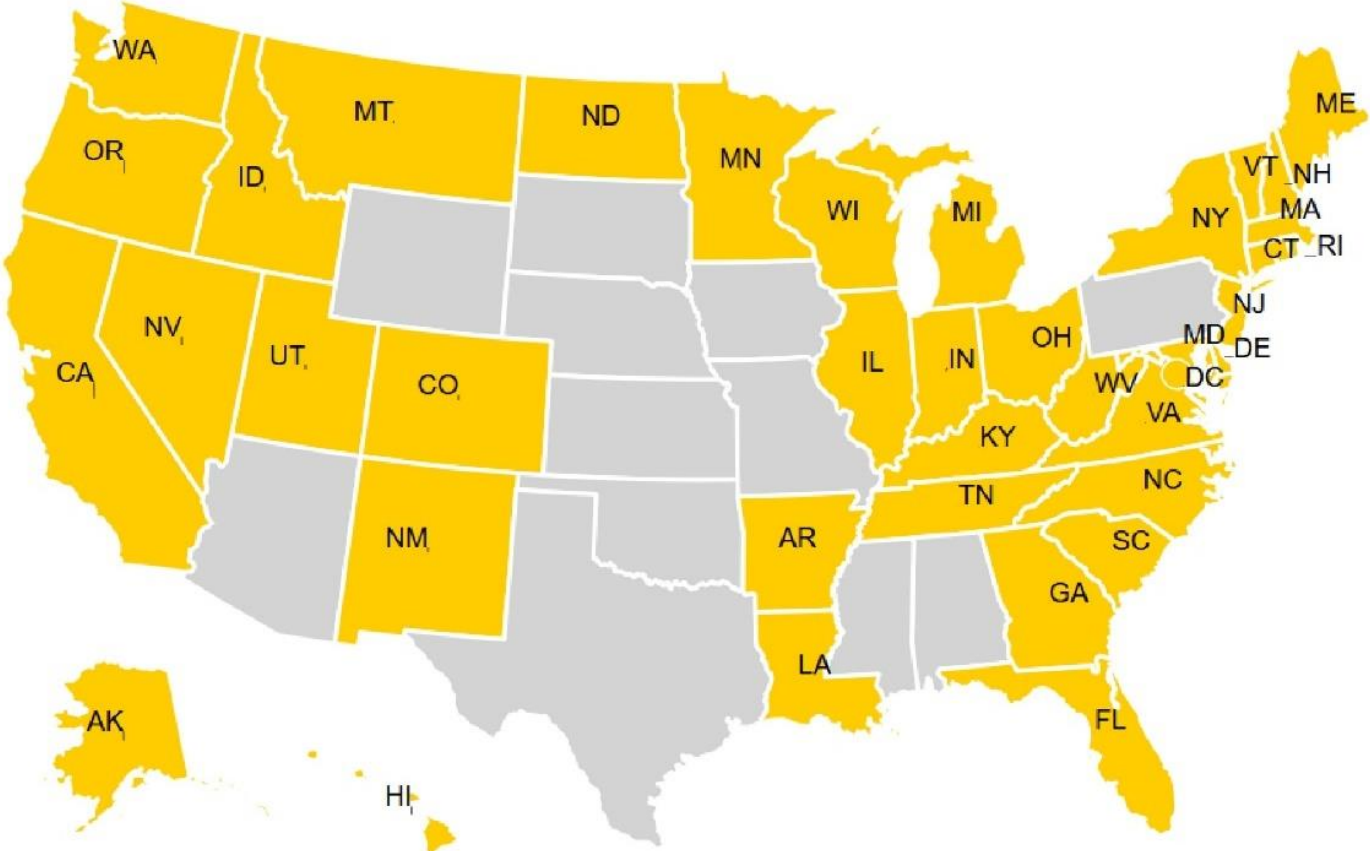
Syringe Service Programs (SSP)

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/>

Services Offered: More than just supply distribution

- Engage street side with individuals in areas where those who may be struggling are congregating or accessing services
- Listen: take a person first approach, show empathy and compassion
 - Judgement-free access to services
- Don't assume - let the client set the pace
- Referrals for needed services (food, clothing, housing, medical, etc...)
- Build trust and relationships over time to keep people coming back
- Connect individuals to SUD 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
- Honor that each client is the expert of their own life. They know where they are, what change they can currently handle and what they are ready for!

Supplies Offered: More than just syringes

- Syringes and other safe injecting supplies
- Safe smoking kits
- SHARPS containers
- Fentanyl and Xylazine test strips
- Naloxone kits (IM and Nasal) and overdose reversal training
- Wound care kits
- Hygiene kits
- Medication lock boxes
- Condoms
- Food and water
- Blessing Bags (offered in winter)
 - socks, winter hats, gloves, scarves, mylar blankets, chapstick, etc....



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 infections that can lead to serious (and costly) complications or 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 to

How can CBOs and health agencies partner with SSPs?

- If an SSP is unable to conduct HIV or HCV testing on their own, partnering can promote testing
 - SSPs and nurses can partner to link those who test positive into care and/or case management or to re-engage clients who fell out of care
- If you offer other community health services like vaccinations, it's an opportunity to come out and engage clients
- More wound care services will be needed since xylazine is being founds in the drug supply across the state
- Partner to provide comprehensive services to high-risk populations
 - It may require compromise but making services more accessible and low-threshold can benefit clients and organizations!



Support SSP Expansion in PA!
Advocacy resources at
www.pahrn.org/ssps

Resources

Pennsylvania:

- PA Harm Reduction Network: 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

National:

- Drug Policy Alliance: drugpolicy.org/
- National Harm Reduction Coalition: harmreduction.org/
- NASTAD Drug User Health Program: nastad.org/teams/drug-user-health
- SSP Finder: nasen.org

HARM REDUCTION

IS



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Thank you!