

Four Data Driven Harm Reduction Strategies in Overdose Prevention

What steps can communities take to incorporate harm reduction in overdose prevention? The following summary provides concrete examples of data-driven harm reduction strategies to address rising rates of overdose. Case studies were drawn from overdose prevention coalitions participating in the [California Overdose Prevention Network \(COPN\) Accelerator 3.0 Program](#). These can serve as models for other coalitions and organizations across the country.

Expanding Harm Reduction Services in Jails

Coalition: The Butte Glenn Opioid Safety Coalition works in three counties and serves tribal areas in the region. They serve both rural and urban communities impacted by overdose with a focus on those who are incarcerated and ensure that medication assisted treatment (MAT) and naloxone are available throughout the community.

The Need: Overdose rates due to fentanyl and opioids are on the rise in their counties, with alarming rates in their local jails. Data demonstrates that MAT and harm reduction programs in the prison system have decreased overdose rates in California, but there is considerable stigma against providing harm reduction services within the county, particularly to those who are recently incarcerated. Based on the needs in the jails, the coalition focused on improving systems of care for incarcerated people.

The Result: Despite the difficulties of implementing harm reduction in a politically charged, adversarial environment, the coalition has **successfully launched a naloxone upon release program** and has strengthened partnerships with their local jails.



“Sharing our data with other networks and stakeholders has been key to true policy shifts and changes throughout our communities. We realized the rates of certain populations were less than we thought, and that we would have created more stereotypes and stigma had we put our focus there.”

- Monica Soderstrum

Destigmatizing Harm Reduction Services

Coalition: The Northern Sierra Opioid Safety Coalition serves four rural counties in northern California. Despite challenges from the pandemic and devastation caused by wildfires, the coalition continues to respond to the overdose crisis. They have a strong focus on harm reduction despite pushback in some of their rural communities. The coalition works hard to engage their Latinx and Tribal populations and offer a contingency management program for people who use stimulants.

The Need: In analyzing their local data, the coalition found that Lassen and Plumas counties consistently have higher rates of overdose deaths due to stimulants than the state average. Additionally, death rates are higher in areas of their community with fewer harm reduction services. Despite the effectiveness of harm reduction in reducing overdose-related morbidity and mortality, stigma continues to be a major barrier to implementing these services throughout their communities.

The Result: To address the stigma and misinformation surrounding harm reduction services, their coalition **developed an anti-stigma campaign called *Addiction has a Face***. They are planning to run ads in the newspaper, radio station, movie theaters, and the local magazine. They will also launch it as a social media campaign, post flyers on bulletin boards, and potentially run ads on shopping carts at local grocery stores. The coalition also **increased access to harm reduction supplies using vending machines, and have shared their [operations manual](#)** for other communities to looking to implement a similar model. The manual includes their Board of Supervisors approval process, a sample memorandum of understanding (MOU) with sites that 'host' the vending machines, educational materials and a press release to inform the public.



"Our coalition used key informant interviews and public opinion polls during the data collection and analysis phase of the COPN Accelerator 3.0 Program. By doing so, we discovered that there is a disconnect between key decision makers and the public."

-Kate Manganaro

Naloxone Vending Machines:

Coalition: The Santa Clara County Opioid Overdose Prevention Project is comprised of subcommittees focused on treatment, youth, and outreach. Their members are health care professionals and other volunteers from a variety of backgrounds who aim to promote opioid safety throughout their county.

The Need: Overdose deaths continue to rise among young people in their community. The coalition is dedicated to reducing stigma and increasing awareness among this demographic, and making sure young people can easily access life-saving resources including Narcan.

The Result: Their coalition implemented **naloxone vending machines** at Santa Clara University and the local jail to allow individuals to access Narcan and information without fear of judgement, stigma, or recognition. These vending machines provide low-barrier access to health products to Santa Clara County residents. People can register to receive a magnetic strip card to access the vending machines at any of their locations. Demographic information is collected at the time of registration to better understand the needs of the community and still allow for anonymity.



“Our data shows who is affected by the overdose epidemic in our county, reveals trends and associated responses that need to be changed, and allows for a review of what is working and what changes need to be made.”

-Mike Torres

Expanding Online Access to Naloxone

Coalition: The SLO Opioid Safety Coalition serves San Luis Obispo County, which is primarily rural. Action teams focus on a specific sub-topic such as data, community prevention, naloxone, and MAT. The coalition works to ensure their outreach and educational efforts are serving the needs of the whole community. They have been successful in leveraging media opportunities (radio, local news, social media) to communicate current information about overdose, risks and how to access services. They also look at local data to determine locations or populations that have a harder time accessing services, and focus outreach efforts in those areas. Their goal is to meet people where they are and ensure no one falls through the cracks.

The Need: Their data showed that fentanyl overdoses have more than doubled over the past year and are projected to continue to increase. With the prevalence of fentanyl in most of their local drug supply, it is critical that naloxone and other preventative measures are available in their communities.

The Result: To make naloxone more accessible in their county, their coalition collaborated with the Cal Poly Digital Transformation Hub (DxHub) and a team of university students [to develop Naloxone Now!](#) Using Naloxone Now online or through the phone app, SLO community members can find the nearest location to get naloxone or have it delivered at no cost. The coalition also created a billboard and outreach campaign to promote community awareness of increasing overdoses and the availability of naloxone through the app. With this campaign they have seen upticks in requests among community members.



“Ground truthing helped us with language for local awareness campaigns. Our coalition was initially going to use the phrase: ‘Overdose happens, but it doesn't have to happen to you. Be prepared’. The “you” part was off-putting to many people we showed the ad to. So, we changed it to ‘Overdose affects us all. Be prepared’.”

-Jenn Rhoads