

# Four Data Driven Strategies to Engage Youth in Overdose Prevention

What steps can communities take to engage youth in overdose prevention? The following summary provides concrete examples of data-driven strategies to address rising rates of overdose among youth. 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.

## Surveying Youth's Experiences with Substance Use: Empower Watsonville's Point-In-Time Survey

**Coalition:** Empower Watsonville is a collaborative, youth-led coalition that aims to provide culturally relevant resources and information to teens and families. The perspectives and experiences of youth participants are critical to addressing substance use and overdose throughout their community.

**The Need:** Empower Watsonville needed accurate and up-to-date data to increase community awareness around youth substance use and inform local school districts and policy makers of needed changes.

**The Result:** Empower Watsonville **created a point-in-time survey to anonymously survey and assess local youth's experiences with substance use**. Youth administered the survey to their peers and therefore received a high response rate. They are using the findings to help establish a restorative policy for students who possess drugs or are intoxicated on a school campus. Their goal is to influence local policymakers to include resources for students including naloxone, referral services, and restorative approaches. Youth engaged through the coalition are also using the data findings to deliver presentations to parents in the community and discuss how parents can help with prevention starting at home.



"We prioritized fostering youth-to-youth relationships, where youth could express their concerns, voice their needs, and share their experiences. Additionally, the data from our survey has been foundational to gathering data in our community and has given us leverage to introduce substance use concerns in our community."

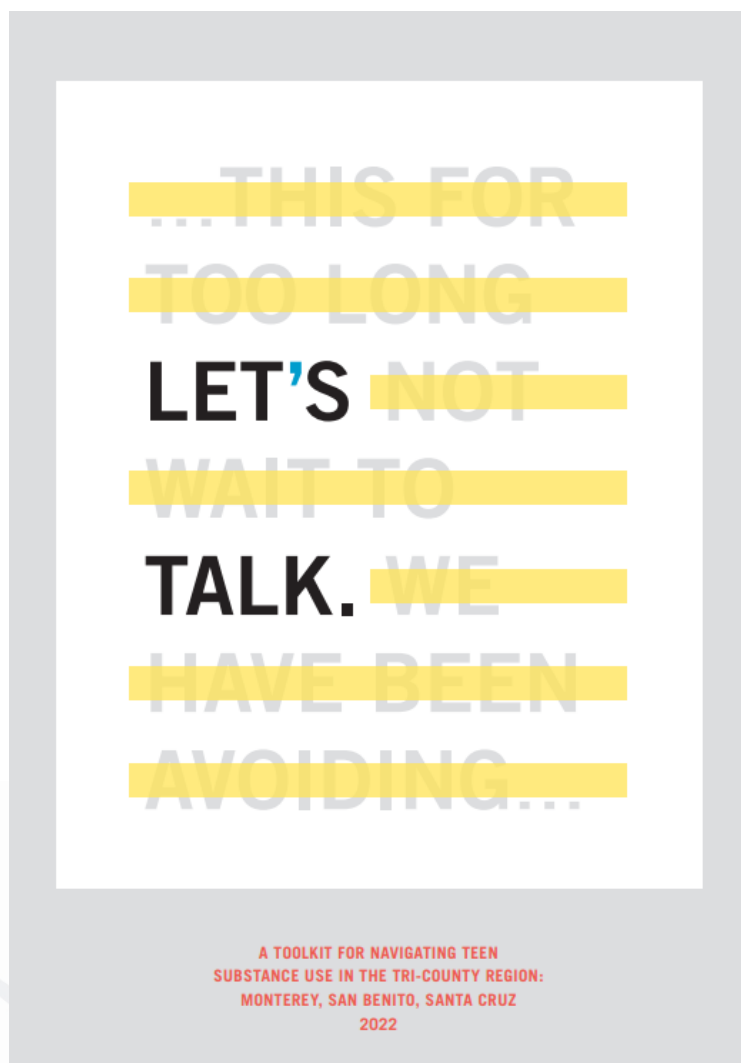
- Esme Vargas

## Getting a Substance Use Prevention Toolkit into the Hands of Parents: Central Coast Region's Let's Talk Guide

**Coalition:** The Central Coast Regional Team is a tri-county collaborative that aims to improve access to care among youth and build their capacity to address substance use among their peers.

**The Need:** Local data revealed an increase in overdose incidents among transitional aged youth. They also found that youth and young adults are disproportionately affected by the circulation of fentanyl within the local drug supply.

**The Result:** The team decided to adopt a **parent toolkit to better facilitate conversations about youth substance use within their communities**. They operated a massive mailing campaign to send a printed version of the booklet, in both English and Spanish, to every parent of an incoming 9th grader in their region.



“Using data-driven strategies increased partnerships and trust among the education sector, validated our work, and made it possible for us to respond to community-youth focused needs.”

- Rita Hewitt

## Equipping Schools with Naloxone: Lake County Office of Education Naloxone Policy

**Coalition:** SafeRx Lake County is comprised of 13 agencies in rural Lake County. They are currently focused on youth engagement, Narcan distribution, and an anti-stigma campaign.

**The Need:** Their team identified Narcan distribution in schools as a very important safeguard for youth who are using or experimenting with opioids.

**The Result:** They used a combination of data sources and strategies including overdose hotspotting and survey data to drive their work. Their data helped them better understand and describe the scope of the problem and build a strong case for more appropriate policies in a predominantly conservative political environment. They **used their findings to implement a local school naloxone policy**. With this policy change, they will be able to train school administrators, educators, and other staff members and get kits into schools throughout the county.



“The shock and awe from the data and the pressing need to work hard and quickly to stay ahead of the tragic overdoses has been key in our work.”

- Kim Tangermann

## Building Youth Awareness and Skills: Implementing harm reduction curriculum for youth

**Coalition:** The Safe Rx Mendocino Opioid Safety Coalition serves Mendocino County and the Round Valley Indian Tribes. The coalition targets historically underrepresented and disproportionately impacted communities including transitional age youth, Native American and Latino/Latinx/Mexican communities, and people who inject drugs (PWID).

**The Need:** The team found increasing rates of combination overdoses (opioids and stimulants) and increasing rates of fentanyl overdoses among youth. They wanted to raise awareness of this combination drug use and develop youth leaders to combat rising rates of fentanyl-related overdoses. Although they have strong harm reduction services throughout their county, they wanted to expand youth-centered overdose prevention measures and increase community awareness.

**The Result:** In response to increasing rates of overdose among youth and gaps in community knowledge around harm reduction, Safe Rx Mendocino **implemented a harm reduction curriculum for youth**. This resource will be taught and distributed throughout schools, drop-in centers, and family resource centers.



“We had assumptions coming into the program but throughout the process we had to change. Although we are focused on opioids, we cannot ignore methamphetamine overdoses with equivalent numbers. Harm reduction seemed like the best intervention for our coalition’s efforts.”

- Karen Lovato