Addressing the Overdose Crisis in Philadelphia during COVID-19

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Objectives

- Discuss current and local information related to the overdose crisis and the impact made by COVID-19
- Discuss harm reduction strategies and best practices for safer drug use during the pandemic
- Provide services available for people who use drugs and their loved ones
Philadelphia had the highest overdose death rate of the top 10 largest U.S. cities in 2016 and 2017.
Drug overdoses caused nearly 3x as many deaths as homicides in 2019
The rise of fentanyl-involved deaths in Philadelphia

Number of Overdose Deaths by Specific Drugs Involved, 2010-2019

Specific Drugs Involved
- Fentanyl
- Heroin
- Pharmaceutical Opioids
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine

1 Specific drugs involved are not mutually exclusive
2 Includes both illicit and pharmaceutical fentanyl
3 May include morphine only deaths
4 Includes methadone
1,150 people died from drug overdoses in 2019.

Number of Unintentional Overdose Deaths by Drugs Involved, 2010-2019

1Additional drugs such as sedating drugs may have been involved; Stimulants include cocaine, methamphetamine and pharmaceutical amphetamines.

Medical Examiner’s Office, Philadelphia Department of Public Health.
Fatal overdoses are the tip of the iceberg

Overdose deaths

People who
- use naloxone in the community
- overdose multiple times
- don’t go to the hospital after OD

Naloxone reversals by first responders, 2014 - 2018

- EMS
- Police
- SEPTA
All geographic regions and demographics are affected
Opioids are also the tip of the iceberg

Other drugs are on the rise in Philadelphia

**SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS (K2/SPICE)**
UNPREDICTABLE DANGER

**HEALTH EFFECTS OF K2/SPICE ARE UNPREDICTABLE**

These drugs can act on many different brain cell receptors, including the
receptors that bind to THC (found in marijuana).

They produce unpredictable effects that can be dangerous.

**BRAIN**
- Suicidal thoughts
- Violent behavior
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations

**HEART**
- Rapid heart rate

**STOMACH**
- Nausea and vomiting

For more information, visit:
https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/drugs/k2/synthetic-cannabinoids.html

“Tranq Dope”—The Heroin Combo That’s Been Putting Philly to Sleep

**“Lab Testing Anomalous Street Drug Samples in Kensington Philadelphia”**

- “The one unique component of Philadelphia’s heroin supply is the addition of the tranquilizer Xylazine, a demand-driven trend exported here from Puerto Rico, where Xylazine abuse is common. Drug users refer to this as “tranq dope” or “sleep cut,” as it produces a sedating effect preferred by some (particularly Latino) users.”
Cocaine and methamphetamine-involved deaths are increasing in Philadelphia

Full report: CHART Stimulants
And because one crisis wasn’t enough...
The opioid epidemic was already a national crisis. Covid-19 could be making things worse.

Overdose deaths skyrocket in Pennsylvania during COVID-19 pandemic
A pandemic inside another pandemic is what many healthcare experts are calling the recent uptick in opioid-related deaths during the...

National Geographic
The pandemic may fuel the next wave of the opioid crisis
A staggering 46,000 Americans died of overdoses in 2018. While COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on various vulnerable populations, ...

The Philadelphia Inquirer
How the coronavirus has upended the lives of people who have no safe place to quarantine
In February, they started suboxone, the addiction-treatment drug that helps ...

75,000 American Deaths Predicted From Overdose and Suicide During COVID-19 Pandemic

The Philadelphia Inquirer
Coronavirus killed panhandling and closed food pantries. This volunteer is scrambling to keep homeless Philad...
St. Miriam's is one tiny part of Philadelphia's patchwork food supply for homeless people, which has strained and shredded during the ...

Wall Street Journal
Coronavirus Disrupts Illegal Drug Supply in U.S., DEA Official Says
Coronavirus Disrupts Illegal Drug Supply in U.S., DEA Official Says ... long effect will last in a public-health crisis without modern precedent, ... overdoses after going through withdrawal and seeing their tolerance
Stigma & discrimination

Poor Health: High rates of chronic medical conditions

There are increased risks associated with COVID-19 for people who use drugs and/or experiencing housing insecurity

Congregate settings: Shelters, public transportation, soup kitchens, health clinics and many other service venues

Limited ability to follow public health advice
Impact of COVID-19 on Syringe Service Programs

Based on data collected from 173 syringe service programs that responded to a North American Syringe Exchange Network (NASEN) survey March 31 – April 16, 2020.
Most community-based organizations are operating with modified and/or limited services

Services that will be available:

1. **Essential Services & Medications**: Medication access is available for STEP, PrEP, Hep C treatment & Clinica Bienstar.
   - **PrEP, Hep C treatment**: Mon-Fri, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
   - **Clinica Bienstar**: Medical case management & medication pick-up is available only on Mon, Tues & Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Dr. Bamford has cancelled all appointments.
   - **STEP**: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, 12 p.m.-3 p.m.
   - These programs are not enrolling new participants at this time. If you were referred to Prevention Point’s MAT program or were just released from jail, ask to speak with a STEP staff member.

2. **Mail Services**: You can pick up mail Mon, Tues & Fri, 12-4 p.m. at the RUTH STREET entrance.

3. **Syringe Services Program**: Operating out of KENSINGTON AVE entrance. Call 215-530-2370 with any questions.
   - Emergency packs: Monday only, 12-3 p.m.
   - Syringe exchange: Tuesday & Friday only, 12-3 p.m.
   - Mobile sites: regular schedule EXCEPT for 63rd & Market which is suspended until further notice.

4. **Overdose Prevention**: Bathroom staff will distribute Narcan on Wed & Thurs.

5. **Meals**: Breakfast, 9 a.m. at Monmouth entrance.
   - Lunch, 1-3 p.m., Mon-Fri at Ruth & Clearfield.

Services that will NOT be available at this time:

1. The Drop-in Center AND Drop-In Case Management (including: transportation passes, phone calls, Medicaid assistance, linkage to mental health or drug & alcohol treatment services & housing)
2. Legal Services
3. Primary Care Services & Wound Care
4. Testing Services

*This flyer will be periodically updated as we get more information.*
Harm reduction services are available in Philadelphia

**Testing, Treatment, and Medical Clinics**
PPP regularly provides HIV and HCV testing and linkage to care. Free medical clinics are also available multiple times per week. Click on Streetside Health Project to find out more.

**Drop-In Center**
The John Paul Hammond Drop-In Center provides participants with a safe place to find shelter from the street and become linked to social and medical services.

**Syringe Exchange Program**
As the longest-running service provided by PPP, the Syringe Services Program has been a major factor in reducing the number of new HIV infections in Philadelphia.

Project SAFE’s Wellness Advocacy Program: 800-509-SAFE (7233)
Impacts of COVID-19 on Drug Use

- Social isolation is dangerous and impractical for people living outside or in their home. Distancing from others increases the risk of overdose and other harms.
- Decreased access to supportive care services (meals, sterile supplies, naloxone, and a safe place to sleep) puts you at a greater risk for an overdose.
- The diminished lung capacity from COVID-19 may increase the risk of opioid overdose.
- Release in incarceration or using after any other period of abstinence puts you at a significantly higher risk of opioid overdose because of lowered tolerance.
- Resumed or increased use due to increased stress, trauma & isolation & lack of access to other means of coping or boredom.
- Disrupted drug markets may lead to dangerous additions to the drug supply.
- People (including first responders) responding to an overdose may be hesitant to administer naloxone and/or rescue breathing.
Messaging for PWUD

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN—ESPECIALLY BEFORE PREPARING DRUGS
Use warm water + soap. Wash for at least 20 seconds while rubbing all over.

NO WATER?
- OPTION 2: Hand sanitizer: Pour on hands. Rub until liquid is gone.
- OPTION 3: BZK wipes: Rub off visible dirt, then use new wipes to clean each finger and both sides of hands.
- DO NOT use Lysol or other cleaning supplies on your hands or body.

CLEAN SURFACES FOR PREPARING DRUGS
Clean surface with an alcohol pad or use a clean sheet of paper.

AVOID TOUCHING YOUR FACE
Only do so after washing hands.

DO NOT SHARE EQUIPMENT
This includes all injection, smoking, and sniffing tools!

MAINTAIN PERSONAL SPACE
Avoid crowds and keep some space between yourself and others.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!
Try to drink 8-10 glasses of water, eat well, and get enough sleep.

AVOID SHARING CUPS, CIGARETTES, ETC
Coronavirus can be spread via saliva so avoid sharing anything that touches your mouth.

FOR SNiffING DRUGS:
To protect your nose, chop lines as finely as possible and use a saline rinse after sniffing.

FOR SMOKING CRACK:
Use lip balm and your own mouthpiece to avoid lips cracking/burning.
No mouthpiece? Use tape, rubber bands, or wrap a tie around the end.

For more prevention info, visit: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html
COVID-19 Transmission Risk Associated with Substance Use

Washing hands & wiping down surfaces before & after prep and consumption will reduce the risk of transmission.
Resources for safer substance use during COVID-19
Department of Public Health

When responding to an overdose, the risk of contracting COVID-19 cannot be eliminated but it can be minimized.

COVID-19: Overdose Response Tips

Let’s keep helping each other!

When someone who has gone down, **ALWAYS:**

- Wear non-latex gloves prior to helping
- Safely dispose all used naloxone kit contents
- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer as soon as possible afterwards

As always, if you are concerned about being exposed to an infectious disease, including COVID-19 after responding to an overdose, talk to a harm reduction worker or healthcare provider.

Toronto Public Health

416.338.7600 toronto.ca/covid19
Physical contact should be limited so decision to do breaths will be based on:

- Comfort level
- Supplies
  - Face shield
  - Disposable ambo bag
Mail-based naloxone (Narcan)
Resources
Free, lower barrier testing for people who use substances

- **Esperanza Health Center at The Rock Ministries (2755 Kensington Ave)**
  - Monday – Friday 2pm – 4pm
  - No referral required, but must be symptomatic

- **Philly FIGHT at Community Center at Visitation (2646 Kensington Ave)**
  - Monday – Wednesday 1pm – 3pm

- **Hub of Hope (1401 Arch St)**
  - Monday – Friday 9 AM – 5 PM
  - No referral required, but must be symptomatic
Referrals for Isolation and Quarantine

- The City of Philadelphia has established a quarantine and isolation residence for people who cannot safely be returned to their usual housing or are housing insecure.

- Length of stay determined by COVID-19 diagnosis & need for quarantine or isolation (max stay 14 days)

- PDPH will screen requests Monday – Saturday 8:30am – 5:00pm

PDPH provider referral line: 215-685-6741
Referrals for Isolation and Quarantine

• **Caveats:**
  • Not a healthcare facility
  • Must be referred by a healthcare provider or residential facility provider

• **Eligibility**
  • Positive or pending test for SARS-CoV-2 OR require up to 14-day quarantine
  • Stable for discharge without need of oxygen or home health support
  • Housing insecurity
  • Unable to safely isolate or quarantine
  • Provided with fourteen (14) days of all required medications
  • Willing to comply with isolation/quarantine rules
Virtual Resources

- **Harm Reduction Works**
- **Harm Reduction for Alcohol (HAMS) online support**
- **Smart Recovery Online Meetings**
- **MARA (Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous) virtual meetings**

- **AA Virtual Meetings**
  - **Greater Philadelphia Area**
  - **Worldwide**

- **NA Virtual Meetings**

- **Recovery Dharma Online: Recovering from Addiction with Buddhist Practice**

- **Unity Recovery free virtual recovery meetings**
Learn more about the impacts of stigma, drug use & harm reduction

*Harm Reduction Coalition*

*Filter*

*Narcotica*

*A Podcast About Drugs & The People Who Use Them*

*We are the Drug Policy Alliance.*
Combating the opioid epidemic
Fighting back against the opioid crisis in Philadelphia.

www.phila.gov/opioids

Learn how to get and use naloxone (Narcan®) www.PhillyNaloxone.com

For more information:
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Additional Slides
Food distribution sites

Find free food and meals during COVID-19 at www.phila.gov/food

Food sites
Eligibility: Any resident is eligible. No ID or proof of income is required.
Pickup details: One box per household. Mon/Thurs 10AM-12PM

Student meal sites
Eligibility: All children and youth are eligible. No ID is required.
Pickup details: Days and times vary by site.

Senior meal sites
Eligibility: For PCA sites, Adults 60 and over & must call ahead to reserve meals prior to pickup. For Parks & Rec, Adults 55 and over & no reservation
Pickup details: Days and times vary by site (call specific site for details)

Outdoor meal sites
Eligibility: Any resident is eligible. No ID or proof of income is required.
Pickup details: Days and times vary by site. One meal per resident.
Questions?
Please share your tools and resources!

Email mkenyon@haponline.org
Future Opioid LAN Events

Office Hour
How to Implement a Certified Recovery Specialist Program including COVID-19 Response
Mike Krafick, CRS, Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission
May 21, 2020 at 11 a.m.

Webinars
Understanding Single County Authority (SCA) Models
Erica E. Nocho, PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Bureau of Administration & Program Support
June 11, 2020 at 11 a.m.

Regional Meetings (Virtual)
Central Regional Organizations Only
May 28, 2020 11-12:30 pm

Northeast Regional Organizations Only
June 18, 2020 11-12:30 pm