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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overdose prevention centers (OPCs) save lives by preventing overdose deaths—trained professionals are on-site to immediately intervene at the earliest signs of overdose.
- OPCs divert public drug use by bringing people off the streets and into settings where care is accessible. Accompanying outreach teams can reduce the presence of hazardous waste and drug-related litter in communities.
- OPCs reduce overdose deaths and infectious diseases, connect people to treatment and services, improve community safety, and save money.
- Two OPCs operate in New York City, and a third operates in Providence, Rhode Island. Nearly 200 more operate around the world.
- OPCs are supported by top medical and public health organizations and a variety of stakeholders across the country.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTERS (OPCS) ARE URGENTLY NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE OVERDOSE CRISIS

Over one million people have died from overdose since the onset of the overdose crisis.¹ Though annual overdose deaths began declining in 2022 due to health and harm reduction interventions,² we are still losing nearly 100,000 people each year to this preventable tragedy.³

No one should die from an overdose. Overdose deaths can be avoided if trained overdose responders intervene quickly. Unfortunately, many people who overdose are alone at the time of their death because of shame and stigma.⁴ The prevalence of potent substances like fentanyl in an unpredictable drug supply also increases risk.

While people of all races and ethnicities use drugs at similar rates, Black and Native American people have the highest overdose mortality rates nationwide, and in many communities, their rates of overdose remain high or are increasing.⁵ This may be because they have limited access to harm reduction, treatment, and health services or experience mistreatment and stigma in healthcare settings.⁶ Communities of color also face targeted drug enforcement, which creates additional barriers to health and stability.⁷ Other groups at high risk of overdose include those who are unhoused and people involved with the criminal legal system.

The magnitude of this crisis underscores the urgent need for overdose prevention centers (OPCs), which provide trained professionals who respond at the earliest signs of overdose and connect people to health services, treatment, and supports.

OPCS SAVE LIVES, IMPROVE HEALTH, AND CONNECT PEOPLE TO TREATMENT

- **OPCs save lives.** Trained staff monitor for signs of overdose and intervene to prevent or reverse overdose.⁸ They also provide drug checking services to reduce the harms of fentanyl and other substances, like xylazine, in the drug supply. OPCs do not provide drugs, but participants can bring pre-obtained substances.

- **OPCs are a pathway to recovery**, connecting people to substance use disorder treatment.⁹
- **OPCs reduce the spread of infectious diseases** (e.g., HIV, hepatitis C) by providing sterile supplies and connections to primary healthcare.¹⁰
- **OPCs make connections to critical health and social services** like wound care, mental health services, housing supports, and employment counseling.¹¹
- **OPCs provide life-sustaining resources** such as food, showers, laundry, and mail service.¹² These services support an individual's ability to pursue gainful employment and stability.
- **OPCs increase social connectedness** among people who might be otherwise isolated from family and friends because of their drug use. By offering connection in a non-judgmental environment, participants are more likely to engage with services and make healthier choices for themselves.¹³

"At times I struggled, but throughout the process, [the OPC] gave me opportunity and it gave me the resources I needed by not judging me throughout my addiction to heroin and crack cocaine. [There] wasn't a lot of resources out there but the OPC, and they really gave me the opportunity to transition to being sober."

- Brian, a Former OnPoint NYC OPC Participant¹⁴

OPCS IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY & SAVE TAXPAYER DOLLARS

- **OPCs reduce litter and syringe debris in surrounding areas.**¹⁵ Not only do OPCs properly dispose of hazardous waste, OPC staff also regularly clean up nearby parks and public spaces to keep communities safe and clean.
- **OPCs reduce public drug use** by bringing people who use drugs off the streets and into settings where care is accessible. Many people who use OPCs are housing insecure and would otherwise use drugs on the streets, on public transit, or in public parks or restrooms.

- **OPCs partner with community members, local businesses, and law enforcement to bolster safety** and address neighborhood issues. They provide health and safety benefits without increasing drug use or crime in the community.¹⁶
- **OPCs save money, freeing up resources for emergency services to focus on other crises.** By reducing costs, EMS can better respond to other critical emergencies, like fires, shootings, car accidents, and heart attacks—situations where a quick response can mean the difference between life and death.¹⁷ One study estimated an OPC in Rhode Island would save \$1.1 million every year.¹⁸

"The goals of OPS [Overdose Prevention Sites] are primarily to prevent deaths and reduce harms from drug use (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B and C, and skin infections), as well as provide linkages to treatment and/or other services, and reduce public disorder. The federal, state and local governments should take action to ensure state- or locality-sanctioned pilot OPS can operate without fear of prosecution."

-American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2021¹⁹

OPCS ARE A PROVEN SOLUTION TO LOCAL ISSUES

There are nearly 200 OPCs in 14 countries around the world.²⁰ OPCs have been in operation for nearly four decades and have clearly demonstrated benefits to community health and safety.²¹

In November 2021, OnPoint NYC opened the first two recognized OPCs in the U.S. in New York City with local government approval.²² Participants report that without the OPCs, they would have had to use in a public or semipublic location (e.g., a public restroom).²³ Over half of participants visiting these sites accessed additional care during their visit. This includes the opioid overdose reversal drug naloxone, counseling, referral to substance use disorder treatment, hepatitis C testing, medical care, and holistic services.²⁴ As of April 2025, there have been over 171,000 site visits, and staff reversed over 1,700 overdoses.²⁵ In addition to the on-site services offered, OnPoint NYC educates community members on overdose prevention and harm reduction, cleans up discarded syringes, and encourages people using in public to visit the OPCs.²⁶

SINCE OPENING IN 2021, ONPOINT NYC'S OPCS HAVE:

REVERSED OVER

1,700

OVERDOSES

CLEANED UP OVER

2.5
MILLION
UNITS

OF HAZARDOUS WASTE

CONNECTED

100%

OF PARTICIPANTS WHO SOUGHT
TREATMENT TO APPROPRIATE
PROVIDERS²⁷

A third OPC opened in Providence, Rhode Island in January 2025.²⁸ Project Weber/RENEW operates the OPC under a license granted through the State Department of Health. In just the first few weeks of operation, the OPC had close to 200 visits and intervened in 14 overdoses.²⁹ An evaluation of the New York City and Rhode Island OPCs is underway, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.³⁰

For most of 2022, an OPC operated in a government-owned facility in San Francisco. In the 11 months the OPC was open, staff intervened in 333 overdoses with no deaths. Unfortunately, the site was shuttered for political reasons in December 2022, leaving San Francisco without a recognized OPC.

More states are taking action. Vermont has enacted legislation to authorize OPCs and allocate opioid litigation settlement funds to establish them.³¹ Minnesota has allocated millions of dollars for OPCs.³² More than one-fifth of states are considering or have recently considered legislation to authorize OPCs.³³

Addiction and overdose impact people across the U.S., but all states and localities experience the crisis differently. As such, states and localities should be able to seek different solutions to address the overdose crisis in their jurisdictions. OPCs are an important complement to existing treatment, harm reduction, and health services.

Federal law should not deter local leaders from acting to save lives. Existing federal controlled substance laws were never intended to apply to health interventions like OPCs and should not serve as a barrier to states and localities who wish to move forward.³⁴

LAW ENFORCEMENT, HEALTH EXPERTS, AND GRIEVING PARENTS ENDORSE OPCS

OPCs are endorsed by a variety of stakeholders and community members. Eighty current and former prosecutors and law enforcement officials, including former DOJ officials, support OPCs as a means to improve both public safety and health outcomes.³⁵

“Overdose prevention centers make law enforcement’s job easier by allowing us to focus on more serious crimes, while saving lives and improving health and safety outcomes among those at highest risk.

As a career law enforcement official, I know firsthand that we can't arrest and punish our way out of this public health crisis.

Instead of continuing the shortsighted strategies that have led to the current overdose epidemic, we should be focusing state and local efforts on prevention and other proven public health interventions.

People struggling with substance use issues need more addiction services—including overdose prevention centers, treatment, and outreach teams—not more criminalization."

- Lieutenant Diane Goldstein (Ret.) Executive Director, Law Enforcement Action Partnership

Top medical and public health associations, such as the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and the American Society of Addiction Medicine endorse OPCs.³⁶

Additionally, many parents who have lost their children to overdose have expressed support for OPCs as an intervention that keeps people struggling with addiction alive.

"We have experienced the loss of those we love to overdose. Our goal is to prevent others from experiencing this loss. We fully support the establishment and operation of Overdose Prevention Centers because life, every life, is priceless."

- Tamara Oit, M.D., Darleen Berg, MSW, Laura Cash, MA, Denise Cullen, LCSW, Mary Stafford, JD, Sam Snodgrass, PhD³⁷ Parents who have lost their children to overdose and Board Members of Broken No More

OPCs represent a significant step toward comprehensive public health solutions for overdose and public drug use that will save lives and improve communities across the country. It is time for policymakers to support this lifesaving intervention.

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