Issue brief: Reports of efforts to help the nation’s overdose epidemic

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Despite the continuing COVID-19 global pandemic and the nation’s worsening drug overdose epidemic, the American Medical Association also has seen efforts in many states to increase access to evidence-based treatment. The AMA remains greatly concerned by a continuing number of reports from national, state and local media suggesting increases in opioid- and other drug-related mortality—particularly from illicitly manufactured fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, methamphetamine and cocaine. The AMA also continues to highlight the latest research and data to help provide evidence-based data and other information to help policymakers undertake meaningful public health interventions.

This issue brief is focused on positive interventions that are working to help increase access to evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders, patients with pain and harm reduction efforts. For context, among the related AMA advocacy, resources and recommendations:

- **AMA-Manatt Health 2022 state policy toolkit** provides more than 400 specific laws, regulations, policy guidance and other actions being implemented to help reduce mortality and improve outcomes. The toolkit builds on the 2020 **AMA-Manatt Health national policy roadmap** use of best practices to increase access to evidence-based care for mental illness, substance use disorders, comprehensive pain care and harm reduction initiatives.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on February 10, 2022, released a draft revision to its 2016 opioid prescribing guideline. The AMA said that the CDC’s new draft guideline—if followed by policymakers, health insurance companies and pharmacy chains—provides a path to remove arbitrary prescribing thresholds, restore balance and support comprehensive, compassionate care.
- **AMA letter urging Congress** to hold health plans accountable for nearly 15 years of failures in complying with the 2008 Mental Health Parity And Equity Addiction Act.
- **AMA comments on Biden Administration’s 2022 National Drug Control Strategy**. Reduce barriers to medications to treat substance use disorders; broaden access to a wide range of harm reduction services, including naloxone, sterile needle and syringe exchange services, and drug checking supplies; require all health insurance programs to remove arbitrary restrictions for care for patients with pain; and take steps to develop and support a national, standardized reporting system for key metrics related to drug use. July 2021.
- **Recommendations from the AMA Substance Use and Pain Care Task Force** and **AMA 2021 Overdose Epidemic national report** Updated recommendations that highlight physicians’ actions as well as additional steps that must be taken to have a meaningful impact on reducing drug-related mortality and improving patient outcomes. September 2021
- **AMA issue brief on key considerations for employers during the drug overdose epidemic**. This includes reviewing benefit plans for patients and families with substance use disorders, mental illness and/or pain; promoting harm reduction at work; and reducing stigma.

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National reports (state reports begin on page 4)

- Implementation tools to help states use opioid litigation funds for evidence-based programs. [https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/implementation-tools/](https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/implementation-tools/) April 2022
- Native American tribes reach $590 million opioid settlement. [https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/02/01/native-american-tribes-reach-590-million-opioid-settlement](https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/02/01/native-american-tribes-reach-590-million-opioid-settlement) February 1, 2022
- Opinion: Overdose prevention sites can save lives and promote recovery. We must be

- Mobile telemedicine unit found to be effective in treating opioid use disorder in rural areas. https://www.news-medical.net/news/20210828/Mobile-telemedicine-unit-found-to-be-effective-in-treating-opioid-use-disorder-in-rural-areas.aspx August 28, 2021
- Access to Treatment for Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder. https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/access-to-treatment-for-individuals-with-opioid-use-disorder/ April 21, 2021
- Overcoming Barriers to Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2777039 February 25, 2021
• Mental Health: Will it Finally Be an American Legislative Priority?  
  https://harvardpolitics.com/mental-health-legislation/ February 23, 2021

• Bupropion plus naltrexone could work for methamphetamine use disorder.  

• ‘Use that money wisely”: Coalition urges governments to spend opioid settlement funds on evidence-based efforts.  

• Regional public health overdose response projects receive national funding.  

• Biden moving to nix Trump plan on opioid-treatment prescriptions.  

• Extended Medicaid Coverage Would Help Postpartum Patients With Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder.  

• HHS Expands Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder.  
  https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/01/14/hhs-expands-access-to-treatment-for-opioid-use-disorder.html January 14, 2021

• Combination treatment for methamphetamine use disorder shows promise in NIH study.  

• CMS Issues Guidance about Expanded Medicaid Coverage for Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders.  

• As a physician and a patient, I’ve seen the damage caused by the stigma of addiction. It must end.  

**State-specific news reports and other information**

1. **Alabama**
   - Find out how this new initiative with Addiction Prevention Coalition is helping stop HIV in Birmingham’s youth.  

2. **Alaska**
   - Got 15 minutes? You can save a life.  
   - State updates guidance for treating opioid use disorders.  
     https://www.ktooo.org/2021/05/21/state-updates-guidance-for-treating-opioid-use-disorders/ May 21, 2021

3. **Arizona**
Navajo County will use state, federal grants to reduce overdose deaths. [Link](https://www.wmicentral.com/news/latest_news/navajo-county-will-use-state-federal-grants-to-reduce-overdose-deaths/article_e8927332-43ab-5d41-a618-302ae457b072.html) January 18, 2022

Legalized syringe exchanges, fentanyl test strips could help combat overdose deaths. [Link](https://kjzz.org/content/1725254/legalized-syringe-exchanges-fentanyl-test-strips-could-help-combat-overdose-deaths) October 17, 2021

Legalization brings legitimacy to needle exchange programs in Arizona. [Link](https://www.kold.com/2021/08/26/legalization-brings-legitimacy-needle-exchange-programs-arizona/) August 26, 2021


Banner Phoenix launches new program to combat opioid overdoses. [Link](https://ktar.com/story/4340712/banner-phoenix-launches-new-program-to-combat-opioid-overdoses/) April 22, 2021

Arkansas

UAMS-linked research studying first-of-its-kind drug to treat meth abuse. [Link](https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2021/nov/02/uams-linked-research-studying-first-of-its-kind/) November 2, 2021


Opioid treatment and research at center of two UAMS grants. [Link](https://talkbusiness.net/2021/02/opioid-treatment-and-research-at-center-of-two-uams-grants/) February 24, 2021


California

California Inmate Overdoses Plummet Under Drug Program. [Link](https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/california-inmate-overdoses-plummet-under-drug-program/2874576/) April 26, 2022 (Also see related California dashboard with detailed data: [Link](https://cchcs.ca.gov/isudt/dashboard/))


In a bid to stop overdose deaths, California could allow drug use at supervised sites. [Link](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-23/harm-reduction-california-could-allow-drug-use-at-supervised-sites) October 23, 2021

Dear Provider Letter. California Department of Public Health. [Link](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/CDPH%20Document%20Library/SOS-

- The key to treating opioid addiction is to cut the red tape. https://kmph.com/news/local/the-key-to-treating-opioid-addiction-is-to-cut-the-red-tape April 27, 2021

6. Colorado
- After one year, the Colorado Naloxone Project will soon be available nationally. https://www.kunc.org/health/2022-04-26/after-one-year-the-colorado-naloxone-project-will-soon-be-available-nationally April 26, 2022
- CDPHE allocates $1.8 million to increase access to naloxone in local communities. https://stateofreform.com/featured/2022/02/colorado-naloxone/ February 4, 2022
- A New Salida Treatment Center Aims To Fill Behavioral Health Care Gaps in the Region. https://www.cpr.org/2021/05/06/a-new-salida-treatment-center-aims-to-fill-mental-health-care-gaps-in-the-region/ May 6, 2021

7. Connecticut
- Coronavirus pandemic worsened the opioid crisis; a new law is designed to help. https://www.theday.com/article/20210710/NWS01/210719934 July 10, 2021

8. Delaware
- DPH Announces Launch Of Restaurant Accolade Program To Address Substance Abuse Prevention, Opioid Overdose. https://news.delaware.gov/2022/03/15/dph-
announces-launch-of-restaurant-accolade-program-to-address-substance-abuse-prevention-opioid-overdose/ March 15, 2022


9. District of Columbia
- DC Free Naloxone. DC residents may request to receive free naloxone by mail from the Opioid Learning Institute. http://opioidhealth.org/dc-free-naloxone/

10. Florida

11. Georgia

12. Illinois
- This Cook County judge gives convicts his cell number—if they complete addiction program. https://chicago.suntimes.com/2022/1/28/22902699/rehabilitative-alternative-program-charles-burns-cook-county-drug-court January 28, 2022

13. Indiana
- State health department gives naloxone training during National Recovery Month.
14. Iowa

15. Kansas

16. Kentucky

17. Louisiana

18. Maine
- Maine expanding opioid treatment during wave of overdose deaths.
19. Maryland
- Opinion: A Road Map to Combating Overdose Deaths. [https://www.marylandmatters.org/2021/05/24/opinion-a-road-map-to-combating-overdose-deaths/] May 24, 2021

20. Massachusetts

21. Michigan
suffering-from-substance-use-disorder/ January 19, 2022

- How raising her hand is helping build an addiction medicine infrastructure. Michigan’s Cara Poland, MD, leading effort to build core faculty throughout the state. https://end-overdose-epidemic.org/stories/how-raising-her-hand-is-helping-build-an-addiction-medicine-infrastructure/ July 26, 2021
- Treatment Barrier Falls, but More Remain, for People with Opioid Issues. https://labblog.uofmhealth.org/rounds/treatment-barrier-falls-but-more-remain-for-people-opioid-issues May 21, 2021
- Mobile health unit brings addiction treatment services to rural areas. https://www.wnem.com/news/mobile-health-unit-brings-addiction-treatment-services-to-rural-areas/article_ea49a68e-7ade-11eb-be03-4b36ee34246e.html March 1, 2021

22. Minnesota

- Minnesota House Passes $300 Million Opioid Settlement Bill. https://knsiradio.com/2022/05/06/minnesota-house-passes-300-million-opioid-settlement-bill/ May 6, 2022
- Two new Minnesota laws take effect August 1. https://www.kaaltv.com/rochester-minnesota-news/two-new-minnesota-laws-take-effect-august-1/6190348/?cat=10151 July 30, 2021 (Editor’s note: one of the new laws focuses on prohibiting life insurance companies from taking adverse actions based only on the presence of a naloxone prescription. See more here: https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2021/0/Session+Law/Chapter/10/)

23. Missouri

- Governor signs bill ending Missouri’s designation as last state without a PDMP. https://missouriindependent.com/2021/06/07/governor-signs-bill-ending-missouris-designation-as-last-state-without-a-pdmp/ June 7, 2021

24. Montana

25. Nebraska
- Statewide Narcan Program Expands to O’Neill Area.
- Off-duty Nebraska deputy uses Narcan to save two men from drug overdose.
- How one Nebraska addiction psychiatrist tirelessly advocates for her patients.
- Opioid settlement to fund drug abuse treatment and prevention in Neb.

26. Nevada
- Reducing drug-related harm with research: Opioid overdose and HIV prevention work can save lives.
- Las Vegas firefighters encourage response training on Overdose Awareness Day.
- State advisory committee forming to guide decisions on opioid litigation funds.
- Mobile clinic sets out to help the homeless combat addiction.

27. New Hampshire
- Rochester needle exchange raises fears. Leaders say they get it, but it saves lives.
- Endocarditis cases, deaths from dirty drug needles declined since 2017.

28. New Jersey
- Why NJ’s Fatal Drug Overdoses Remain Flat as Nation’s Death Rate Spikes.

29. New Mexico
- Bill could clear way for legal use of fentanyl test strips in New Mexico.
- Albuquerque jail offers treatment for opioid addiction.
  https://apnews.com/article/health-albuquerque-opioids-3d3975b20a9e7a89bbf2a1f400eb60f8 September 1, 2021
- Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction and Memorandum of Law.
30. New York
   - Supervised injection sites avert over 100 overdoses, organization says. https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2022/01/24/supervised-injection-sites-avert-over-100-overdoses--organization-says January 24, 2022

31. North Carolina
   - To combat opioid overdose deaths, state officials try medication-assisted therapy with select NC inmates. http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2021/04/12/to-combat-opioid-overdose-deaths-state-officials-try-medication-assisted-therapy-with-select-nc-inmates/ April 12, 2021

32. North Dakota

33. Ohio
• MetroHealth, Euclid police partnering in new overdose treatment program.  
in-new-overdose-treatment-program/article_18d034ce-550e-11eb-84b6-4f2788b0900e.html  
  January 17, 2021

34. Oklahoma
• Oklahoma legalizes needle exchange programs.  
  https://www.thecentersquare.com/oklahoma/oklahoma-legalizes-needle-exchange-
programs/article_dd8692d8-e5a8-11eb-94d8-ab1d77029a82.html  
  July 16, 2021

35. Oregon
• New clinic is first tribally owned, operated opioid treatment center in Oregon, staff says.  
treatment-center-in-oregon-staff-says  
  April 15, 2021

36. Pennsylvania
• The United States’ Findings and Conclusions Based on Its Investigation of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, D/J# 2-4=64-170.  
  https://www.ada.gov/ujs_lof.pdf  
  February 2, 2022
• City of Philadelphia Office of the Mayor Executive Order Re: Distribution of Fentanyl Test Strips for Harm Reduction Purposes.  
  August 2, 2021
• Guest opinion: We could save lives and money by legalizing needle exchange programs in Pa.  
  https://www.goerie.com/story/opinion/2021/05/26/save-lives-and-money-legalizing-
needle-exchange-programs-pa/5143983001/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=gh-
erietimesnews-main&fbclid=IwAR2fPezgkTr5NKFKwXXDG0kCD0KKVnvLJ5B4C6cvttGBMIPj9ym_x0nM0eg
  May 26, 2021
• Pa. can save lives with an easy policy change: Legalize syringe exchange state-wide now.  
  Editorial.  
  https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/pennsylvania-syringe-services-hiv-
overdose-harm-reduction-coronavirus-relief-20210325.html  
  March 25, 2021
• Wolf Administration Launches Portal To Ensure High-Risk Populations Have Access To Opioid Reversal Medication.  
  https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Health-Details.aspx?newsid=1359  
  March 23, 2021
• Gov. Wolf signs renewal of opioid disaster declaration in Pennsylvania.  
declaration-in-pennsylvania/  
  February 9, 2021

37. Rhode Island
• Rhode Island’s regulations for Harm Reduction Centers become effective February 16, 2022.  
  https://health.ri.gov/addiction/about/harmreductioncenters/
• Pawtucket fire stations now double as safe stations for those battling addiction.  
those-battling-addiction  
  January 12, 2022
• RI Gov. McKee signs legislation allowing safe-injection sites into law.  
allowing-safe-injection-sites-into-law/7891057002/  
  July 7, 2021
• Mahoney: ‘We’ve lost way too many people’. Community organizations working to combat substance use, overdoses during pandemic.  
  https://www.valleybreeze.com/2021-
38. South Dakota
   • South Dakota Urban Indian Health combats opioid crisis.  
   • Overdose drug saving lives and well supplied in South Dakota.  

39. Tennessee
   • Fentanyl testing strips and Narcan to stop overdoses: Where to find them in the South.  
   • Vanderbilt researchers studying how transit impacts opioid treatment.  

40. Texas
   • Emergency Rule Related to Issuance of Prescriptions Renewed.  
   • Texas FQHC develops integrative model to help patients with pain.  

41. Utah
   • Naloxone Kits Help Utah Law Enforcement Save 500 Lives From Overdoses.  

42. Vermont
   • Mt Ascutney Hospital addresses opioid crisis with medication assisted treatment and Narcan.  

43. Washington
   • Harm-reduction experts offer tips on safe drinking.  

44. West Virginia
   • Annual Save A Life Day brings record amount of lifesaving naloxone to 17 counties.  

45. Wisconsin
• Preventing Opioid Harm in Wisconsin Starts with Real Talks.  

• Legalizing fentanyl testing strips discussed in Assembly.  
  https://wisconsinexaminer.com/brief/legalizing-fentanyl-testing-strips-discussed-in-assembly/  
  October 25, 2021

• With Overdoses At Record Highs, Naloxone Made Available in Boxes Statewide.  
  https://www.wpr.org/overdoses-record-highs-naloxone-made-available-boxes-statewide  
  February 22, 2021

• State will Expand Addiction Recovery Treatment Starting Monday.  

46. Wyoming

• Changes to Wyoming Prescription Drug and Opioid Misuse Efforts.  
  September 23, 2021