

The Unique Role of Municipal Government in Opioid Overdose Prevention Strategies



Municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to build on existing prevention and service structures and add opioid-specific capabilities that reflect local needs, risks, and resources—advancing recovery for residents and municipal workers.

The Unique Value of Municipal Leadership



Set Direction

Signal that overdose prevention is a shared civic priority tied to health, safety, and community well-being.



Align Government

Bring public health, EMS, fire, police, schools, housing, and human services into a coordinated local response.



Authorize Action

Support practical opioid-specific functions such as naloxone access, outreach, linkage to care, and data-informed planning.



Establish Accountability

Set expectations, review progress, and sustain actions across departments and community partners.

A Whole-of-Government Approach

Substance misuse touches parents, youth, workers, older adults, and entire families. Behind every data point is a person, a story, and a community that deserves safety, dignity, compassion, and hope. Prevention matters because it protects life, opens the door to treatment, and supports the possibility of recovery.



Public Safety



Public Health



Finance, HR, and Legal



Schools, Youth, Recreation



Housing and Human Services



Economic and Community Development

Residents, families, and community well-being

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The Multiplier Effect

Municipal leaders can do more than respond to opioid overdose. They can connect people, funding, services, and settings to build a coordinated prevention strategy that saves lives and strengthens the community.



Use State Data to Guide Action

Work with state data resources to identify trends, hotspots, and community needs.



Align with Regional Partners

Coordinate with regional partners and neighboring municipalities so efforts reinforce one another.



Bring Efforts Together Across Municipal Functions and Settings

Integrate policy, budget, programming, personnel, communications, schools, healthcare, public safety, faith communities, and neighborhood groups.

From a Single Activity to a Coordinated Community Strategy

The example shows how a single activity can make a difference, but a coordinated community strategy reaches more people, expands naloxone access, and connects individuals to the help they need.

A SINGLE ACTIVITY (IMPORTANT, BUT LIMITED IMPACT)



Naloxone training for EMS

Builds critical skills and can save lives, but on its own reaches only a small number of people.

A COORDINATED COMMUNITY NALOXONE STRATEGY (BIGGER REACH, STRONGER, LONGER-LASTING IMPACT)



Schools

Train students, staff, and families and make naloxone available.



Faith Communities

Provide training, raise awareness, and offer naloxone in places of worship.



Healthcare Settings

Integrate naloxone training and distribution in clinics, hospitals, and treatment settings.



Neighborhood Groups

Engage local residents, provide training, and increase naloxone access in neighborhood settings.



First Responders / Public Safety

Train and equip police, fire, and EMS, and support community referrals to treatment.



Community Education and Public Awareness

Share clear information, reduce stigma, and promote naloxone access across the community.

Local Government Actions and Your Roadmap to Success



Local government can take meaningful steps to prevent opioid and other drug overdoses by strengthening internal operations, building community partnerships, and aligning with state, regional, and national resources. These actions help close gaps, make the best use of available resources, and create healthier, safer communities.

Strengthen Municipal Operations

Take actions within municipal functions and for municipal personnel to support overdose prevention and connect people to care and recovery.

Key Actions

- Provide training for municipal staff (e.g., overdose response, recognizing risk, how to refer to services).
- Review and support employee benefits, including health insurance coverage for substance use health services.
- Update workplace policies and protocols (e.g., naloxone availability, emergency response).
- Use data to guide internal practices and identify training and resource needs.

Build and Coordinate Community Partnerships

Work with community partners to expand prevention, connect people to services, and address the factors that increase risk.

Key Actions

- Collaborate with public health, healthcare providers, treatment and recovery services, and people with lived experience.
- Support referral pathways and warm handoffs to services.
- Engage schools, housing providers, community organizations, and faith-based groups.
- Share data and insights to identify local trends, needs, and gaps.
- Involve people with lived experience in planning and decision-making.

Align with State, Regional, and National Resources

Use and help shape policies, funding, and initiatives at the state, regional, and national levels to support local efforts.

Key Actions

- Leverage state and federal funding opportunities to support local programs and services.
- Align local policies with state and national best practices.
- Participate in regional initiatives and coalitions.
- Advocate for policy changes to address local needs (e.g., expanded access to substance use health services, housing, transportation).
- Track and share progress to inform continuous improvement and sustain momentum.

By taking action in these **three areas**, local leaders can create stronger systems, improve access to care, and build healthier, safer communities.



Local Government Actions and Your Roadmap to Success



Each action step should identify the lever the municipality will use. Local government can act directly, fund and contract services, convene partners, set policy, communicate clearly, and partner or advocate regionally to close gaps and protect residents.

Choosing the actions that best match resources and needs

Direct

What it means

Change a municipal department function, employee practice, facility protocol, data process, or emergency response.

Examples

- Naloxone in municipal facilities
- Staff training
- Standard referral workflow

Fund

What it means

Support a community or regional service, position, outreach function, transportation resource, or evaluation activity.

Examples

- Peer navigation
- Recovery support
- Data analysis
- Family support

Contract

What it means

Purchase a service with a clear scope, access standards, equity expectations, deliverables, and performance measures.

Examples

- Post-overdose outreach
- Mobile substance use health services
- Regional coordinator

Convene

What it means

Bring independent entities into a shared operating structure with common priorities and referral pathways.

Examples

- Hospital, EMS, health, treatment, recovery, housing, and lived-experience partners

Set Policy

What it means

Use municipal authority to update policies, administrative procedures, procurement, employee supports, facility operations, and reporting.

Examples

- Recovery-friendly workplace policy
- Overdose-response protocol
- Settlement reporting process

Communicate

What it means

Provide accurate, non-stigmatizing, multilingual information and targeted alerts.

Examples

- Service access campaign
- Overdose spike communication
- Family resource guide

Partner / Advocate

What it means

Create regional agreements or request changes outside municipal authority.

Examples

- Shared outreach team
- Transportation solutions
- Expanded MOUD access



A practical roadmap helps local leaders match needs with the right actions—so resources are coordinated, gaps are addressed, and residents stay healthier and safer.