

Rising to the Challenge Together: How ONDCP and CDC support jurisdictions through the Overdose Response Strategy

Overdose threats are evolving. Our response must keep pace. Drug overdose remains one of the Nation's most urgent public health challenges, taking nearly 210 lives every day. Overdose deaths fell by nearly 27 percent in 2024; provisional 2025 data suggest the continued decline is slowing and some states are trending upward. As the drug supply changes, stimulant-involved deaths are rising, and some jurisdictions are detecting ultra-potent opioids (e.g., carfentanil) and non-opioid sedative adulterants (e.g., xylazine and medetomidine). Coordination between public health and public safety is critical to ensure that we understand evolving overdose threats and leverage all available resources to effectively save lives.

ORS unites public health and public safety to prevent overdose. The Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) is the only national program designed specifically to strengthen overdose prevention through this coordinated approach. Established over a decade ago through a formal partnership between the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and operationalized through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program and the CDC Foundation, the ORS builds partnerships and leverages data and tools to enable a coordinated approach to overdose prevention and response. ORS supports 61 two-person teams, a Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) and a Public Health Analyst (PHA), embedded across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These teams are the operational core of the ORS. DIOs leverage law enforcement networks and intelligence to identify emerging threats and support supply reduction strategies, while PHAs analyze and translate overdose and drug related data, tailor evidence-based practices to local context, and evaluate promising interventions.

Overdose is local. Many solutions are as well. The flexible ORS program model allows states and localities to select specific interventions based on local needs, resources, and partnerships. The program's four overarching strategies guide local implementation:

- **Share & Connect** – Expand access and quality of cross-sector data, insights, and trends to inform a coordinated response to the overdose crisis.
- **Collaborate** – Build sustained cross-sector coordination and collaboration to enhance overdose prevention and response efforts.
- **Inform & Promote** – Educate and train community members and partners on effective overdose prevention, treatment, and recovery strategies.

- **Help & Implement** – Assist partners to implement, improve, and expand access to effective overdose prevention treatment and recovery support services.

The ORS brings depth and breadth of expertise to local communities. Through the application of these strategies and the advantages of a robust network, the ORS provides communities with access to the Nation’s top public health and public safety experts working to prevent fatal and non-fatal overdoses. For example, PHAs leverage CDC’s Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program and partners. DIOs leverage HIDTA task forces, drug seizure trends, and Investigative Support Center (ISC) intelligence.

Coordination leads to results. The ORS has successfully closed data and service gaps locally, regionally, and nationally to help prevent overdoses. By strengthening cross-sector data sharing and situational awareness, the ORS helped jurisdictions identify and track the emerging overdose threats described above and adjust local prevention and response efforts accordingly. ORS successes include the expansion of overdose fatality review teams to identify gaps and challenges within systems, implementation and expansion of the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) to maintain near real-time data on suspected drug overdoses and rapidly detect overdose spikes, naloxone distribution in schools and in community “hot spots”, overdose rapid response and spike response planning, public education campaigns, trainings for law enforcement and other first responders, and education on evidence-based diversion and deflection programs to facilitate treatment and long-term recovery support for people at risk of overdose.

We are ready for what’s next. By leveraging the ORS to advance collaboration of health departments, community organizations, law enforcement, first responders, and justice systems, the United States can more effectively identify emerging threats, mobilize resources, and scale proven interventions. Together, these efforts align with Administration priorities and reflect a unified, proactive approach to reducing preventable overdose deaths while strengthening the Nation’s capacity for timely, evidence-based responses in an increasingly complex drug environment.

Contact an ORS team in your state today! For team contact information and more examples of ORS successes, please visit orsprogram.org.

CDC and ONDCP would like to thank the National HIDTA Assistance Center, the HIDTA program directors, CDC Foundation, the 61 ORS teams and their public health and public safety site-leads for helping make the program a success.