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HHS Secretary Becerra Announces New Overdose Prevention Strategy

Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra today announced the release of the new [HHS Overdose Prevention Strategy](http://www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention), designed to increase access to the full range of care and services for individuals who use substances that cause overdose, and their families. This new strategy focuses on the multiple substances involved in overdose and the diverse treatment approaches for substance use disorder.

“With this new strategy, we’re breaking new ground to address the full range of drug use and addiction that can result in overdose and death,” said Secretary Becerra. “We’re changing the way we address overdoses. Our new strategy focuses on people -- putting the very individuals who have struggled with addiction in positions of power. And thanks to the American Rescue Plan, we can address what so many people have seen in recent years: a rise in overdoses that can risk a person’s life – and affect their entire family.”

The overdose epidemic has developed over the past decades, from increases in the prescribing of opioids in the 1990s, to rapid increases in heroin overdoses starting around 2010, to growth in overdoses from illicitly-manufactured synthetic opioids like fentanyl beginning in 2013. The epidemic continues to evolve, underscored by increased overdose deaths involving stimulants.

The new strategy prioritizes four key target areas—primary prevention, harm reduction, evidence-based treatment, and recovery support—and reflects the Biden-Harris Administration principles of maximizing health equity for underserved populations, using best available data and evidence to inform policy and actions, integrating substance use disorder services into other types of health care and social services, and reducing stigma.

It recognizes that the full continuum of integrated care and services are needed to help prevent substance use, expand quality treatment, and sustain recovery from substance use disorders, all while emphasizing the Department’s commitment to helping historically underserved populations. The strategy also breaks

new ground by providing coordinated, federal support for harm reduction and recovery support, which have been supported by grassroots efforts for decades.

The HHS Overdose Prevention Strategy will continue to build on the Biden-Harris Administration's year one [drug policy priorities and actions](https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2021/04/01/biden-harris-administration-announces-first-year-drug-policy-priorities) taken by the Administration to address addiction and the overdose epidemic since January, including removing barriers to prescribing medication for opioid use disorder and providing billions in new funding for prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery support services.

The American Rescue Plan, which President Biden signed into law in March 2021, appropriated over \$2 billion to enable the Department's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to expand access to vital services that would support strategy implementation.

The President's Fiscal Year 2022 proposed budget for HHS on drug-related programs and initiatives totals \$11.2 billion across HHS, \$3.9 billion more than in FY 2021, a 54 percent increase from FY 2021 Enacted, and includes funding to expand access to substance use prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services; as well as funding to bolster the nation's behavioral health infrastructure. Notably, SAMHSA's FY 2022 budget request includes \$3.5 billion for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant. The FY 2022 request also included, for the first time, a 10 percent set-aside for recovery support services. At HRSA, \$1.1 billion in mandatory and discretionary funding is requested in FY 2022 to support the substance use disorder responses in community health centers, invest in the National Health Service Corps, develop the behavioral workforce, and expand substance use disorder response in rural America.

For more information on the new Overdose Prevention Strategy, visit: www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention/. Read the full issue brief here: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/overdose-prevention-strategy>.

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Additional Statements by Administration Officials

Andrea Palm, Deputy Secretary, HHS

"Too many families have lost loved ones to drug overdoses. We are facing a public health crisis that requires a comprehensive approach to preventing and reducing overdose incidents. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to preventing overdose deaths and doing so in a compassionate and inclusive way."

Admiral Rachel Levine, HHS Assistant Secretary for Health:

“Today, people living in America are being harmed by still more substances, most notably synthetic opioids like fentanyl, and stimulants like methamphetamine and cocaine—often used in combination. This strategy could not be more timely, as overdose deaths attributable to use of these and other substances have escalated dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic to more than 93,000 deaths for 2020, an approximate 30 percent increase over the prior year.”

Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

“For too many years, we have treated addiction as a moral failure—an approach that has left people without sufficient support, led to tragically high numbers of overdoses, and hurt families, friendships, and entire communities. The new overdose prevention strategy is a powerful step toward addressing the overdose crisis and investing in a system that approaches addiction not as a character flaw, but as a chronic condition that must be met with skill, compassion, and urgency.”

Dr. Rebecca Haffajee, HHS Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation:

“Given the changing face of the overdose crisis and escalating harms, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, HHS’s new strategy recognizes that the full continuum of integrated care and services are needed to help people prevent, treat, and recover from substance use disorders. We are relying on the best evidence about what works and are committed to helping historically underserved populations in our actions to mitigate overdose harms.”

Dr. Debra Houry, Acting Principal Deputy Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

“Drug overdoses claimed nearly 100,000 lives in the United States in 2020. By focusing on activities that improve primary prevention efforts, reduce risks associated with substance use, advance evidence-based treatment and recovery support, and expand harm reduction interventions this new strategy can help save more lives from overdose and improve the health and safety of our communities.”

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:

“As the health care coverage provider for more than 144 million people, we at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services understand the devastating impacts of Substance Use Disorders -- particularly on underserved communities. CMS recently awarded \$15 million in planning grants to states for mobile crisis intervention services for Medicaid beneficiaries. Bringing care to the patients – when and where they need it – is just one of the ways our team is working to improve access to needed care during this health crisis.”

Dr. Janet Woodcock, Acting Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration:

“HHS’ comprehensive Overdose Prevention Strategy builds on previous work to proactively address the full spectrum of drug misuse and addiction that has evolved beyond the opioid crisis and often can result in overdose and death. The FDA will continue working on all fronts to support HHS’ new strategy, including the use of our regulatory authorities along with innovative approaches to address the many complexities contributing to the public health burden of drug misuse, abuse, overdose and deaths.”

Elizabeth Fowler, Acting Director, Indian Health Service:

“The Secretary’s overdose prevention strategy reinforces our efforts at the Indian Health Service to address the needs of patients with opioid use disorder and to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our tribal communities. The focus on preventing overdoses is significant as we work to prevent substance abuse disorder, reduce harm, and support evidence-based strategies and recovery within American Indian and Alaska Native communities.”

Dr. Francis Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health:

“The recent rise in overdose deaths is heartbreaking. These deaths often result from opioids and stimulants laced with potent, illicit fentanyl. It is clear we need a new, aggressive strategy that accounts for the use of multiple substances, and is aimed at diversifying our treatment approaches and developing other innovations to save lives and address this crisis.”

Dr. Nora Volkow, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse:

“We know that addiction is a disease that some people are more vulnerable to because of biological factors and the social conditions in which they grow up and find themselves. Interventions to buffer adverse social conditions are effective in preventing addiction, and this plan is an important step towards improving equity towards people who have been left behind due to racism and discrimination, and for dismantling the stigma against people who use drugs. Stigma and discrimination pose impenetrable barriers to the support and care that is needed to address the overdose crisis.”

Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, and leader of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

“One life lost to drug overdose is one too many. We remain committed to addressing this evolving public health crisis with innovative, accessible and inclusive prevention strategies. We are stronger together, and this comprehensive approach to preserving life is needed more now than ever before.”

Regina LaBelle, Acting Director of National Drug Control Policy:

“The Department’s overdose prevention strategy is an important step forward that builds on the Biden-Harris Administration’s first year drug policy priorities and actions taken this year to address addiction and the overdose epidemic. To save lives, we must make sure all Americans, no matter where they live, have access to evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery supports.”

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