

How did the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) reduce overdose deaths by 61%?

Case Study: DHS Overdose Response & Harm Reduction Program

September 2026

In 2017, DHS became a NYS Certified Opioid Overdose Prevention Program; however, continued to see an increase in overdose deaths. In 2023, the DHS Health Services Office launched the enhanced [DHS Overdose Response & Harm Reduction Program](#). From FY2022-2025, overdose deaths in shelter declined from 253 to 99 (a 61% decline).

Preventing deaths from opioid overdose requires a trained responder to rapidly (within minutes): (1) Identify overdose; (2) Correctly administer emergency medication (naloxone); (3) Call for emergency medical services (EMS) and ensure the individual is alert/can breathe until EMS arrival.

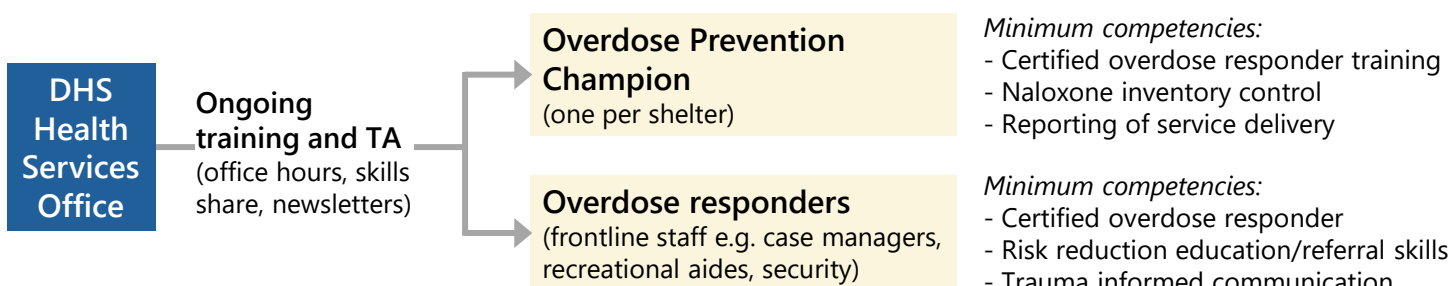
No Shelter Left Behind: Ensuring Baseline Overdose Response Capacity

Since 2023, the NYC DHS Health Services Office (HSO) has implemented the Harm Reduction in Shelter Strategic Plan to ensure a minimum overdose prevention capacity at each one of DHS' 500+ shelters:

Naloxone kits always stocked and not expired	Every shift has staff certified in overdose response	Staff trained in effective substance use risk reduction interventions (based on harm reduction instead of abstinence)
Shelter protocols clearly instruct on overdose response responsibilities	All overdose incidents reported and investigated	Every individual who overdoses receives risk reduction counseling and referral to services, care and treatment

Overdose Response Train-the-Trainer Model

The train-the-trainer model allows HSO to deliver robust training and technical assistance (TA), upskill current shelter staff, and monitor overdose response capacity and delivery across the shelter system.



Targeted Overdose Response & Prevention through Data Monitoring

Overdose risk is highest for people with a history of non-fatal overdose. By enhancing overdose data reporting and monitoring in the CARES database, HSO can efficiently allocate staff resources to the highest-risk clients and shelter sites.

Drive more robust overdose reporting and monitoring mechanisms in CARES	Target shelters and clients at highest risk of overdose incidents for interventions	Investigate and remediate all overdose incidents reported in CARES
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