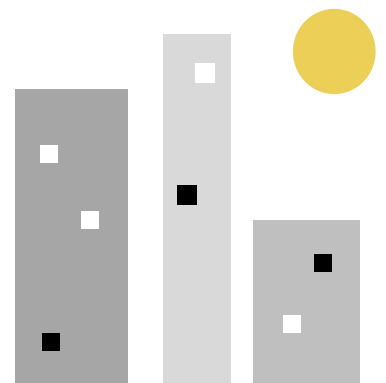


Overdose Awareness Day Toolkit

**Department of Homeless Services (DHS)
Human Resources Administration (HRA)**

Prepared by DSS Health Services Office



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Overdose Awareness Day Toolkit

This toolkit is provided for DHS and HRA staff to participate in Overdose Awareness Day. International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is on August 31. It marks the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose.

Overdose is the leading cause of death among people experiencing homelessness in New York City. On this Overdose Awareness Day (and every day) we mourn the lives lost to overdose, and we renew our commitment to preventing overdose and drug / alcohol-related deaths.

We are committed to promoting Harm Reduction across all DHS and HRA sites: focusing on how we can reduce risk related to substance use, rather than stigmatize, judge or blame people for using, and focusing on meeting clients where they're at in their recovery journey, rather than pushing them towards abstinence as the only option for wellbeing. To learn more about Harm Reduction and how to support your clients who use substances, please register for one of the DSS [Harm Reduction Trainings](#).

In an effort to honor those lost to overdose and to prevent future overdoses from occurring, we have created this toolkit for DHS and HRA staff to engage with clients on-site and promote overdose prevention.

Spreading Awareness

- Wear **purple** on August 31 for Overdose Awareness
- Post a picture of you and your colleagues in purple on your shelter's social media pages if applicable with [#IOAD](#), [#OverdoseAware](#) or [#EndOverdose](#)

Provide Harm Reduction and Health Support

- Pass out **Drug and Alcohol Risk Reduction Support and Tips Flyer** to all clients and post them around your site.
 - a. Download in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Arabic](#), [Bengali](#), [French](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Korean](#), [Polish](#), [Russian](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Traditional Chinese](#), and [Urdu](#).
- Post the **High Use Area Flyers/Naloxone Guidance** in high-use or high-risk areas around your sites.
 - a. Download in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Arabic](#), [Bengali](#), [French](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Korean](#), [Polish](#), [Russian](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Traditional Chinese](#), and [Urdu](#)
- Visit the [Harm Reduction in Shelters Toolkit](#) for these and other resources
- Refer clients who have had a non-fatal overdose to a harm reduction or Syringe Service Program (SSP) for advanced risk reduction support.

- a. To find a local program, call, text or visit [988](#) online, or see the [NYC Syringe Service Programs](#) pocket card.
- Connect clients to care via telehealth: If your client has a substance use, mental health or medical concern, they can speak with a nurse or doctor by phone or online, from anywhere in the DHS system - any time of day.
[H+H Express Care](#) – (845) 397-2273

Annual DSS Overdose Awareness Day Event

We invite you to participate in the Annual DSS Overdose Awareness Day Event! In order to participate, shelters must host an overdose awareness event at their shelter either leading up to or on Overdose Awareness Day (August 31).

Below are various activity ideas that participants can use for their overdose awareness event or display. Participants are welcome to organize one or more of these events at their site, or another activity idea that is not listed here.

To participate in the Annual DSS Overdose Awareness Day Event, you must have:

- Both staff and client's participation
- Completion of at least one of the activities below (or of an activity of your own design that is not listed here)
- A designated volunteer from your site to be responsible for attending Overdose Awareness Day Workgroup Meetings leading up to August.
- A designated point person to be responsible for submission of photo and event description to harmreduction@dss.nyc.gov. Submission deadlines will be discussed in Overdose Awareness Day Workgroup Meetings meeting.
 - Submit photo(s) of the event.
 - When sharing photos of staff and clients, be sure to complete a consent authorization form.
 - Tell us about your event: What did you do? Who participated?
 - Share your success: What was the staff/client's response? If participants are comfortable, please share stories of creating displays and or events and how everyone felt during and after.

The below activities are ideas, but feel free to get creative! You know your site best. Whatever way you can bring both staff and clients together to speak openly about substance use and overdose is a great way to raise awareness. Please keep in mind some activities may be sensitive to some as they might trigger the memories of previous traumatic experiences for staff and/or clients. Shelters can reach out to harmreduction@dss.nyc.gov for assistance and guidance for planning activities.

List of Activities

Activity 1: Tree of Life (Display)

A Tree of Life is a memorial to everyone who has been lost due to overdose (see below example)

Disclaimer: *This may be a sensitive activity for some participants. Respect participants' boundaries and emotions during the activity. Remind them that participation is voluntary, and they can choose how much or how little they want to be involved. At the end of the activity, provide resources and information about overdose prevention and emotional support services for those who may need it.*

Items needed:

- Poster Board
- Markers
- Leaves (you can use index cards or purple construction paper cut into boxes)
- Cutout paper tree with branches
- Picture of the lost loved one/individual/client

Instructions:

- Attach the cutout paper tree with branches to a public / central wall on-site
- Gather staff and clients and hand out paper leaves and markers
- Write a brief message in memory of the person who passed from an overdose, or write the person's name on a leaf
- If you have an image, attach it to the leaf above your message
- Once the leaf is completed, attach it to the tree
- Once everyone has attached their leaves, you can organize an event to take a moment of silence for collective honoring of those lost to overdose
 1. Read the names on the tree and give people an opportunity share a positive story if they choose to



*An example of what your Tree of Life display could look like
Photo: Schwartz Men Shelter 2024*

Activity 2: We Remember (Display and Event)

We Remember is an activity where staff and clients can collectively take a moment to honor anyone lost to overdose. This activity has two options, select which option will work best for your site.

Disclaimer: *This may be a sensitive activity for some participants. Respect participants' boundaries and emotions during the activity. Remind them that participation is voluntary, and they can choose how much or how little they want to be involved. At the end of the activity, provide resources and information about overdose prevention and emotional support services for those who may need.*

A. Option 1: Electric Candles

Items needed:

- [Purple Flameless Candles](#)
- Markers
- Table with a Gold or White tablecloth
- [2 circular stands](#) could be cake stands or just clear stands to hold the candles.
- [String and name tag](#) (to attach to each flameless candle)



Instructions:

- Gather staff and clients and hand out note cards and markers
- Write the name of the person who passed away from an overdose on the notecard
 1. Optional: write a short message to or about the person on the other side of the notecard
- Take the string insert through the card and tie the string around the candle
- Place the candle on the stand with the string overlapping. Use enough string to tie around the flameless candle
- Before placing the candle, say the person's name and place the candle on the table
- After all the candles are on the table, hold a moment of silence

B. Option 2: Paper Candles

Items needed:

- Purple, brown, yellow, orange construction paper
- Markers
- Safety scissors
- Glue
- Staple gun or tape
- A bulletin board or empty wall space

Instructions:

- In advance:
 1. Take purple paper cut into a long rectangle to represent the candle
 2. Take brown paper and cut into a square in the shape of a base for under the candle
 3. Take yellow and orange paper cut into oval shapes in the form of a flame
- Gather staff and clients and hand out base of the paper candles (brown piece of paper) and markers
- Write the name of the person who passed away from an overdose on the base of the paper candles (brown piece of paper)
 1. Optional: write a short message to or about the person on the other side of the base of the paper candles (brown piece of paper)
- Pass out glue and glue the pieces together
- Before placing the candle, say the person's name and place the candle on a wall or bulletin board
- After all the candles are up, hold a moment of silence

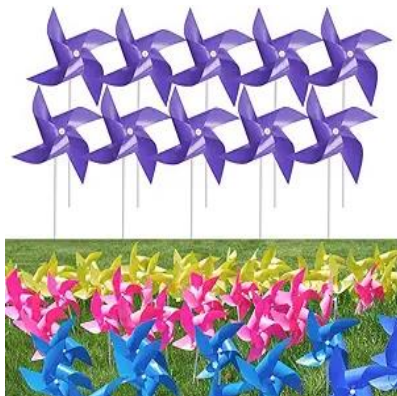
Activity 3: Bubble Release and/or Planting of Pinwheels (Display and Event)

Bubble Release is an activity where you can take a moment to honor anyone lost to overdose. Consider incorporating additional symbolic elements or readings into the ceremony based on the preferences of the participants.

Disclaimer: *This may be a sensitive activity for some participants. Respect participants' boundaries and emotions during the activity. Remind them that participation is voluntary, and they can choose how much or how little they want to be involved. At the end of the activity, provide resources and information about overdose prevention and emotional support services for those who may need it.*

Items needed:

- Bubbles and/or pinwheels
- Purple Shirts
- Markers
- Grass area/ lawn or flowerpot with soil



Images are items that teams can use.

Instructions:

- Gather staff and clients outside, somewhere with grass and place for everyone to stand
- Hand out pinwheels / markers or bubbles (depending on which you're using for the activity)
- If using pinwheels:
 1. Hand out pinwheels and markers
 2. Write the name of the person who passed away from an overdose on the pinwheel
 3. Plant the pinwheels in the grass
- Read the person's name and tell a story if desired
- Takes a moment of silence for those who have passed
- If using bubbles: after a moment of silence, count to three and collectively blow bubbles

Activity 4: Open Conversation (Event)

This is an opportunity to give clients time and space to share their own experiences and needs. Work with clinical staff onsite (such as licensed mental health providers or social workers) and Peers to lead substance use support groups, where people can openly discuss substance use without judgment or risk.

Please note, if clients wish to remain confidential, you can submit that you held an open conversation group without a group photo or any identifying client information.

Items Needed

- Physical space on-site for people to gather
- Clinical staff (LMHC, LMSW, MSW, CASAC, etc.)
- [Overdose Prevention Worksheet](#)
- [Harm Reduction in Shelters Toolkit](#)

Instructions

- If clients feel comfortable, ask them to share whatever they want to about their substance use.
 1. How may substances help them where they are right now?
 2. What risks have they experienced related to substance use?
 3. What their concerns are related to substance use risks?
 4. How are they already keeping themselves safe from substance-related risks?
 5. What can they do in the future to reduce substance related risks?

Activity 5: Naloxone and Xylazine, FTS training (Event)

Create dedicated time to train staff and clients on overdose prevention tools available to them in shelter. Work with your Overdose Prevention Champion to hold a naloxone, xylazine and fentanyl test strip training event.

Items Needed

- Central location to set up a training event
- Overdose Prevention Champion or other Certified Overdose Responder Trainer
- Naloxone Kits
- Overdose Responder Certification Blue Cards (from your Overdose Prevention Champion)
- Fentanyl test strips (can be ordered from DHS – email harmreduction@dss.nyc.gov)
- Xylazine test strips (can be ordered from [OASAS](#) online)

Instructions

- Train staff and clients on how to save a life by responding to a suspected overdose with naloxone
- Share [Harm Reduction in Shelters Toolkit](#) resources with interested clients
- Complete the [Overdose Responder Training and Naloxone Distribution: Reporting Form](#) for every individual trained

Activity 6: Safety Planning Session on Proper Syringe Use and Disposal (Event)

Have a clinical provider or a local SSP come in to shelter to discuss and demonstrate the proper ways to use and dispose of syringes.



To find a local program, call, text or visit 988 online, or see the [NYC Syringe Service Programs](#) pocket card.

Items Needed

- Instructor (clinical provider or SSP contact)
- Sample Syringes
- Sharps Container
- Physical space on-site for people to gather










Instructions

- Start a conversation about syringe use
- Train staff and clients on how to safely use and dispose of syringes
- Share information on local Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)
- Show clients where the designated sharps containers are located in shelter
- Give clients and staff SSP cards if they don't have one already.

Your Guide to		Program	Phone	Website	
<div><h1>Syringe Service Programs</h1><h2>in New York City</h2><div></div></div>		BOOM!Health	718-292-7718	boomhealth.org	BX
		Bronx Móvil*	917-200-0358	bronxmovil.org	
		St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction	718-585-5544	sachr.org	
		After Hours Project	718-249-0755	afterhoursproject.org	BK
		Family Services Network of New York	347-770-9911	fsnny1.org	
		VOCAL-NY	718-802-9540	vocal-ny.org	
		Alliance for Positive Change	212-645-0875	alliance.nyc	
		Harlem United	212-289-2378	harlemunited.org	MN
		Housing Works	212-677-7999	housingworks.org	
		Positive Health Project	212-465-8304	housingworks.org	
		Safe Horizon—Streetwork	646-602-6404	safehorizon.org	
		OnPoint NYC (East Harlem)	212-828-8464	onpointnyc.org	
		OnPoint NYC (Washington Heights)	212-923-7600	onpointnyc.org	
		AIDS Center of Queens County*	718-896-2500	acqc.org	QNS
		Community Health Action of Staten Island	718-808-1815	chasiny.org	SI

*Mobile or weekend services only. Call program for hours of operation, location and services.

*Mobile or weekend services only. Call program for hours of operation, location and services.

What Do Syringe Service Programs Do?		Safety Tips:	
<p>A syringe service program (SSP) provides immediate services for people who use drugs. SSP services include:</p>		<p>Get naloxone. Leave it out when you use. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose from fentanyl, heroin and other opioids.</p>	
 Access to safer drug use and safer sex supplies	 Hepatitis care coordination and treatment counseling	 Fentanyl, a drug stronger than heroin, has been found in heroin, cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, ketamine and pills from nonmedical sources.	 Avoid mixing drugs. Using different drugs together, including alcohol, increases your risk of overdose. If you do mix drugs, go slow.
 Access to naloxone	 Safer drug use and health education	 Use with others and take turns, or have someone check on you.	
 Hepatitis C and HIV testing	 Care coordination and referrals to other services	<p>For more information, go to nyc.gov/health and search for prevent overdose.</p>	

Activity 7: Let's Get Outside (Event)

This activity offers staff and clients a day focused on stress management outside of shelter. Participants will enjoy leisure walks, meditation, and other activities to promote relaxation and well-being. The goal of this activity is to help clients identify their stressors, understand ways to reduce their stress, and find activities outside of shelter that they can participate in to fill time throughout the day in ways that support their well-being.

Items Needed

- Designated location outside of shelter in the community (place to meditate, walk, etc.)
- Discussion topics
- Purple t-shirts
- Yoga instructor
- [Drug and Alcohol Risk Reduction Support and Tips Flyer](#)
- [Overdose Prevention Worksheet](#)

Instructions

- Have clients and staff gather in purple shirts in a designated location.
- The Yoga instructor should open a conversation about stress and drug use and how it relates to overdose awareness.
- Below are some questions that can be used to guide the discussion:
 1. Allow clients to share their stressors.
 2. How do clients experience stress?
 3. How do substances alleviate that stress?
 4. What other ways can they manage stress levels that might be unrelated to substance use?
 5. How do they manage stress levels with substance related risk?
 6. How do they keep themselves safe right now?
- Questions After Yoga Session:
 1. How do you feel now?
 2. What did you enjoy most from the session?
 3. Can you see yourself incorporating Yoga as a stress reliver in your daily life?
- Gather everyone to go for a walk in the park / guide everyone through a meditation session
- After your walk regroup and discuss the day's activities, ways to stay safe and reduce risk
- Provide referral services and guides or ways to stay safe

CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

Photos, Interviews, Videos & Media

I hereby irrevocably grant to Department of Homeless Services (DHS), its affiliates, licensees, successors and assigns, with respect to materials to be produced by DHS for the purpose of publicizing, advertising and exhibiting the activities of DHS, the unrestricted, perpetual worldwide right to: (1) reproduce, display, modify or create derivative works based upon, or otherwise use, my photograph, video, interviews and media ("Materials"), and to copyright such use; (2) use and permit to use my name, voice, image or likeness, whether in its original form or as modified, in connection with the Materials; and (3) use data collected from surveys, interviews, evaluations, and observations. I acknowledge that the uses to which I consent include all or part of the photography and recording made of my image and voice and that the same may be combined with photographs and recordings of other persons, and other places other than where my image or voice was photographed or recorded.

I hereby waive and release DHS from any and all claims, whether now known or unknown, for defamation, libel, invasion of privacy, publicity or personality, copyright infringement, or any similar or related claims, based upon DHS's exploitation of my name, voice, image or likeness, and artwork in connection with the Materials. I further waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve of the Materials.

I state further that I have read the above authorization, release and agreement prior to its execution, and I am fully familiar with the contents thereof.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO:

I _____, hereby warrant that I am of full age and have every right to consent to the terms and conditions of this release.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Shelter Name: _____

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO:

I, _____, hereby warrant that I am of full age and have every right to consent for the child(ren) named below to the terms and conditions of this release.

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Names of Children: _____

Shelter Name: _____

Together we can end overdose

We are here to support you!

Contact us at: harmreduction@dss.nyc.gov