



Help save lives.

CARRY NALOXONE.



The Impact of the Communities That HEAL Program on Overdose Deaths from Opioids Used in Combination with Meth and Other Drugs

The Problem ►

Over three-quarters of the drug overdose deaths in the U.S. involved fentanyl, a powerful opioid that is commonly mixed with stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine (or meth). In recent years, rising amounts of people using opioids with other drugs has worsened the overdose crisis.

The Goal ►

Researchers from the HEALing Communities Study looked at whether the Communities That HEAL (CTH) program reduced drug overdose deaths. They also examined whether the CTH program lowered the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids and other drugs.

What We Did ►

Sixty-seven communities with high opioid overdose rates in Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio took part in the CTH, which used proven methods to reduce overdose deaths. The CTH used evidence-based practices and created community-driven communication campaigns aimed at reducing stigma and increasing access to naloxone, overdose education, and medications for opioid use disorder. Researchers looked at overdose death rates during a comparison period to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

What We Learned ►

Researchers did not find a difference in overall overdose death rate between communities that received the CTH program and those that did not.

In CTH communities, there was a **37% reduction** in overdose deaths from opioids mixed with stimulants like meth (not including cocaine).

However, CTH communities had a significant 37% reduction in overdose deaths that involved an opioid and stimulant, such as meth. Nearly 40% of opioid overdose deaths tracked during the study involved both opioids and stimulants.

Why it Matters ►

The rise in overdose deaths is partly due to fentanyl mixed with stimulants, highlighting the urgent need to better understand and treat disorders involving more than one substance.

A communications campaign part of the CTH program raised awareness about the presence of fentanyl in the illicit drug supply, including stimulants, and the importance of using naloxone for suspected overdoses. The authors think this campaign, along with increased overdose education and naloxone distribution, may have spread awareness of the importance of using naloxone for any suspected drug overdose and helped reduce *all* overdose deaths.

What Can I Do to Help? ►

This is a summary of a scientific research published in JAMA Network Open by Freisthler et al. (2024): [doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.40006](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.40006). To find out how you can bring the CTH program to your community, visit hcs.rti.org.

NIH
HEAL
INITIATIVE

HEALing
Communities
Study

#healtogether