



**One WA family, driven by hope**

## Introduction

Each year, August 31 marks International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD), the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose. This year's theme, *One big family, driven by hope*, highlights the power of our community when we all stand together. In Washington, we believe that any life lost to overdose is a big impact, and we join together this IOAD as One Washington family.

This toolkit offers practical resources to support state agencies, local health jurisdictions, and community organizations in promoting local events and increasing awareness of existing resources and materials.

### **This year's toolkit includes:**

- Overview of overdoses in Washington
- Recognizing and responding to overdose
- Information on finding naloxone
- Links to treatment resources
- Promoting a local event
- Sample press release
- Customizable event flyer
- Social media materials
- Resource list

## Overview of overdose in Washington

IOAD serves as a vital tool for raising public awareness about the impact of overdose on individuals, families, and communities. In recent years, Washington has seen a significant increase in overdose cases, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address this crisis.

We at HCA express our deep gratitude for anyone who has reversed an overdose or who carries naloxone. To our fellow Washingtonians who have been on the front lines of the overdose crisis (those of you in social services, health care, education, and first responders): You have saved countless lives while working in extremely difficult circumstances, often thanklessly and without the resources you need. We appreciate all you are doing and have done.

This year, HCA has developed this toolkit to assist our state and local partners in raising awareness and promoting action to reduce overdose.

### What causes an overdose?

An opioid overdose occurs when a person has more opioids in their body than the body can handle. An overdose can cause breathing to slow or stop completely, which can lead to death. An opioid overdose can happen suddenly or come on slowly over a few hours. Without oxygen, a person can die.

Risks for an opioid overdose include:

- **Using opioids again after your tolerance has dropped** (for example, after being in treatment, at a hospital, or in jail). After a break from opioids, the body can't handle as much as it did before.
- **Taking prescription pain medication more often or in higher doses** than prescribed or using someone else's prescription pain medication. The dose could be too much.
- **Using heroin or pills bought on the street.** Heroin and street pills can contain other substances, often fentanyl, which can be found at dangerous and unpredictable levels.
- **Using opioids with alcohol or other drugs** including sleeping pills, benzodiazepines

("benzos" like Valium and Xanax), cocaine, and methamphetamine.

- Any **current or chronic illness** that weakens the heart or makes it harder to breathe.
- **Using opioids alone.** You are more likely to die from an overdose if no one is there to help.
- **Previous overdose.** A person who has overdosed before is more likely to overdose again.

### Recognizing and responding to an overdose

A person may be overdosing if:

- They can't wake up, even when you call their name or shake them firmly.
- They are breathing very slowly or not at all. Breathing could sound like gurgling.
- They have blue, gray, or purple skin color. Check their lips and fingernails.
- They look ashen or feel cold to the touch.

If you think a person has overdosed, follow these steps:

- Call 911.
- Tell the dispatcher that someone is not breathing.
- Administer naloxone and give rescue breaths.
  - The goal of reversing an overdose is to restore breathing using the lowest necessary dose of naloxone.
  - Wait two minutes, if they do not wake up, administer a second dose of naloxone.
  - Remember, it is safe to give a person naloxone, even if you don't know what they took.
- Stay with them until emergency responders arrive.

Download this [wallet card](#) for instructions on how to administer nasal naloxone.

If you assist in an overdose, remember to take care of yourself after the event. Regardless of the outcome, you stepped up to care for another

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person and that can be difficult or triggering in many ways.

## Strategies to prevent overdose

- Always carry naloxone.
- Learn the signs of an overdose.
- Assume any drug not from a pharmacy may contain fentanyl. When possible, check for fentanyl using fentanyl test strips or visit a [drug checking service](#), which are more accurate and provide more info than a test strip.
- Slow down when using drugs to check tolerance, especially after a recent break from using drugs.
- Try to avoid using drugs alone. Ask someone you trust to check on you or use the [Never Use Alone Hotline](#) (877-696-1996).
  - Please note that this hotline is volunteer-run, and there is not a guarantee of the availability of services.

## Washington's Good Samaritan law

In Washington, anyone trying to help in a medical emergency is generally protected from civil liabilities by [RCW 4.24.300](#). Washington's [911 Good Samaritan Overdose Law RCW 69.50.315](#) gives additional, specific protections against drug possession charges:

- If you seek medical assistance in a drug-related overdose, you cannot be prosecuted for drug possession.
- The overdose victim is also protected from drug possession charges.
- Anyone in Washington who might have or witness an opioid overdose is allowed to carry and administer naloxone. ([RCW 69.41.095](#))

The law does not protect you from outstanding warrants, probation or parole violations, drug manufacture or delivery, controlled substances homicide, or crimes other than drug possession.

## Naloxone information

- Find free naloxone in your area using the [naloxone finder](#).
- Naloxone is covered by Apple Health (Medicaid) in Washington State.
- In fact, most insurance providers cover at least one FDA-approved opioid antagonist. [Learn more about insurance options](#).
- Naloxone can be dispensed at pharmacies without a prescription or found over the counter in some stores.
- Naloxone can be provided by community-based organizations because there is a [Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone](#).

A law went into effect on January 1, 2022, that affects how the Department of Health (DOH) can provide naloxone kits to your program. If you represent a behavioral health agency (BHA) and/or opioid treatment program (OTP), please see [Reference Page for 2SSB 5195](#) or email the [DOH naloxone program](#) to learn how this law applies to your agency.

HCA recently launched the [naloxone pilot program](#), which is accepting [applications](#) for a one-time stock of naloxone for BHAs. Applications will be accepted until **August 15**. Learn more on the [HCA website](#).

The DOH [Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution \(OEND\) program](#) supports access to naloxone for people who are likely to experience or witness an opioid overdose. The program provides free naloxone for distribution to clients and community members, overdose recognition and response training for community organizations, and technical assistance to organizations that are interested in distributing naloxone.

- If you are interested in applying for the program, please complete the [Naloxone Program Application](#).
- Tribes, tribal organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations can request naloxone using the [Tribal Naloxone Request Form](#).
- To request training for your organization, please visit [Overdose Education and Response Training Form](#).

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## Native communities

American Indians and Alaska Natives are affected disproportionately by the opioid crisis. Opioid overdose rates are higher for American Indians and Alaska Natives than in any other category by race and ethnicity.

For Tribal Nations in particular, the effects of historical trauma have decimated the health and wellness of families due to generations of assimilation, systemic poverty, and racism. These experiences elevate risks for mental health issues and substance use as a form of coping.

Tribes in Washington State are leading powerful efforts to heal their communities from the devastating impacts of opioid addiction. Rooted in strength and resilience, they are restoring cultural ways—through talking circles, ceremonies, and traditional foods; weaving those teachings into everyday life. Interpersonal relationships, interconnectedness, and identity are key to healing and wellness in Tribal communities.

As of this date, Tribal Nations have built or expanded ten inpatient and outpatient OTPs and mobile clinics that serve both Native and non-Native people, blending traditional medicine with modern care.

## Treatment

There is no “one size fits all” treatment. Everyone’s path is different. The good news is that there are resources available for an [in-depth look at treatment options](#).

Buprenorphine and methadone are medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and can improve one’s quality of life and health. Buprenorphine treatment after a nonfatal opioid overdose has been associated with a 62% reduction in the risk of opioid-involved overdose death. Being on MOUD long-term significantly decreases the risk of overdose and death. Recent research found that treating opioid use disorder without medication was more deadly than no treatment at all.

OTPs are outpatient behavioral health agencies that offer both counseling and all three FDA-approved MOUD: methadone, buprenorphine products, and naltrexone products. To find an OTP in Washington, check out the [OTP Guide](#) and learn more on the [HCA website](#).

An expansion of the [King Co. “Telebupe” Hotline](#) is currently being developed and will be launched later this year.

[Learn more about MOUD here](#), including a downloadable brochure. Additionally, ADAI has developed an easy resource for [understanding the differences between MOUD options](#).

Medications are the gold standard of treatment for opioid use disorder and should be the first line of treatment. Abstinence-based treatment puts people with opioid use disorder at a higher risk of death in the long term.

- Detoxification is typically a 3- to 7-day inpatient stay where a person goes through withdrawal under medical care. Following this medical detox, they should be started on medications for opioid use disorder and, with their consent, transferred to a residential or outpatient treatment program.
- Residential treatment lasts typically 30 to 60 days and links to further supportive care like a recovery home and outpatient treatment. Providing individuals with the option to start or continue medications to treat opioid use disorder while they are in residential treatment is required by law.
- Outpatient or intensive outpatient treatment consists of a mix of group and individual therapy, at varying duration and frequency, with opportunity for continuing care. Outpatient treatment providers should not discriminate against participation in their treatment program based on someone’s using medications to treat opioid use disorder and should facilitate connection to medication treatment options.

## Hosting a local event

Media outlets can play a key role in the success of your event by sharing details in print, digital, or broadcast media. Increasing awareness of local events helps IOAD gain the visibility needed to maximize impact and create change.

Individuals or community organizations running events should utilize the tools in this toolkit and we encourage you to share your event details with colleagues around the state to help increase attendance. When you're speaking to the media, it's important to frame your event in the context of the wider IOAD campaign — a global movement sparked by an unprecedented health crisis.

Remember to highlight the local relevance of the opioid crisis. While journalists might be impressed by global significance, they will also want to know how this issue affects your community specifically. This will be especially important for publications targeting a local audience, like community newspapers. **Overdose data** for your region can help bring attention to the scale of the crisis.

As with the point on local relevance, a big news item will have greater impact if it is tied to a concrete example to give it weight and emotional resonance. Nothing achieves relatability like a human face. If you have community members willing to speak openly about their experience, it can help audiences connect with the issue on a personal level.

We encourage anyone planning an event to register the event on the **Washington-specific IOAD webpage**. If you need assistance registering, please reach out to **Beth Payne** at DOH. Beth is also collecting stories and pictures from Washington events to share afterwards, so consider sending in your feedback and any photos you might have.

## Sample press release

**[Partner name]** announces the observance of International Overdose Awareness Day on Sunday, August 31. On this day, we join state, national, and international partners in recognizing the critical issue of drug overdoses, honoring the people in our state who have lost their lives to overdose, and promoting initiatives to prevent future overdoses.

International Overdose Awareness Day serves as a vital tool for raising public awareness about the impact of overdose on individuals, families, and communities. In recent years, Washington has seen far too many lives lost to overdose, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address this crisis. Our state continues to recognize the tremendous efforts of so many community organizations, providers, researchers and responders who are working to reduce the toll of overdose in our community.

We can all take part in the collective action to prevent overdose and that is why **[partner name]** is hosting an event on **[date]**. This year's event will take place at **[location]** at **[time]** and is open to everyone in this community. This International Overdose Awareness Day, we are *One Washington Family, Driven by Hope*.

## Customizable flyer

We have created the following flyer to promote your local event, with space for details regarding location and time. HCA can support and provide additional *Friends for Life* material for IOAD events by contacting [Devan Iyomasa](#).

**Everyone  
deserves to live,  
and anyone  
(including you!)  
can be a  
friend for life.**



**Join a local event for  
International Overdose Awareness Day  
August 31**

Time:

Location:

## Social media for overdose awareness

This year's theme is "One big family, driven by hope" and in Washington, we are encouraging everyone using social media to promote events to use **#OneWAFamily** to help spread awareness. Feel free to use these posts in the days and weeks before your event. Tag HCA (@wa\_health\_care) and DOH (@wadepthealth) and our social media teams will try to boost your posts.

### Post 1

When someone survives an opioid overdose, it's because someone else stepped up to help. Our lives are deeply connected. When we see each other not as strangers but as friends to keep safe, we have the power to change what happens next. Overdose is preventable – when we act together.

#OneWAFamily #OneBigFamily #DrivenByHope #IOAD2025  
#EndOverdose



### Post 2

Every life lost to an opioid overdose is a big deal, especially to the friends, family, and community left behind. By taking small, everyday steps – like carrying naloxone – you can do your part to keep the people around you safe. And that's huge.

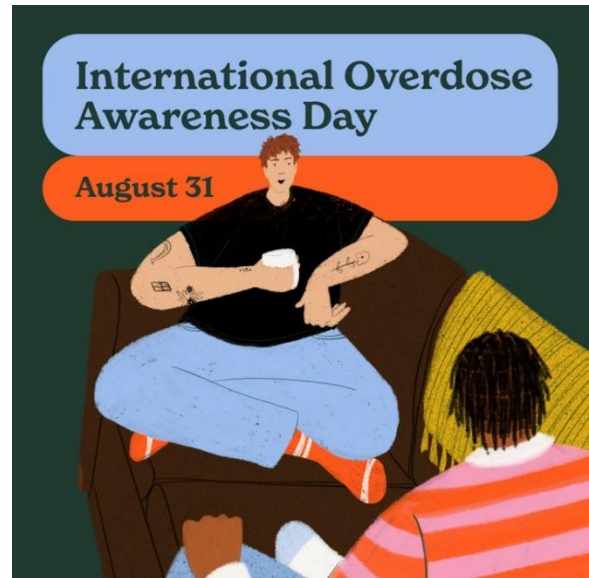
#OneWAFamily #OneBigFamily #DrivenByHope #IOAD2025  
#EndOverdose



## Post 3

Overdose prevention takes compassion, knowledge, and action – from all of us. This August 31, we can organize, show up, and work together to create a future free from overdose. Remember, everyone deserves to live, and anyone (including you!) can be a friend for life.

#OneWfamily #OneBigFamily #DrivenByHope #IOAD2025  
#EndOverdose



## Resource list

### Printing or ordering materials

- [Friends for Life toolkits](#), email [Devan Iyomasa](#) for ordering questions
- [ADAI clearinghouse](#), limit 30 copies per item (please place orders by August 13)
- [Printable handouts](#) from CEDEER
- IOAD campaign [information](#) and [toolkits](#)
  - Don't forget to [register](#) your local event!

### Washington data resources

- [DOH Data dashboard](#)
- [Washington State Community Drug Checking Network](#)

### For crisis services

- [Visit the 988 website](#) or call or text 988 for free or confidential support for people in crisis 24/7.
- Native individuals in Washington can call the [Native and Strong Lifeline](#). To access this lifeline, dial 988 and press 4.
- [The National Helpline](#) can assist with referrals and information 24/7 at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- If you are facing a disaster, the [National Disaster Line](#) can provide immediate crisis counseling related to disasters at 1-800-985-5990.

### Overdose education

- Overdose information from the [For our Lives](#) campaign
- Overdose information from the [Friends for Life](#) campaign
- [PreventOverdoseWA](#) campaign
- [Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution \(OEND\) program](#)

### Naloxone resources

- Learn [how to get and use naloxone](#) (Narcan)
- [Request a naloxone training](#) from DOH
- [How to use insurance to get naloxone](#)
- [Never use alone hotline](#)
- [Intramuscular naloxone wallet card](#)
- [Nasal naloxone wallet card](#)
- Digital wallet card for downloading available in [Friends for Life toolkit](#)

### Native resources

- [WA Tribal Opioid Resource Exchange](#) from the American Indian Health Commission (AIHC)
- [WA State Tribal Opioid & Fentanyl Task Force](#)
- [Tribal resource hub](#) for connecting Native people in Washington to support in one place
- Native individuals in Washington can call the [Native and Strong Lifeline](#). To access this lifeline, dial 988 and press 4.
- [Healing of the Canoe project](#)
- Treatment, recovery, and stigma information from the [For Our Lives](#) campaign
- [Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board \(NPAIHB\) Opioid Resources](#)



## For treatment resources

- 24-hour buprenorphine hotline in King County, (206) 289-0287. This hotline will be expanded in the next year to serve all of Washington. Details forthcoming from DOH.
- The [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) is an anonymous and confidential help line that provides crisis intervention and referral services for Washington State residents. Call the help line at **866-789-1511**.
  - Professionally trained volunteers and staff are available to provide emotional support 24 hours a day, and offer local treatment resources for substance abuse, problem gambling and mental health as well as to other community services.
- FindTreatment.gov is a confidential and anonymous resource for persons seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders in the United States and its territories.
  - Learn about [how to find quality treatment](#), the different types of treatment, and what to expect when starting treatment.
  - Learn [how to pay for treatment](#) whether you have insurance or not.
  - Understanding [substance use disorder](#).
  - Understanding [mental health disorders](#).
  - Supporting [the health of youth who use opioids](#).
- For medication for opioid use disorder resources
  - Find an OTP in Washington with the [OTP Guide](#)
  - [DOH handout](#)
  - [Find practitioners and treatment programs](#) providing buprenorphine for opioid use disorder.
  - [Find programs that provide methadone](#) for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

## For housing or emergency services

- 211 provides information including but not limited to housing, transportation, and food resources. [Visit the 211 website](#) or call 211 24/7.

## Other

- The [Empathy Lens collection](#), developed by ADAI, features free photographs related to drug and alcohol use, prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction. The project encourages the use of realistic, humanizing imagery in education, media, and other forms of information dissemination.
- Download and share this [Good Samaritan wallet card](#), which includes the basic information on the Good Samaritan law.
- [Dance safe](#) for fentanyl test strips
- [Syringe service program directory](#)
- Learn about [Safer Supply](#), an overdose prevention strategy that has been implemented in other countries, like Canada
- Drug Policy Alliance [Safer Supply Toolkit](#)
- ADAI handout on [what to do after surviving an overdose](#)
- [Developmental risks for children and harm reduction of opioid exposure](#)
- Information about [fentanyl exposure in public places](#)
- School education and activities
  - Friends for Life [middle school activity](#) and [presentation](#)
  - Friends for Life [high school activity](#) and [presentation](#)
  - [Safety Study Hall](#) from DOH
  - [Facts about fentanyl](#) from DOH