



CONSIDERING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO DRUG OVERDOSE IN ETHEKWINI

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BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS TO RESPOND TO DRUG OVERDOSE

- Pilot study conducted March 2019 across three South African Cities (39 respondents from eThekweni)
- Purpose:
 - Document personal and peer experience of drug overdose
 - Understand comfort in calling for emergency help to response to an overdose
 - Knowledge around opioid overdose management among people who use drugs who access harm reduction services
 - Map hotspots of drug overdoses occurrence



Results:

- 76% used drugs for more than 5 years; most commonly used drug reported was heroin
- 63% of participants reported having experienced a drug overdose in the past year.
- 76% knew at least one person who had experienced an overdose.
- Most participants (64%) had not heard of naloxone
- 73% felt comfortable to carry Naloxone

	Durban (n=29)	Cape Town (n=21)	Pretoria (n=16)
Proportion that personally experienced overdose in last year	12 (41%)	3 (14%)	10 (63%)
Average times they reported personally overdosing in last year	2.5	1.7	1.1
Reported knowing someone who had overdosed in last year	23 (79%)	15 (71%)	12 (75%)

Key Takeaways

- Drug overdoses (lethal and non-lethal) are occurring and individuals are willing to report and there is sharing of overdose experience amongst at risk groups in eThekweni
- There is a need to raise awareness of overdose and who to call for help
- Better surveillance is needed to monitor and track occurrence and locations of drug overdose
- Additional efforts are needed to increase understanding and access to Naloxone



LAW ENFORCEMENT AS PROTECTORS OF HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

- Engagement with LEAD National Support Bureau around role of police in responding to needs of people who use drugs
- During COVID lockdown, law enforcement trained on recognizing and responding to a drug overdose, including administration of Naloxone
- Metro Police stored Naloxone on sites where short-term medical withdrawal program was run from
- Law enforcement protected and championed medical withdrawal program using methadone





DIALOGUE AND SPACE CREATED

- The Council of the eThekweni Municipality has set-aside a City owned building, Bellhaven Memorial Hall, to Safer Cities for the purposes of running a harm reduction centre
- Bellhaven Programmes:
 - OST Programme (active) 125-130 people daily
 - Needle Syringe Programme (active)
 - Overdose Prevention Space (in discussion)
 - Psychosocial Intervention (active)
 - Testing and referral for treatment for TB, HIV, and Hepatitis (active)
 - Primary Care Clinic in coordination with DOH (in discussion)
- In commemoration of International Overdose Day (August 31):
 - Overdose Training
 - Naloxone Awareness
 - Candlelight Vigil to remember lives lost