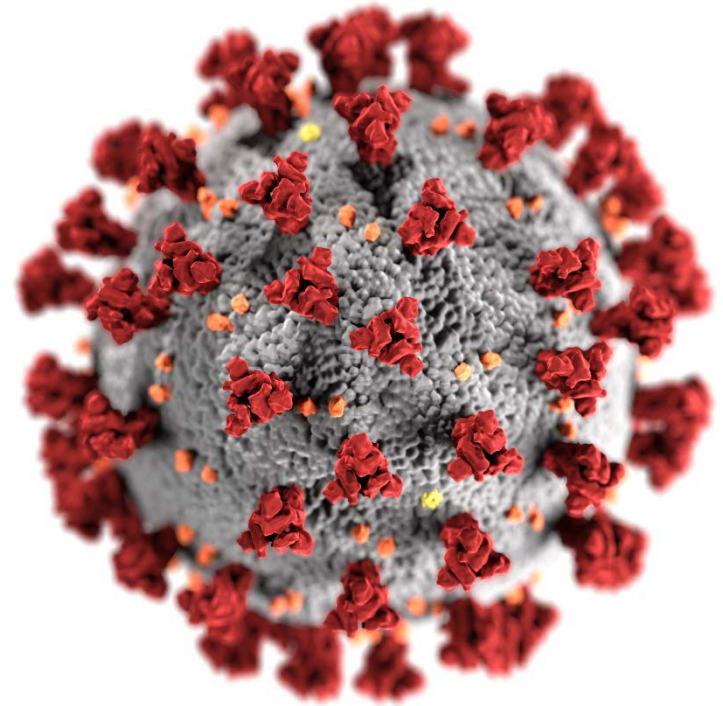


# NCIPC COVID-19 Activity: Novel Harm Reduction and Treatment Strategies to Support Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder

**Nancy Worthington, PhD, MPH**  
**Health Scientist**  
**Division of Overdose Prevention, NCIPC**

Department of Health and Human Services  
Public Health Service  
Board of Scientific Counselors  
February 16, 2021



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Cooperative agreement between NCIPC and National Council for Behavioral Health (NCBH) to:

1. Identify and document **novel, innovative, and emerging harm reduction strategies** implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Fund promising strategies for **ensuring or increasing access to services** during COVID-19

# BACKGROUND

## COVID-19 may increase fatal opioid overdoses, owing to:

- Increased substance use or a return to use after remission
- Delays in seeking treatment or disruptions in access to treatment and naloxone
- People using substances alone

### References:

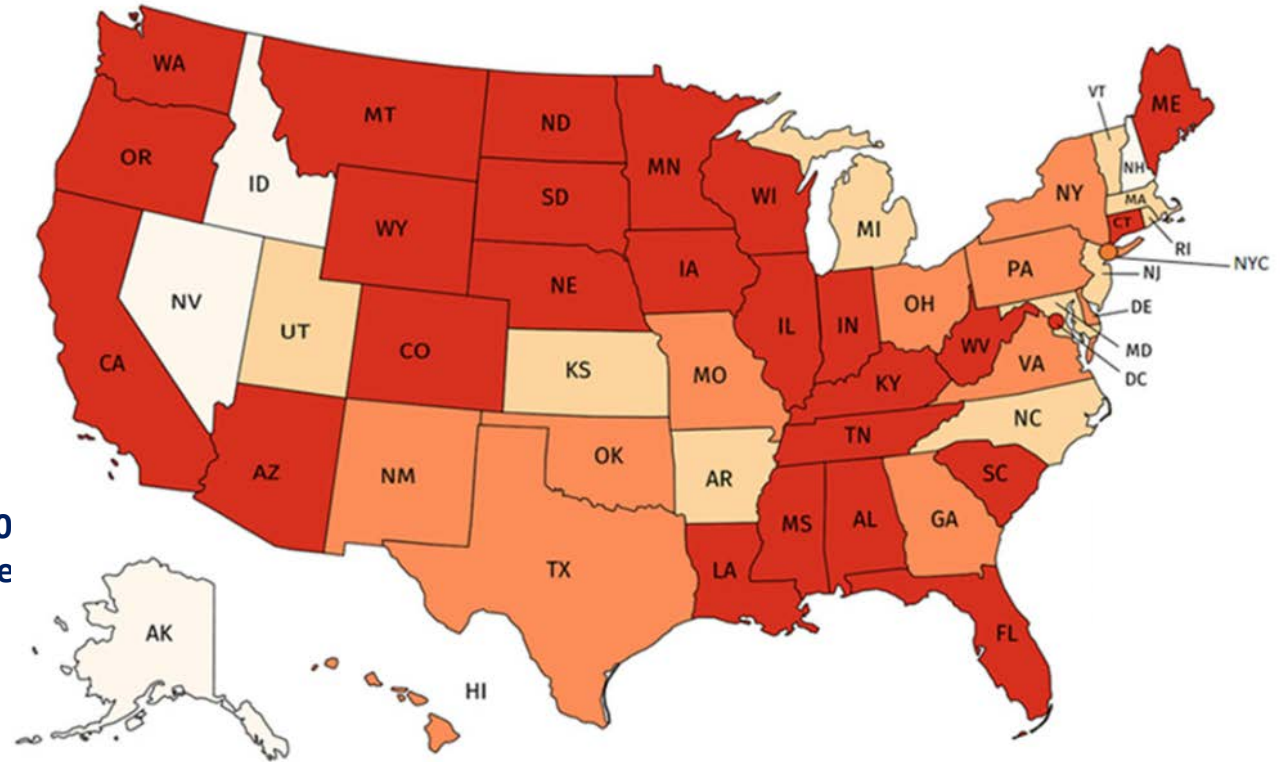
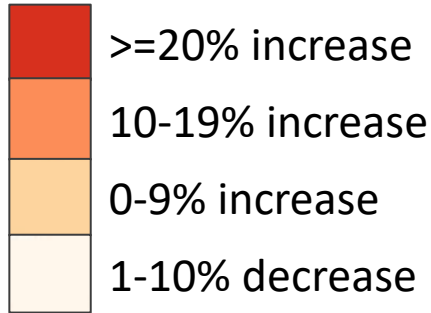
Enns, A., et al. (2020). "Substance Use and Related Harms in the Context of COVID-19: A Conceptual Model." *Health Promot Chronic Dis Prev Can* 40(11-12): 342-349.

Glick, S. N., et al. (2020). "The Impact of COVID-19 on Syringe Services Programs in the United States." *AIDS Behav* 24(9): 2466-2468.

Stack, E., et al. (2020). "The Impacts of COVID-19 on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Overdose Concerns of People Who Use Drugs in Rural Communities." *J Addict Med*.



# Percentage change in provisional drug overdose death counts from 12-months ending in June 2019 to 12-months ending in May 2020\*



\*12-months ending in May 2020 includes the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as months prior to the pandemic

# ACTIVITIES

- Environmental scan of **challenges and opportunities** related to the provision of harm reduction services during COVID-19
  - Literature review
  - Key informant interviews
- Identification of **innovative and effective harm reduction practices** employed during the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Funding harm reduction organizations** and developing **peer-to-peer learning** among grantees
- **Technical assistance tools** to disseminate best and promising practices



# KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- 21 key informant interviews conducted with field experts
- Environmental scan submitted and undergoing revision
- Competitive request for funding applications developed and released to over 100,000 stakeholders
  - 16 stakeholders selected for awards up to \$33,333
- Evaluation plan developed to assess program impacts/outcomes

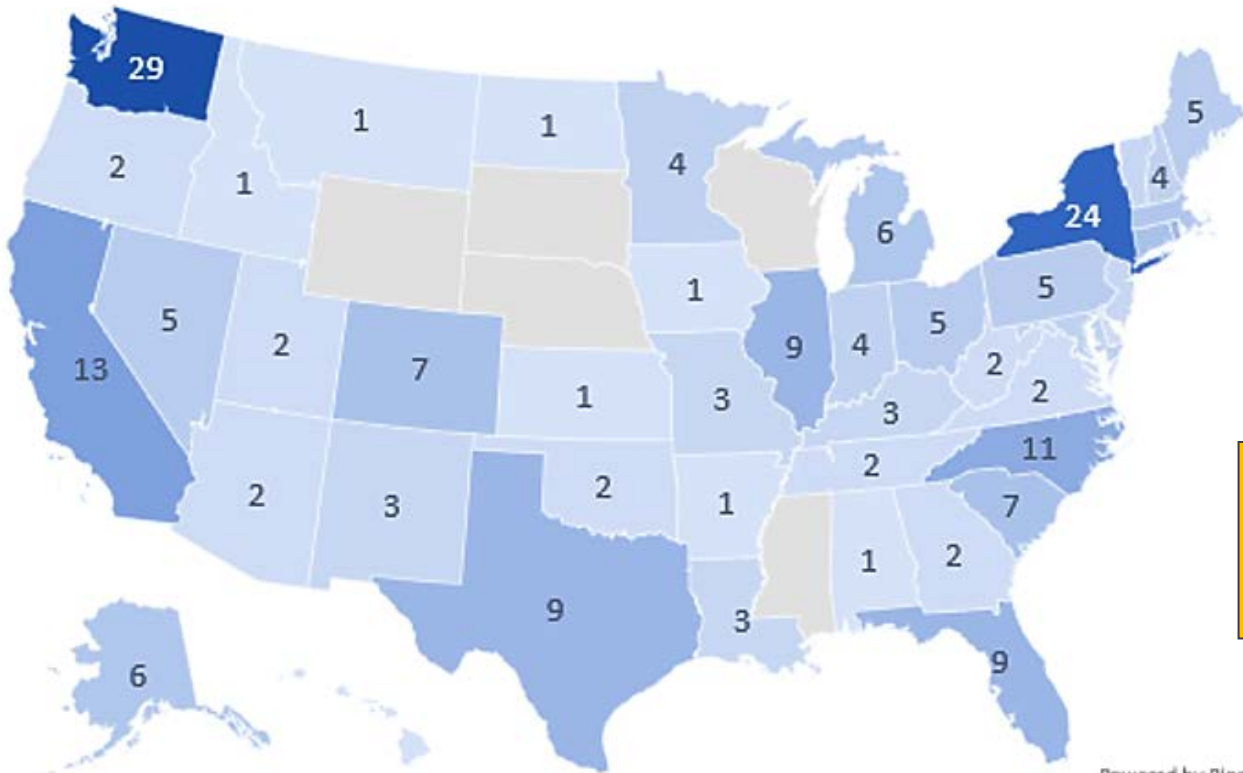
Project period ends on **July 31, 2021**



# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: FINDINGS

I.	Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on <b>people who use drugs</b>	risk of contracting COVID-19; substance use-related health harms; impact on mental health; social and economic harms; criminal-legal system impacts; barriers to essential services
II.	Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on <b>harm Reduction organizations</b>	increased need for harm reduction services; operational disruptions; staffing; supply distributions; impact on workforce
III.	<b>Adaptations and innovations</b> made by harm reduction organizations	operational changes; technology-based adaptations and innovations; partnerships and collaborations; resources and tools





Number of applicants



**233 Applicants**  
from 45 states + DC

Powered by Bing  
© GeoNames, Microsoft, TomTom



# FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	State
HIPS (Honoring Individual Power and Strength)	DC
The Perfectly Flawed Foundation	IL
Southside Harm Reduction Services	MN
Maine Access Points	ME
Milan Puskar Health Right	WV
Trystereo / New Orleans Harm Reduction Network	LA
Dave Purchase Project/Tacoma Needle Exchange	WA
Sex Workers and Allies Network of New Haven	CT
Iowa Harm Reduction Coalition	IA
Sonoran Prevention Works	AZ
NEXT Distro	NY (nationwide)
North Carolina Survivors Union	NC
Healthy Alaska Natives Foundation	AK
SWOP Behind Bars	FL
Bronx Movil	NY
SHOTS Tulsa	OK

**16 Grantees**  
from 15 states + DC  
covering 9 HHS regions

**MAINE  
ACCESS  
POINTS**



# FUNDED STRATEGIES

- **Distribution** of harm reduction and hygiene supplies
  - no contact delivery; postal delivery; call in and secondary exchange
- **Communication and education**
  - educational videos; online resource hub with chat function; virtual peer support meetings; Never Use Alone line
- **Outreach**
  - mobile health unit; outreach van; outreach to homeless encampment
- **Low threshold employment** for people who use drugs
- **Linkage to care** for individuals released from correctional facilities



## Budget Period Outcomes

- Improved capacity **to identify, prioritize, and customize harm reduction programs and services** to address public health needs during COVID-19
- Increased capability of public and behavioral health practitioners **to implement evidence-based/informed harm reduction programs, policies, and services** to address public health needs during COVID-19

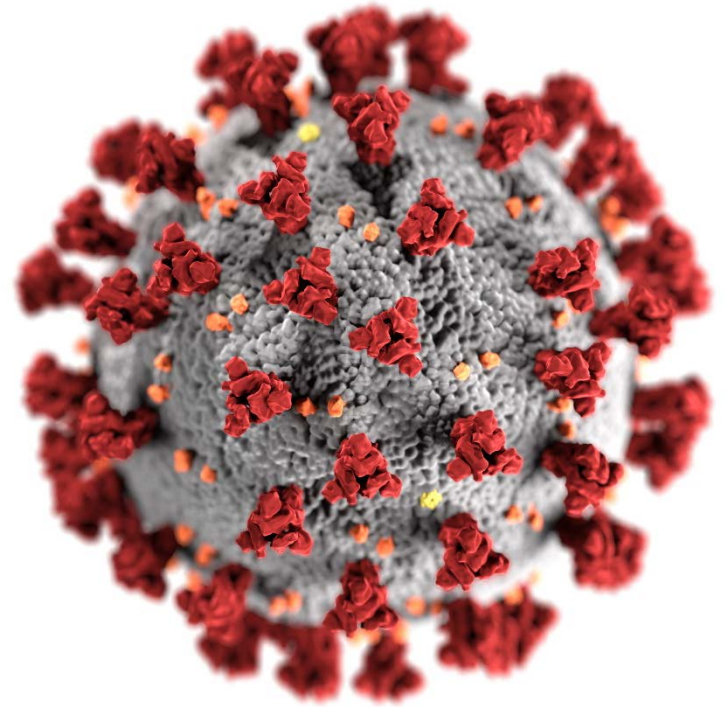
## Outputs for Public Dissemination

- **Results** from environmental scan (**3/2021**)
- Technical assistance **tools** to disseminate best and promising harm reduction practices during COVID-19 (**7/2021**)



# Thank you!

For questions:  
Nancy Worthington  
ous8@cdc.gov



For more information, contact CDC  
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

