



LOS ANGELES OVERDOSE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

The Los Angeles Overdose Prevention Task Force is an interdisciplinary coalition of governmental organizations, community agencies, family members and individuals working to prevent rising opiate overdose deaths throughout Los Angeles County. We are an independent body, which operates by collaboration and consensus.

Task Force Mission Statement:

Our mission is to bring together individuals and specialists in the fields of public health, law and law enforcement, corrections, emergency services, medicine, needle exchange, homeless services, drug treatment and research to create coordinated opiate overdose prevention programs and policies.

POSITION STATEMENT

- The Los Angeles Overdose Prevention Task Force is an interdisciplinary coalition of governmental organizations, community agencies and individuals working to prevent rising opiate overdose deaths throughout Los Angeles County. We are an independent body, which operates by collaboration and consensus.
- The Los Angeles Overdose Prevention Task Force views opiate overdose as a public health problem requiring a prompt, evidence-based, diverse and collaborative response.
- The Los Angeles Overdose Prevention Task Force believes a coordinated effort which includes direct service, public policy and research is necessary in order to prevent the rising numbers of fatal opiate overdoses in Los Angeles County.
- Scientific research completed in other cities has shown that those at highest risk for fatal opiate overdose are individuals who experience periods of reduced opiate tolerance, especially those who are exiting drug treatment facilities, jail and prison. Therefore, we believe that these populations should be targeted for life-saving education and prevention efforts.
- We believe that opiate overdose prevention programs should include training and education to those at risk for opiate overdose as well as those who provide services to those at risk for opiate overdose. We believe the essential components of opiate overdose prevention training should include education about causes, pre-disposing risks and guidance on how to respond to witnessed opiate overdoses. Rescue breathing, a component of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, is a necessary component of opiate overdose training, as are instructions for calling 911 in the event of an overdose.
- The Los Angeles Overdose Prevention Task Force also supports the provision of the drug naloxone (trade name Narcan) via prescription by licensed medical providers to those at risk for opiate overdose, their loved ones and associates. Naloxone, a non-addictive opiate antagonist, commonly used by paramedics and emergency room providers to reverse opiate overdoses, has been shown to be a safe and effective life-saving treatment for more than forty years.
- The Task Force will make every effort necessary to research, promote and implement the policy and legislative measures so that naloxone may be provided legally within Los Angeles County. It will work closely with the State of California, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and law enforcement agencies in order to protect those who prescribe and administer naloxone and will support those agencies and providers who provide naloxone to those at risk for opiate overdose.
- The Task Force views naloxone as an essential component of overdose prevention programs whenever and wherever possible. When conditions prevent the provision of naloxone, we support every other effort to train those at risk in rescue breathing, and overdose prevention, recognition and response.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Asian American Drug Abuse Program • Aegis Medical Systems, Inc. • Antelope Valley Hospital • Behavioral Health Services, Inc. • California State University Dominguez Hills • Los Angeles County Fire Department • City of Los Angeles, AIDS Coordinator's Office • Clean Needles Now • Clinica Oscar Romero • Common Ground • CorrectHelp • Cri-Help • Drug Policy Alliance • Homeless Health Care, Los Angeles • JWCH Institute, Inc. • L.A. County Coroner's Office • L.A. County Dept. of Mental Health • L.A. County Probation Department • L.A. Dept. of Health Services • LADHS Injury & Violence Prevention Program • My Friend's Place • Skid Row Housing Trust • SRO Housing Corp. • Tarzana Treatment Centers • UCLA Department of Family Medicine • UCLA School of Public Health • USC, Keck School of Medicine • Western Pacific Rehab

During this first year of the Overdose Prevention Policy Project, the ODPTF effectively (1) organized key stakeholders, (2) established critical groundwork, (3) leveraged resources and (4) successfully advocated for groundbreaking statewide legislation toward the understanding, acceptance and utilization of naloxone, a proven opiate overdose prevention intervention. These are the Task Force's key accomplishments during this first phase:

- **The Summit – A Successful Call to Action:** Over 150 community leaders from 79 different organizations attended the full-day Summit in spring of '06, resulting in a well informed, representative, motivated 50-member task force coalesced to initiate community education, resource development and policy action to reduce overdose deaths in Los Angeles County.
- **The Task Force Membership** met monthly to mobilize its approach to overdose policy and programmatic planning at government levels. Core participants have been involved throughout, including representatives of County departments, law enforcement, drug treatment, fire departments, needle exchange programs, homeless service providers, coroner's office, research institutions and family members. Key action included infrastructure development, motivating community buy-in, and policy advocacy planning.
- **Informing Local Policy Makers:** On September 12, 2006, by a three-to-one margin, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a \$100K allocation for a pilot program for the public distribution of naloxone to reduce overdose deaths in Los Angeles County. The vote was informed by powerful public testimony by Task Force members, and preceded by presentations to each of the Supervisor's Health Officers and Deputies.
- **Resource Development:** This government-supported program will fund community-based needle exchange and/or drug treatment agencies to incorporate naloxone distribution into their services.
- **Critical Collaboration:** During the first quarter of 2007, the ODPTF, Los Angeles Department of Health and The Harm Reduction Coalition collaborated on the strategic approach to passing California State Senate Bill 767. Each of these entities are named as co-sponsors to the bill, and are prepared to support the movement of the bill through the legislative process.
- **California State Senate approval of SB767** – Due in part to the successful collaboration of the ODPTF, Los Angeles Department of Health, and the Harm Reduction Coalition, SB 767 was passed unanimously by both the Judiciary and Appropriations Committees, and was passed unanimously by the California State Senate on May 30, 2007. The bill is now on its way to the California House of Representatives. If passed, doctors would be indemnified from liability for prescribing naloxone to drug users. In this respect, the work of the ODPTF is anticipated to have statewide impact in the form of expanded access to this critical overdose prevention intervention and reduced fear of litigation on the part of medical providers.
- **Public Information** – The ODPTF presents an overdose prevention curriculum and information about task force activities on the ODPTF website, which is currently a part of the Clean Needles Now website.
- **Media Campaigns** – Press releases, op/ed articles and a tri-fold brochure have been published and distributed, containing information on the problem of overdose and intervention strategies.
- **Community trainings and in-services** – Twelve trainings and in-services were conducted in the project year. Attendees included policy makers, City administrators, drug treatment providers, and social service staff

Organization's Relationships

Because the Task Force emerged from the Overdose Prevention Summit in 2006, key organizational partners were involved in contributing collaboratively to its mission literally from its first day. Partnerships included leaders in County government, justice, law enforcement, research, healthcare, drug users, and family members of individuals who had died from overdose. The triad of critical partners in the achievement of recent achievements is: (1) County government, including the Departments of Health and Public Health, (2) Harm Reduction Coalition for its support in advocacy, and (3) Drug Policy Alliance, for its resource support including use of space and representative involvement.