

DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE OVERDOSE HOTSPOT ASSESSMENT & PLAN

Prepared by: Rhode Island Public Health Institute for the City of Providence Healthy Communities Office
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INTRODUCTION

Rhode Island is experiencing an unprecedented overdose crisis, ranking 11th in fatal overdoses in the country in 2018. Downtown Providence, the city's urban center, is an area where the overdose crisis has been particularly evident. Downtown is unique: the area has among the fewest residents of any zip code in the city, yet the highest burden of opioid overdose-related Emergency Medical Service (EMS) runs. The unique characteristics associated with Downtown Providence's overdose crisis require a locally tailored, multi-sector, public policy response. This work is timely; Rhode Island saw an approximately 22% increase in fatal overdoses between January and March 2020. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the public policy response to the overdose crisis.

PURPOSE

This project aims to characterize the Downtown Providence overdose crisis, identify factors influencing the overdose crisis in Downtown, solicit stakeholder input about factors contributing to overdose Downtown, and solicit normative policy recommendations from local experts and key opinion leaders about how best to respond to the overdose crisis.

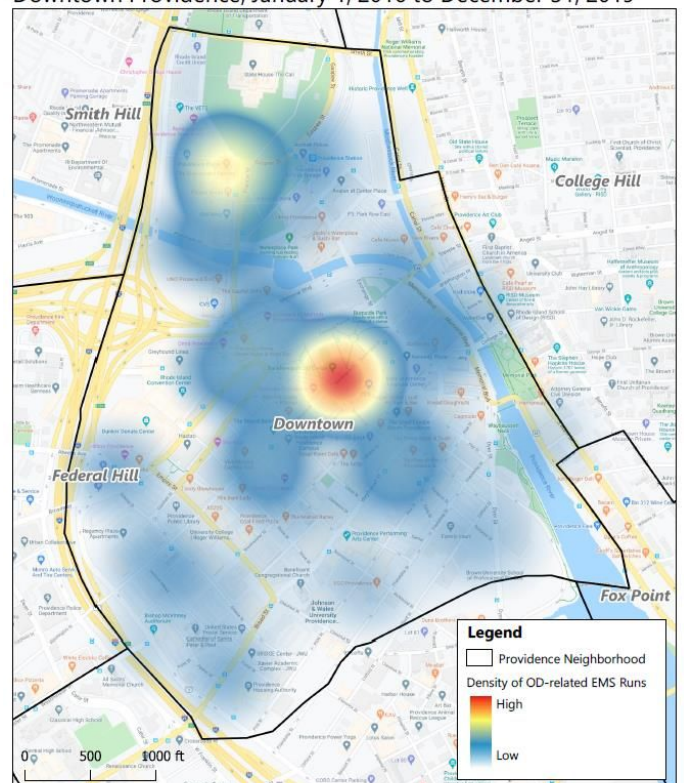
METHODS

The City of Providence Healthy Communities Office contracted the Rhode Island Public Health Institute (RIPHI) to undertake a needs assessment of the overdose crisis in the 02903 zip code, which includes Downtown and nearby areas, funded by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control. The assessment utilized several sources of data to inform this report, including:

1. Key stakeholder interviews conducted by RIPHI
2. Overdose surveillance data and EMS data provided by RIDOH
3. Survey and observational data collected by community partners

Data was triangulated and recommendations were made based on results.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS):
Heat Map of Opioid Overdose-related EMS Runs in
Downtown Providence, January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019



Source: Rhode Island Emergency Medical Services Information Systems (RI-EMISIS)

KEY FINDINGS

Providence had the highest percentage of opioid overdose-related Emergency Department visits (32%) and EMS runs (31%) in the State from 2016 to 2019. The city experienced a higher percentage of overdoses in public settings (e.g. streets, parks, parking lots) (41%) compared to Providence County (32%) and Rhode Island in general (31%). Most persons experiencing overdose Downtown were between the ages of 25-44 and 76% were men. Fentanyl contributed to 60% of these fatalities, while alcohol contributed to 33%

There is an unmet need for distributing naloxone (Narcan) in Kennedy Plaza and the surrounding area.

GIS data shows that the areas of Kennedy Plaza and Burnside Park overwhelmingly had the highest density of overdose-related EMS runs between 2016-2019, followed by the Providence Place Mall and lastly by peripheral areas surrounding Kennedy Plaza and I-95.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Overdose data reporting is inconsistent and presents barriers to geographic or population-based overdose prevention efforts;
2. There is an unmet need for health-related, including overdose prevention, services Downtown, particularly in Kennedy Plaza and Burnside Park;
3. Services need to be better coordinated at the neighborhood, city and state level;
4. Sustained financial support is needed to enhance overdose prevention efforts;
5. The Providence Place Mall should adopt harm reduction efforts in restrooms;
6. The Downtown Improvement District (DID) presents an opportunity to deliver harm reduction services unique to Downtown;
7. A Harm Reduction Center is needed to meet the health needs of people Downtown at high risk for overdose; and
8. A holistic approach is required to serve people at risk for or who experience overdose.

FULL REPORT CAN BE FOUND AT:

<https://riphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/02903-overdose-report.pdf>