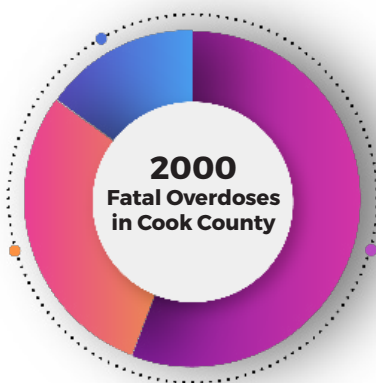


# HARM REDUCTION AND HIV/STI PREVENTION

The intersection of HIV, other transmissible diseases, and opioid overdose rates presents a complex public health challenge. Modes of HIV transmission include exposure to blood and other bodily fluids that contain the virus. As a result, people who inject drugs are at higher risk of acquiring and transmitting diseases such as HIV and viral Hepatitis. Eliminating future transmission of HIV relies on the expansion of harm reduction programs as outlined in the initial statewide Getting to Zero Illinois plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that empowers people who use drugs with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their lives. Strategies include prevention, risk reduction, and health promotion, aiming to minimize negative consequences of behavior risks through evidence-based intervention, education, and support. This approach effectively mitigates transmission risks and reduces overdose rates.

## Opioid Overdose Rates and the Role of Substance Use<sup>2,3</sup>,



- 15% Latine
- 29% White
- 56% Black



- 2000 Cook County
- 1012 Remaining Counties

Illinois Counties	Overdose Fatalities
Will County	138 Overdose Deaths
Winnebago County	122 Overdose Deaths
DuPage County	121 Overdose Deaths
Lake County	110 Overdose Deaths
Kane County	78 Overdose Deaths
Madison County	77 Overdose Deaths
St Clair County	69 Overdose Deaths
Sangamon County	51 Overdose Deaths
McHenry County	45 Overdose Deaths
Champaign County	40 Overdose Deaths

In 2022, Illinois experienced 15,286 non-fatal overdoses and 3,261 fatal overdoses. The state’s most populous county, Cook, experienced the most fatal overdoses in 2022 (2,000). Fatal overdoses due to opioids impacted every corner of the state from Rockford (Winnebago), the Collar Counties, Springfield (Sangamon), and down to the Metro East region (Madison and St. Clair). While the opioid epidemic affects all communities, it also disproportionately impacts communities of color specifically Black Illinoisans. Black Illinoisans only comprise 12.4% of the state’s population<sup>4</sup> but in 2022 accounted for nearly 50% of all reported overdoses (9,095).

1. Getting to Zero Illinois. "GETTING TO ZERO ILLINOIS PLAN," March 25, 2019. <https://gtzillinois.hiv/the-plan/>

2. Illinois Department of Public Health. n.d. "Opioid Data Dashboard." Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://idph.illinois.gov/OpioidDataDashboard/>

3. Cook County Government. 2023. "Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office Confirms Record 2,000 Opioid Overdose Deaths in Cook County for 2022." Cook County. July 25, 2023. <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/news/cook-county-medical-examiners-office-confirms-record-2000-opioid-overdose-deaths-cook-county>

4. America Counts Staff. "Illinois: 2020 Census." United States Census Bureau, August 25, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/illinois-population-change-between-census-decade.html>

## Overdose Prevention Sites as a Solution

Harm reduction interventions like overdose prevention sites and syringe service programs, help to reduce HIV transmissions among other benefits including prevention of other blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis B and C, prevention of fatal overdoses, reduction of encounters with the criminal legal system, and the reduction of social exclusion.<sup>5 6</sup>



### WHAT ARE OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES?

Overdose prevention sites are healthcare facilities that offer various services, including medical supervision of drug use to monitor patients, administer first aid, and prevent fatal overdose and infection. These sites also form useful education networks to increase safety and has

**About 1 in 10 HIV Transmissions Result from Injection Drug Use<sup>7</sup>**

proven to also reduce the rates of needle sharing<sup>8</sup>. Licensed staff at an OPS help provide sterile use supplies, prevent fatal overdoses, and when appropriate link clients to treatment, housing, HIV/STI testing and prevention, social services, and recovery support programs.

New York City's OnPoint non-profit opened in the United States' first overdose prevention site in November 2021. In the first eleven months of opening the overdose prevention site, OnPoint experienced 594 overdose interventions (reversals) among other milestones<sup>9</sup>.

### OPS Accomplishments this year



Acknowledging the intersection between HIV, other transmissible diseases, and fatal overdose rates, and by implementing evidence-based harm reduction strategies, we can work towards a safer and healthier future for all. AIDS Foundation Chicago is proud to work alongside Illinois advocates, lawmakers, and people with lived experience to champion legislation that would establish the first Overdose Prevention Site pilot in the state.

Together, we can make a difference in reducing the impact of HIV, transmissible diseases, and fatal overdose rates in communities across Illinois

5. World Health Organization. "Drug-Related Harm Reduction." AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Accessed July 25, 2023. <http://www.emro.who.int/asd/health-topics/drug-related-harm-reduction.html>.

6. Ti, Lianping, and Thomas Kerr. "The Impact of Harm Reduction on HIV and Illicit Drug Use." Harm Reduction Journal 11, no. 1 (February 21, 2014): 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7517-11-7>.

7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV Surveillance Report, 2023; vol.34. Table 1b. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance.html>. Published May 2023. Accessed June 7, 2023

8. Wodak, Alex, and Leah McLeod. 2008. "The Role of Harm Reduction in Controlling HIV among Injecting Drug Users." AIDS (London, England) 22 (Suppl 2): S81-92. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.aids.0000327439.20914.33>

9. OnPoint NYC. Organizational Data. Published November 11, 2022.