



Combating the Overdose Crisis: Mobile Supervised Consumption Sites in Berkshire County



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Overdose Prevention Team

Team Member Introduction

Xavier

Koki

Heidi

Maegan

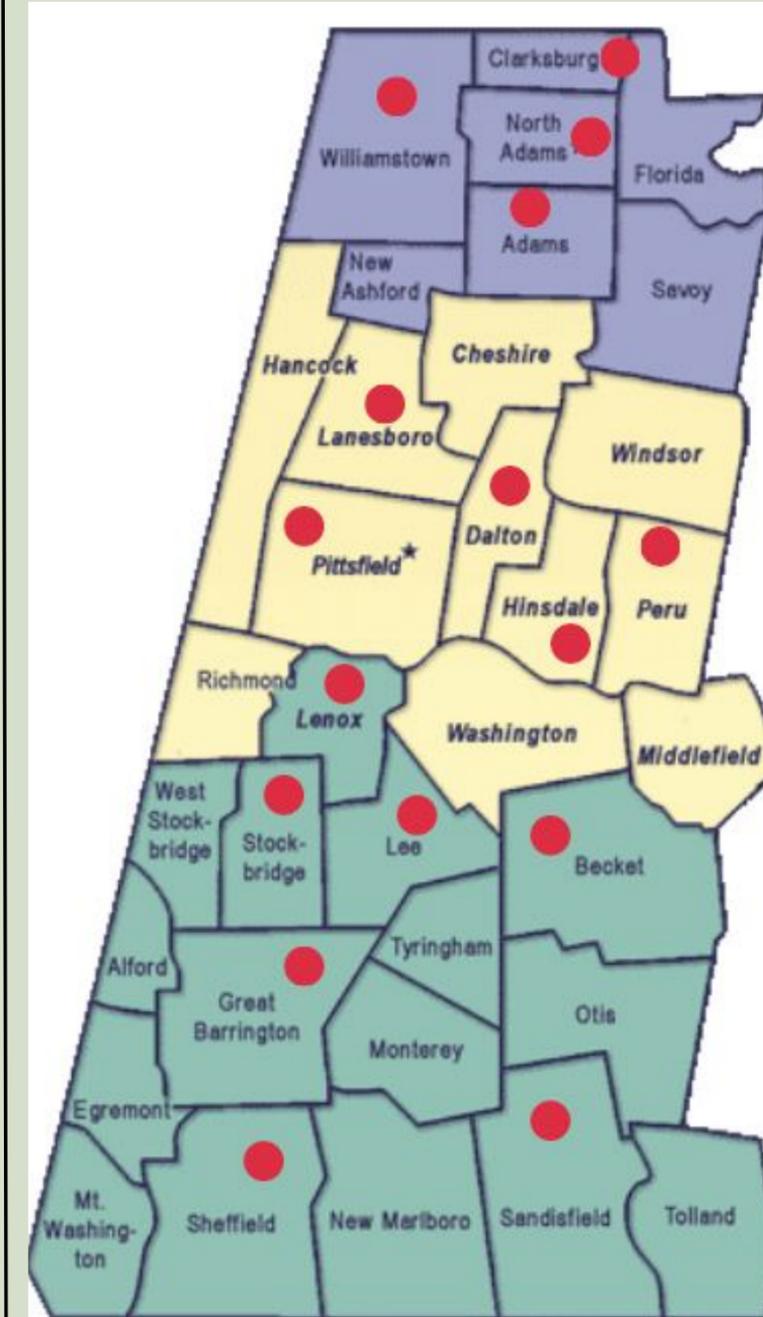
Akila

Advocacy Focus

- People who use drugs have a higher risk of contracting HIV as a result of direct exposure through shared needles.
- Supervised consumption sites (SCS) are a harm reduction tool that will help curb the rates of new HIV infections and prevent overdose deaths.
- In an SCS, people who use drugs will have access to sterile needles, naloxone and trained staff who can reverse overdoses (in case there is one).

Why Berkshire County?

- Berkshire County observed an increase in rate of opioid overdoses and related emergency department charges, in comparison to Massachusetts as a whole
- Current legislative discussions about SCS does not account for the unique needs of Western Massachusetts' rural communities like Berkshire County



Fatal Overdoses 2015-2020

Clarksburg- 3
Adams- 14
North Adams- 42
Williamstown- 2
Lanesboro- 3
Pittsfield- 142
Dalton- 1
Hinsdale- 7
Peru- 2
Lenox- 3
Lee- 6
Stockbridge- 3
Great Barrington- 7
Becket- 2
Sheffield- 1
Sandisfield- 1

Our Project

- 1. What: Researching and Promoting The Urgent Need for Mobile Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) in Berkshire County**
- 2. Intent:**
 - a. Introduce mobile SCS as a harm reduction tool that will decrease overdose deaths and reduce new HIV diagnoses
 - b. Urge lawmakers to adopt legislations, such as H.2088 and S.1272, *Act relative to preventing overdose deaths and increasing access to treatment*
- 3. Impact:**
 - a. Uplift the voices and experiences of people with lived experience of drug use in Berkshire County
 - b. Meet with legislators (Representatives Pignatelli and Farley-Bouvier) to share our research
- 4. Planning:**
 - a. Interviewed 7 stakeholders and surveyed 25 people who use drugs in Berkshire County
 - b. Reviewed existing public health literature on the feasibility of SCS
- 5. Who We Worked With:**
 - a. **Mentors:** Lyv Norris, Abby Kim, and Carrie Richgels
 - b. **Stakeholders:** Gary Pratt, Sarah DeJesus, Samantha Kendall, Wendy Penner, Andrea Harrington, Stephen Murray, Liz Whynott

Next Steps for our Project

Legislation

- Continue legislative briefings of our report
- Follow the progress of supervised consumption site (SCS) legislation in MA

Report

- Dissemination of our report to community stakeholders
- Continued research on effectiveness of existing SCS in the US

Long-term

- Hope to see Berkshire County establish a mobile SCS program

Project Obstacles

- Delays in brainstorming about Narcan, SCS, and potential projects as we oriented ourselves to the previous advocacy done in this field
- Changing project focus to better address overdose prevention
- Working remotely without lived experience on the topic
- Lack of firsthand experience with Berkshire County residents
- Lack of responsiveness from interviewees
- Compiling testimonials, survey data, and research into a concise report
- Preparing for legislative briefings

How did we overcome these obstacles?

- Extensive discussions with Abby and Lyv to change project focus
- Extensive research to determine what parts of the state to focus on
- Received help from Sarah DeJesus and Samantha Kendall of Berkshire Harm Reduction to distribute surveys
- Clear communication between group members to make the remote aspect work

What was your biggest takeaway from this project?

Koki: Stigma wrongfully shifts the blame on people who use drugs and must be combatted.

Xavier: Activism is multifaceted and there are many different avenues by which you can approach it.

Akila: Approaching overdose prevention cannot be limited to academic spaces and requires working with people who use drugs with lived experience and existing community organizations.

Heidi: Public health interventions should be inclusive to rural areas and low-resource settings.

Maegan: Public health should be community based and centered around the needs of those with lived experiences.

Moving Forward

- Continue following supervised consumption legislation
- Continue researching overdose prevention
- Be more cognizant of people who use drugs' needs in our own interactions
- Shifted mindset on the value of academic vs. community organizing work

Acknowledgments

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