

54 Meadow Street, 9th Floor • New Haven, Connecticut 06519 • 203-946-6999

Justin Elicker, Mayor • Maritza Bond, MPH, Director of Health

Executive Summary

New Haven has seen dramatic increases in drug overdoses each year. According to the US Census, with a population of over 130,000, New Haven is a racially and ethnically diverse city; 29% of residents are White non-Hispanic, 34% are Black or African American, and 31% are Hispanic/Latinx. Nearly 40% of residents are under 25 years of age, 50% are 25 to 64, and about 11% are 65 years and older. The percent of persons in poverty is 25%. The owner-occupied housing unit rate is 28% as compared to other CT cities: Hartford 25%, Bridgeport 42%, Waterbury 45%.¹

Since 2015, the number of fatal overdose deaths has more than quadrupled in New Haven from 26 to 118 in 2021, which is the highest number of fatalities of any town or city in Connecticut. From 2019 to 2021, overdose deaths increased by 123%. There were three times as many fatal overdoses for males than females in 2021. Overdose deaths in age groups 15-24, 35-44, 55-64 doubled, but ages 45-64 more than quintupled.

Most alarming though, are the increases in fatal overdoses among people of color. According to the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) of the fatal overdoses in 2019, 29 of the individuals were White, 14 Black, and 10 Hispanic/Latinx. In 2020, fatal overdoses in people who are Black and Hispanic doubled. In 2021, the number of fatal overdoses among people who are White remained the same as 2020 but it increased to 48 and 34 for people who are Black and Hispanic/Latinx, respectively, equaling a staggering 243% increase in fatal overdoses in people who are Black and 240% increase in fatal overdoses in people who are Hispanic/Latinx since 2019.²

The New Haven Health Department (NHHD) will be applying for federal funding up to \$10,517,506 over five years to reduce health inequities and fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by closing gaps in access to care through the Overdose Data to Action: Limiting Overdose through Collaborative Actions in Localities from CDC.

The purpose of the initiative is to implement strategies that will decrease fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses, decrease illicit opioid and stimulant use, improve health equity, increase adoption of harm and stigma reduction strategies, and improve care by tracking data on connections to and retention in care.

Activities under this proposal include providing academic detailing to train providers and pharmacists on appropriate opioid prescribing; offering trainings on stigma, harm reduction, naloxone use, and overdose prevention (including naloxone distribution) in English and Spanish; developing and implementing a health communication campaign to raise awareness about stigma and the overdose crisis; and expanding navigation services to enhance connections to care.

CITY OF NEW HAVEN

Health Department



54 Meadow Street, 9th Floor • New Haven, Connecticut 06519 • 203-946-6999

Justin Elicker, Mayor • Maritza Bond, MPH, Director of Health

If funded, the program will begin in the summer of 2023 and run for five years. Under this proposal, NHHD will hire Navigators to link people who use drugs to care and support their retention in care in our communities, conduct harm and stigma reduction campaigns across the County, develop an enhanced data surveillance system that will measure linkage to and retention in care in our districts, and contract with an evaluator to understand program efficacy, with emphasis on the barriers and facilitators in linkages to care.

NHHD will also continue to improve data collection, analysis, presentation, and sharing with the public and partners since NHHD utilizes data driven approaches to outreach. Increasing and expanding educational resources can help meet the needs of disproportionately impacted populations and lessen gaping health disparities and improve health equity.

To address this identified need, if awarded this grant, NHHD will hire 3.0 FTE navigators, 1.0 FTE program coordinator, 1.0 FTE trainer, 1.0 FTE community engagement specialist, and 1.0 FTE epidemiologist/data analyst. Additionally, NHHD will contract with the following health departments/districts so they can hire additional navigators to serve New Haven County: Waterbury Health Department, East Shore Health Department, Quinnipiack Valley Health District, Naugatuck Valley Health District, and the Milford Health Department.

NHHD will also contract with Yale School of Medicines - Yale Program of Addiction Medicine/Yale School of Public Health to support surveillance around linkages to care, and will also contract with an Evaluator to conduct a mixed-methods evaluation. The Principal Investigator will be Bonnie Smith from B.Weyland Smith Consulting. Bonnie Smith has over 18 years' experience in substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion in both academic and consulting positions and she currently evaluates overdose prevention programs for other health departments in Connecticut.