



OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



Hawai'i ORS Team - Richard Witt and Aashish Hemrajani

Overdose Prevention Training

The Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) is a unique Public Health - Public Safety partnership between the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The mission of the ORS is to help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by connecting public health and public safety agencies, sharing information and supporting evidence-based interventions. The Hawai'i ORS team has developed a repertoire of training modules in response to community needs, including training on: Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND), Fentanyl Awareness/Safety, Drug Recognition and Data Trends. While topics often overlap, every training delivered is customized to meet the needs of each particular audience. The team has distributed over 3,000 Naloxone kits and provided training for over 700 individuals since the fall of 2022.

Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND): Naloxone is a very powerful tool to combat the opioid overdose epidemic. Naloxone works by binding to the brain's opioid receptors and reversing an overdose from opioid drugs like heroin, fentanyl and morphine. Through support from the Department of Health, the ORS team provides training and naloxone to Public Safety partners and other interested organizations. The ORS team's OEND training includes information on identifying potential opioid overdoses, administering naloxone and connecting overdose survivors to follow up care through EMS and First Responders. Additionally, these training courses often include data on drug trends and education on the psychological and environmental causes of Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

Fentanyl Awareness and Safety: Fentanyl is the fastest growing drug threat in Hawai'i and is responsible for 2/3 of all overdose deaths nationally. There is fear among non-drug users of harms due to accidental exposure. The ORS team conducts Fentanyl Awareness trainings for Law Enforcement Agencies and First Responders to balance the real dangers of this drug threat with a realistic, evidence-based appraisal of the relatively miniscule risk of accidental exposure to fentanyl unless it is aerosolized in significant quantities. These trainings are designed to empower frontline Public Safety partners throughout the state with the knowledge and tools to respond to drugs safely and effectively.

Drug Recognition and Youth Prevention: In response to community demand, the ORS has designed and delivered training to several educational institutions and other organizations serving the youth in Hawai'i. This training includes information on recognizing drug use, common concealment techniques and trends in youth substance use. Additionally, the ORS complements the Public Safety perspective by providing information to youth-serving organizations on identifying potential causes of substance use in children, such as trauma or neglect, and linking affected individuals to supportive services. The ORS team's approach strikes a unique balance between a recognition of the real dangers of drugs with a trauma-informed, compassionate approach towards those who are struggling with substance use and mental health challenges.

Trends in Drug Seizure and Mortality Data: The ORS team provides training to a wide variety of community stakeholders on drug data from multiple perspectives. These trainings include updated information on drug seizure data from Hawai'i HIDTA task forces and other Law Enforcement Agencies, mortality and morbidity data from the Department of Health and the Office of the Medical Examiner and shifting trends in overdoses both nationally and locally. These trainings also include subject matter expertise on the science of addiction, the importance of stigma reduction, the properties of emerging drug threats like Fentanyl and Xylazine and information about evidence-based or promising practices such as Post-Overdose Response Teams (PORTs), drug interdiction and community saturation of naloxone.



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ORS Program

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