

# The VILLAGE Prevention Plan: Improving health outcomes for people who use drugs

## What is the VILLAGE Prevention Plan?

The current drug overdose crisis is causing a rise in infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis C. Our team at Brown University created new tools to understand Rhode Island's risk for infectious disease outbreaks and overdose. Using these tools, we can establish resources in those areas to help prevent such an outbreak from occurring.

## What do we recommend?

Our team at Brown recommends a statewide prevention plan to help shift Rhode Island's overdose prevention response to include other health risks related to drug use. Our prevention plan is a toolkit of programs that may help prevent an outbreak.

## How can we improve health outcomes for people who use drugs?

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### You can start by doing what already works in Rhode Island.

#### Connect state & local prevention efforts

- Attend the Governor's Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force & Working Groups. These are great places for local community leaders to connect with others around the state doing similar work.

#### Promote Low-Barrier Health Interventions

- Ensure access to Syringe Service Programs (SSPs), which offer safe supplies, health services, and referrals to people who use drugs
- Offer free vaccinations for People Who Use Drugs (PWUD), including Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and tuberculosis (TB)
- Provide rapid HIV and HCV Testing and Linkage to Care to help with early detection and diagnosis of new infections
- Distribute Naloxone and Fentanyl Test Strips, which help prevent fatal overdoses

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### Next, you can take inventory of what resources already exist and assess unmet needs by doing a community needs assessment survey.

#### Take Inventory & Scale-Up

- Create a needs assessment survey to get information directly from people who use drugs in your community
- Create customized response plans to address the local needs
- Use mid-level clinicians to improve health outcomes by increasing access to healthcare and treatment by working in community-based and street outreach settings

#### Assess Funding Opportunities

- Consider low-cost SSPs, such as backpack outreach programs
- Engage more people in harm reduction services by developing state-led standards for SSP implementation and evaluation

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### Finally, you can take it further by implementing practices that have shown promise in other states, such as:

- Offering Low Barrier Buprenorphine Access, which would happen with providers outside of a traditional doctors office
- Offering Low Barrier Hepatitis C (HCV) Treatment using nurse practitioners and case managers
- Providing harm reduction through local faith communities

