

Recommended Reading



A guide for prevention specialists and community coalitions to assist with outreach about opioid misuse and drug overdoses in Black/African American communities.

The Opioid Crisis and the Black/African American Population: An Urgent Issue

Missouri Partners in Prevention is proud to be Missouri's higher education substance abuse prevention and mental health consortium. In order to see measurable change in the health, safety, and well-being on campus, campus prevention practitioners must employ evidence-based strategies and models. This series provides a brief synopsis of the publications, articles, and resource documents available to campuses to assist in their substance abuse prevention and mental health intervention efforts. These documents provide a great deal of technical assistance and support. Browse our recommended reading synopsis to learn more about these publications.

The issue brief, published in March 2020, was prepared by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Office of Behavioral Health Equity. This issue brief addresses how the opioid epidemic is affecting the Black/African American community.

Introduction

The introduction outlines the current opioid epidemic and discusses how Black/African American communities are receiving less attention and support than other communities. The purpose of the issue brief is to provide recent data on opioid misuse and overdose death rates in the Black/African American population. It also discusses factors that impact the opioid epidemic in these communities. Innovative outreach and engagement strategies are highlighted in the form of community snapshots, along with the importance of community

involvement in the development and implementation of solutions to the opioid public health crisis.

Opioids in Black/African American Communities: Context

This section provides data on opioid misuse rates, opioid-related overdose death rates, and deaths involving selected drugs by race/ethnicity. Table 5 has a table displaying drug overdose deaths for selected drugs by race/ethnicity. A chart on this same page shows the percent increase in overdose deaths among the non-Hispanic Black population from 2014 to 2017. The next page outlines opioid overdose death rates and number of opioid deaths, both by state. Pages 6-7 discuss reasons for the current rise in opioid misuse and overdose deaths for Black/African Americans. These reasons include excessive prescribing, illicit drug use, and opioid comorbidities in Black/African American communities.

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Challenges to prevention, treatment, and recovery are given on page 7. The negative representation of the Black/African American community may contribute to mistreatment and discrimination. Another challenge is the intergenerational and polysubstance use that is often common in communities with high poverty. Fear of legal consequences and general mistrust of the justice system is magnified in the Black/African American community. Challenges are further discussed on pages 8-9 and include misperceptions about opioids and addiction, lack of culturally responsive and respectful care, and unequal prevention and treatment.

Strategies to Address Opioid Misuse and OUD in Black/African American Communities

Standard treatments are outlined on pages 9-10. Standard treatments involve medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and opioid overdose reversal drugs. Community-informed strategies are outlined on pages 10-18. The strategies, each including specific community examples, are briefly described below:

1. Implement a comprehensive, holistic approach (pages 10-12)

Community Snapshot: Bellevue Hospital created a clinic that resembles a welcoming home. This clinic offers creative arts, self-care, and a recovery network of support.

2. Involve the community and develop multi-sectoral, diverse community partnerships (page 12)

Community Snapshot: The Detroit Recovery Project (DRP) is a multi-service agency. Their services include GED preparation, twelve-step support groups, assistance with housing, job-readiness, and employment, HIV prevention, testing, and counseling services, and ex-offender programs.

Community Snapshot: The Coffee with a Cop program gives community members the opportunity to have coffee with a police officer and discuss concerns without fear of being reported or arrested.

3. Create culturally relevant public awareness (pages 12-13)

Public awareness campaigns should be built on the needs assessments of the community. Communities are able to identify gaps in awareness and knowledge and tailor health communication campaigns and subsequent prevention programs to the population.

4. Employ culturally specific engagement strategies (pages 13-16)

Some Black/African American cultures place value on interpersonal relationships and one-on-one connections.

Connecting individuals with culturally similar support groups is a way to bond them through cultural ties.

- Community Snapshot: The Prime Time Sister Circles is a program that addresses the unique impact of gender, race, age, and class experienced by midlife African American women. This support group is community-based, socially innovative, and holistic.

Collaborate and partner with faith-based organizations

- Community Snapshot: Bridges to Care and Recovery is a community initiative with multisector partners that serve as extenders in identifying mental health concerns and SUDs and then linking individuals to care.

- Community Snapshot: The Imani Breakthrough Recovery Program in Connecticut is a 12-week intervention

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program for people with SUD that utilizes a faith-based support group and wellness coaching.

- **Community Snapshot:** The Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta has subcontracted with churches in rural settings to collaborate on addressing various public health efforts including opioid misuse and OUD.

Identify community-embraced first responders

- **Community Snapshot:** The City of Huntington Quick Response Team (QRT) is deployed to locations with a high number of drug overdoses. The QRT includes a paramedic, treatment provider, law enforcement officer, and unique to Huntington, a faith leader. The faith-based leaders are champions in the cause and are helping engage individuals to seek treatment.

5. Create a culturally relevant and diverse workforce (pages 16-18)

Meet people where they physically are

- This involves considering the context in which a person is living and the challenges they may be facing. It is important to physically go where people are, connect with them, bring authentic care and hope, and link them with trusted treatment and recovery providers.
- **Community Snapshot:** The Detroit Recovery Project Mobile Outreach Team collaborates with local emergency departments to link people with SUD in crises with the care they need.
- **Community Snapshot:** Project RECOVER utilizes peer recovery coaches to link, engage, and retain people with OUD in outpatient medication-based treatment

for at least six months after completion of detoxification.

- **Community Snapshot:** The Detroit Recovery Project (DRP) is a training center that allows for mentoring of the next generation of medical providers to be better equipped and experienced in working with low-income, Black/African Americans with SUD.

Moving Forward

Page 18 involves a discussion of steps and strategies moving forward. This section ties together the information in the issue brief and gives guidance for strategies that will be effective for Black/African American communities. Strategies need to be tailored to the diversity of the communities affected. An interdisciplinary, multi-level team approach is the best way to reduce opioid use and overdoses in Black/African American communities.

Resources and References

The glossary on page 19 defines terms used in the issue brief. These definitions are from SAMHSA and the CDC.

Page 20 provides additional resources related to topics from the issue brief, including OUD, prevention, addiction, and cultural competence.

Pages 21-24 provides a list of the references used to create the issue brief.

Read 'The Opioid Crisis and the Black/African American Population: An Urgent Issue' here:

store.samhsa.gov/product/The-Opioid-Crisis-and-the-Black-African-American-Population-An-Urgent-Issue/PEP20-05-02-001

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