

Post-overdose outreach programs in Massachusetts expanding

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Boston Medical Center has released a study that shows post overdose outreach programs in Massachusetts have expanded across the state, as 44 percent of municipalities reported having such programs available—a majority established since 2015—to reduce risks for those who survive an overdose. The results are published online in the February 2021 issue of *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

These post-[overdose](#) outreach programs leverage collaborations between public health overdose prevention practitioners and public safety organizations (police, fire, EMS) to engage overdose survivors and/or their social networks (family, friends, and acquaintances) at their home one to three days after an overdose. Individuals who survive an overdose are at higher risk for future overdose (Caudarella et al., 2016). The research team completed a statewide cross-sectional survey to identify and characterize these programs to develop strategies that should be further studied to determine [best practice guidelines](#) for these programs.

Municipalities that reported having a post-overdose outreach program were asked to complete a detailed survey characterizing their programs. The researchers found that the outreach teams relied on 911 call data to identify overdose survivors, and that outreach teams often comprised staff from community-based public health organizations and police departments. Outreach teams provide or refer individuals to a wide variety of services including inpatient addiction treatment, recovery support, outpatient medication, overdose prevention education, and naloxone.

"We know that post-overdose outreach programs will continue expanding, which means we need to conduct additional research in order to determine evidence-based [best practices](#) that will reduce subsequent overdose," said Alex Walley, MD, MSc, a physician and addiction medicine expert at Boston Medical Center who is the study's senior author. Walley is currently principal investigator on research to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs at reducing overdose rates.

More information: Scott W. Formica et al, Characteristics of post-overdose public health-public safety outreach in Massachusetts, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108499](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108499)

Provided by Boston Medical Center

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