



West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force

CONVENED IN 2016 BY STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD, IL-8, THE TASK FORCE BRINGS TOGETHER COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCIES (CBO), GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND PERSONS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE (PWUD) TO CONFRONT THE EPIDEMIC OF OPIOID OVERDOSES AND RESULTANT DEATHS IN CHICAGO'S WEST SIDE COMMUNITIES.

Our Goal:

Reduce overdose deaths and save lives through a coordinated, collaborative community coalition.

To achieve this goal, Task Force activities focus on:

Increased awareness of the impact of drug use on individual and the community



Improved overdose response throughout the West Side

Increased supportive services for people who use drugs (PWUD) and their families and friends



Integrating mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services

Prevention Partnership is the Task Force's administrative organization. Responsibilities include: convening monthly meetings, facilitating member communication, and **helping Task Force members work together to respond to West Side's overdose epidemic.**

Task Force successes include:

- More than 500 members including West Side substance use and mental health treatment providers, housing organizations, advocacy groups, harm reduction organization, business, and faith leaders, PWUD, and state, county and city agencies and legislators.
- Monthly meetings attended virtually or in-person by 100 people.
- Weekly e-blasts to Task Force members that include information on overdose prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support resources and related trainings and community events.
- A collaborative direct intervention outreach initiative that has trained over 18,000 West Side community members, including PWUD, how to administer naloxone, the lifesaving drug that reverses opioid overdoses. 14,000 of the people trained frequent "hot spots" where opioids are sold and used. The collaborative's "warm handoff" process immediately refers PWUD for medical stabilization, treatment, medication assisted recovery (MAR) and other needs.
- A legislative/policy committee that supports harm reduction and equity-focused legislation at the local, state and federal level.
- Participation in International Overdose Awareness Day activities on the West Side every August 31st to promote community awareness of overdose prevention, treatment and recovery.
- A fentanyl workgroup that addresses the alarming increase of overdoses and deaths due to the increased presence of the deadly drug fentanyl in the illicit drug supply. Workgroup activities include expanding fentanyl testing both at the street level and within the treatment and recovery system and distributing fentanyl test strips.
- Over 4,000 drug de-activation kits given to West Side seniors, family members and friends.
- Engaging West Side community members in discussions about Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS). The OPS Community Education and Engagement project is funded by the Illinois Department of Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery IDHS/(SUPR). See the Year 1 report: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27896/documents/OPS.pdf>
- Ongoing daily street outreach to West Side hot spots by teams that include people with lived experience of drug use. The street outreach teams trained PWUD how to use naloxone, administer naloxone to people who are experiencing overdoses, and connect PWUD to community services.
- Deploying staff on vans that provide medication assisted recovery services to PWUD on the West Side.

For More Information about the West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force, contact:



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