

Community Support for Vermont Overdose Prevention Centers

APRIL 16, 2024

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE VERMONT GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Over the past decade the dramatic rise in fatal overdoses has become one of the most pressing crises facing our state. Directly or indirectly addiction and overdose have touched the lives of most Vermonters, impacting our families, or friends and our communities. We have worked to enact a number of important policies that can be beneficial, including making Naloxone widely accessible, but the stark reality is that these efforts have not stopped overdoses from occurring or reversed the rising curve of overdose deaths.

We cannot continue to stand by and allow Vermonters to die without trying a proven life-saving intervention, which is why we urge you to pass legislation to authorize and fund Overdose Prevention Centers.

The evidence is now clear and uncontested - after years of studying programs operating in Canada, in countries throughout the world, and now in New York - that **Overdose Prevention Centers save lives.**

That's not a surprising finding, since someone is far more likely to survive an overdose if someone with training and equipment is immediately available to intervene when an emergency situation arises, instead of after far more time has elapsed - or instead of nobody responding at all because the person was using alone or because others in the area fail to recognize the urgency of the situation.

What we also know from peer-reviewed research is that **such sites do not lead to increased drug use or crime in surrounding communities.** Instead, they can help reduce drug use in public areas, inside and around businesses, and outside of churches. They **reduce the amounts of discarded waste in our communities.**

Instead of leaving our neighbors with significant needs to be alone or in vulnerable situations, they **bring people inside, providing greater access and connection to needed services,** behavioral health supports, minor medical care, and basic needs such as laundry, computer access, and safe spaces that help reduce trauma and anxiety.

All of us want to help our fellow Vermonters who need substance use disorder treatment to have easy access to high quality, evidence-based treatment, and we support efforts to further expand its availability. But Improving stability for those experiencing substance use disorder, which can most effectively occur at an overdose prevention center, is a vital step in connecting people with that treatment and other supportive services.

Overdose Prevention Centers will not end the overdose crisis alone, but **will make a difference in keeping people alive so that they can have the opportunity to embrace treatment and recovery services.**

None of us want to encourage unprescribed drug use or unregulated drug sales. Any suggestion that the thoughtful work to establish overdose prevention centers would encourage drug use or "send the wrong signal" is wrong. Such suggestions have been proven untrue by the research and may be rooted in misunderstandings about how such centers operate.

We all want healthy, safe and cohesive communities, and for those experiencing substance use disorder to have the best possible access to care and support.

That's why we urge you to enact legislation that will finally add Overdose Prevention Centers as another tool for addressing addiction and overdose in Vermont.

Respectfully,
The undersigned individuals & community groups

Over 500 Vermonters

**signed the letter in support
of overdose prevention centers.**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO SUPPORT OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTERS REPRESENT OVER 70 CITIES & TOWNS ACROSS VERMONT

<i>Barnard</i>	<i>Londonderry</i>
<i>Barre</i>	<i>Marlboro</i>
<i>Bellows Falls</i>	<i>Middlebury</i>
<i>Bennington</i>	<i>Middlesex</i>
<i>Berlin</i>	<i>Middletown Springs</i>
<i>Bethel</i>	<i>Milton</i>
<i>Bradford</i>	<i>Montpelier</i>
<i>Brandon</i>	<i>Moretown</i>
<i>Brattleboro</i>	<i>Morristown</i>
<i>Brookfield</i>	<i>Morrisville</i>
<i>Brownington</i>	<i>Newfane</i>
<i>Burlington</i>	<i>North Ferrisburgh</i>
<i>Calais</i>	<i>North Hero</i>
<i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Poultney</i>
<i>Colchester</i>	<i>Pownal</i>
<i>Concord</i>	<i>Putney</i>
<i>Corinth</i>	<i>Randolph Center</i>
<i>Cornwall</i>	<i>Richmond</i>
<i>Dummerston</i>	<i>Rutland</i>
<i>Duxbury</i>	<i>Shelburne</i>
<i>East Dummerston</i>	<i>Shoreham</i>
<i>East Montpelier</i>	<i>South Burlington</i>
<i>East Wallingford</i>	<i>South Hero</i>
<i>Enosburgh</i>	<i>St Johnsbury</i>
<i>Essex Junction</i>	<i>Strafford</i>
<i>Ferrisburgh</i>	<i>Vergennes</i>
<i>Guilford</i>	<i>Warren</i>
<i>Hinesburg</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Huntington</i>	<i>Waterbury</i>
<i>Hyde Park</i>	<i>Williston</i>
<i>Jamaica</i>	<i>Winooski</i>
<i>Jericho</i>	<i>Woodstock</i>
<i>Johnson</i>	<i>Worcester</i>

OVER 50 ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT VERMONT OPCS

Addiction Recovery Channel CCTV
 AFSCME 1674 (Howard Center Union)
 ACLU of Vermont
 AIDS Project of Southern Vermont
 Bennington Planned Parenthood Generation Action
 Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless
 Beyond Bars Peer Support Program
 Cathedral Church of St. Paul
 Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
 COTS
 Cultivating Connections
 Dovetail Counseling PLC
 Downstreet Housing and Community Development
 Drug Policy Alliance
 Emily Eley Creative
 End Homelessness Vermont
 FreeHer VT
 Green Acres Homestead
 Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont
 Ink Dog LLC
 Ishtar Collective
 King St Laundry
 Lamoille Community House
 Lamoille Housing Partnership
 Laraway Youth & Family Services
 National Harm Reduction Coalition
 Peace and Justice Center
 Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund
 Pride Center of Vermont
 Recovery Vermont
 Revolution Youth
 Sunrise Champlain Valley
 The Samara Fund
 Tiny Pony Apothecary
 Turning Point Center of Bennington VT
 VAMHAR
 VT Businesses Social Responsibility (VBSR)
 Vermont CARES
 VT Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth
 Programs
 VT Community Wash and Learn Inc
 VT Freedom Fund
 VT Interfaith Action
 VT Legal Aid
 VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
 VT Overdose Prevention Network
 VT Recovery Advocacy
 Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform
 Voices for Vermont's Children
 With Great Heart, PLC
 Yarrow Integrative Healing
 Youth Services

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