

# LIVE. LONG. DC.

## WASHINGTON, DC'S APPROACH TO ENDING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

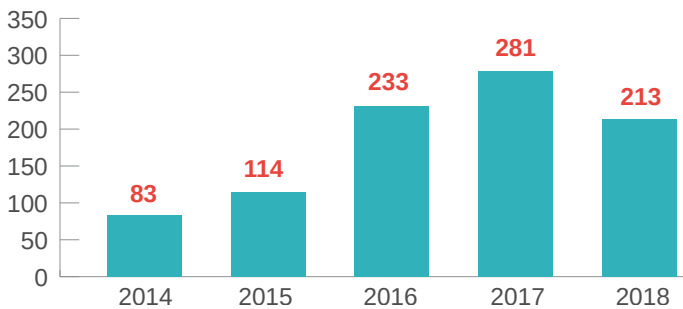


### THE CRISIS

As opioid-related deaths continue to rise across the nation, Washington, DC has also experienced an alarming increase in fatal opioid overdoses. Overdoses hit a peak in 2017, with 281 fatal overdoses total, and has since trended downward in 2018. National trends largely reflect new opioid users who are White (non-Hispanic) younger adults who begin their addiction by experimenting with prescription drugs, with the potential of progressing to heroin usage. However, Washington, DC's epidemic affects a unique demographic and presents different trends in use.

#### WASHINGTON, DC'S EPIDEMIC IN A SNAPSHOT

This graph reflects the trend of opioid-related deaths since 2014



- There was a 178% increase in fatal overdoses due to opioid use from 2014 to 2016.
- In 2016, 62% of cases involved fentanyl or a fentanyl analog. In 2017, 71% of cases involved fentanyl or fentanyl analogs.
- Approximately 80% of all overdoses due to opioid drug use happened among adults between the ages of 40-69, and such deaths were most prevalent among people ages 50-59.
- Overall, 81% of all deaths were among African-Americans. This trend has remained consistent across years.
- Fatal overdoses due to opioid drug use were more common among males (74% of deaths were males).
- From 2014 to 2017, opioid-related fatal overdoses were most prevalent in Wards 7 and 8.
- 89% of DC opioid users are over 40 years old and 58% are more than 50 years old.
- 22% have been using heroin (primary used opioid in Washington, DC) for more than 40 years, 59% for more than 25 years, and 88% for more than 10 years.

### THE APPROACH

In October 2017, a group of diverse stakeholders met to collectively understand the city's opioid crisis and establish a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to comprehensively address the epidemic. Since the first summit, an expanded group of more than **100 individuals from over 40 stakeholder groups, District government agencies, and federal agencies** have come together regularly to share data, discuss initiatives and best practices, and identify common approaches to work together. These meetings have supported the development and implementation of "**LIVE.LONG.DC.**", **Washington, DC's Strategic Plan to Reduce Opioid Use, Misuse, and Related Deaths**. The comprehensive strategic plan covers prevention, treatment, and recovery supports through seven goals, with **50 associated strategies**, all aimed at **reducing opioid use, misuse and opioid-related deaths by 50% by 2020**.

#### QUICK FACTS



**8**  
summits



**7**  
goals



**50**  
strategies



**50+**  
stakeholder  
groups



**150+**  
individual  
stakeholders

#### THE PUBLIC PRIVATE CROSS-SECTOR COALITION INCLUDES:

- DC Government Officials
- Hospital Leaders
- Physicians
- Public and Private Treatment Providers
- Community-Based Service Providers
- First Responders
- Individuals with Lived Experience
- Harm Reduction Advocates
- Federal Partners

## THE PLAN

**GOAL 1** Reduce legislative and regulatory barriers to create a comprehensive surveillance and response infrastructure that supports sustainable solutions to emerging trends in substance use disorder, opioid-related overdoses, and opioid-related fatalities.

**GOAL 2** Educate District residents and key stakeholders on the risks of opioid use disorders and effective prevention and treatment options.

**GOAL 3** Engage health professionals and organizations in the prevention and early intervention of substance use disorder among District residents.

**GOAL 4** Support the awareness and availability of, and access to, harm reduction services in the District of Columbia consistent with evolving best and promising practices.

**GOAL 5** Ensure equitable and timely access to high-quality substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services.

**GOAL 6** Develop and implement a shared vision between the District's justice and public health agencies to address the needs of individuals who come in contact with the criminal justice system. Promote a culture of empathy for arrestees, inmates, returning citizens, and their families as they navigate the various entities in the criminal justice system.

**GOAL 7** Develop effective law enforcement strategies that reduce the supply of illegal opioids in the District of Columbia.

## 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since LIVE.LONG.DC. was published in December 2018, much work has been done to meet the goals set out in the Plan. Highlights include:

- Successful reversal of 85% of all reported overdoses due to the administration of naloxone.
- Reduced the death rate due to opioids by 31% (subject to change once the fatal overdose data has been finalized).
- Enacted the provisions in the SAFE DC Act, which criminalizes synthetic drugs, including variants of fentanyl, based on the class of the chemical compounds, strengthening law enforcement's ability to test for and prosecute cases against sellers and distributors of these drugs.
- Extended emergency legislation to make opioid testing kits legal.
- Better characterized the supply of illegal opioids, including the discovery of new opioids, through advanced testing at the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) opioid surveillance lab.
- Launched social marketing campaigns to increase awareness about opioid use, treatment, and recovery.
- Awarded to contract for the implementation of Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral, and Treatment (SBIRT) in three emergency departments and the induction of MAT, in conjunction with peer engagement and referrals to community services and supports.

## TIMELINE

