

Resolution Declaring Overdoses a Public Health Crisis

WHEREAS, today drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with the majority of nationwide overdose deaths involving opioids; and

WHEREAS, From 2018 to 2023, the United States experienced a 57% increase in drug induced deaths, for a total of 105,443 US residents, which included 5,688 Texas residents and 469 Bexar County residents; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, more than 2,000 people in the US including 9 people in Bexar County died on a weekly basis from drug overdoses according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and

WHEREAS, in 2023, Bexar County had a higher mortality rate than the state average for both stimulant-related and opioid-related deaths; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, 58% of overdose deaths by drugs in Bexar County involved stimulants such as methamphetamines; and

WHEREAS, major risk factors for substance use include untreated mental health conditions, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and barriers to accessing health services and treatment; and

WHEREAS, in Bexar County, 6.3% of adults have a substance use disorder and 22.7% have a diagnosable mental health condition; and

WHEREAS, since 2020, adult and child mental health units in San Antonio/Bexar County have been operating at 120% of capacity; and

WHEREAS, the highest per capita increase in requests for behavioral health services has come from residents of southeast and southwest San Antonio/Bexar County (55% and 79% respectively); and

WHEREAS, there are only 150 substance use disorder residential treatment beds for uninsured individuals in a community with a 18.1% uninsured rate; uninsured individuals often wait more than two months for a bed in a drug recovery program; and

WHEREAS, although community partners and support systems work with individuals to seek treatment, long waitlists and barriers to care can greatly increase the risk of overdose deaths; and

WHEREAS, harm reduction is a proactive, evidence-based, and cost-effective approach to reduce overdoses, overdose deaths, and the harms associated with drug use at both the individual and population levels; and

WHEREAS, naloxone (often sold under the brand name Narcan) is a medicine that rapidly reverses opioid overdoses, but is not widely accessible to community members or social service agencies; and

WHEREAS, there is a critical need for additional measures to address the overdose epidemic in San Antonio/Bexar County by actively engaging the community, by

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expanding alliances with organizations that work to prevent drug-related deaths and reduce drug-related harms, and by further promoting equitable harm reduction strategies throughout the community: and

WHEREAS, in February 2022, opioid manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and opioid distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, and McKesson agreed to pay \$26 billion to settle multiple lawsuits alleging that their business practices contributed to the opioid crisis; and

WHEREAS, to date, the State of Texas has received \$6 billion of these opioid settlement funds, Bexar County has received \$14.5 million, and City of San Antonio expects to receive \$6 million distributed over 18 years; and

WHEREAS, death by overdose not only harms those struggling with substance use and their families; it places enormous stress on schools, communities, health systems, and governments; and

WHEREAS, death by overdose is a preventable tragedy, impacts the health and wellbeing of the entire community, and requires a concerted, comprehensive response.

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO:

SECTION 1. That this Council declares a public health crisis related to substance use overdoses.

SECTION 2. That this Council supports community-based groups and initiatives that provide prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services.

SECTION 3. This Resolution is effective immediately upon the receipt of eight affirmative votes; otherwise, it is effective ten days after passage.

PASSED AND APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2024.