



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

0059 - CITY CLERK
2023 JUN 29 AM 08:34:01

TO:	City Council
FROM:	Councilmember Teri Castillo, District 5
COPIES TO:	Erik Walsh, City Manager; Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk; Andrew Segovia, City Attorney; John Peterek, Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to City Council
SUBJECT:	Opioid-Related Overdoses and Access to Narcan
DATE:	June 27, 2023

Request:

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the City Council:

Requesting the City Manager, City Attorney, SA Metro Health, and other appropriate departments develop for City Council consideration and adoption a resolution which designates drug overdoses, specifically Opioid-related overdoses, a public health crisis and operationalizes the following actions to reduce deaths and other community harms caused by Opioid addiction:

1. Establish a budget plan with harm reduction strategies for the expenditure of funds related to the Opioid settlement payments.
2. Explore expanding availability, training, and use of Naxalone (Narcan) for community-based non-profits and workers in all public-facing COSA departments as well as COSA owned, managed, and/or leased buildings.
3. Develop and fund a COSA-sponsored program for pregnant people and new mothers experiencing Opioid addiction.

Background:

The purpose of this policy request is to improve public health and safety by reducing Opioid-related deaths and addiction in San Antonio. To that end, the San Antonio City Council must adopt a comprehensive resolution which codifies specific actions, expenditures, partnerships, and programs in addition to coordinating with local government, educational, and non-profit entities.

Opioid overdose is a major public health crisis in the United States and affects countless individuals, families, and communities, including San Antonio. In the United States, opioids have contributed to nearly 60% of the 841,000 drug-related overdose deaths between 1999 and 2019. In 2019 alone, over 70,000 deaths resulted from drug-related overdoses, and almost three-fourths of these overdose deaths involved opioids.¹ The Centers for Disease Control estimated

¹ UTSA's research into opioid-related deaths in Texas could curb a rising tide (October 29, 2021) www.utsa.edu/today/2021/10/story/demography-research-texas-opioid-



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107k Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021 which is the highest in the nation's history to date.

In Texas, the crude death rate specifically for opioids has increased dramatically over the past 15 years and currently stands at 4.3 per 100,000 population in Texas and 5.7 in Bexar. In 2022, more than 2,000 people died from fentanyl in Texas — more than five a day.² Officials reported approximately 246 overdose deaths in the county in 2021. Furthermore, in 2018, Texas paid \$20 billion for non-fatal overdose care in emergency rooms and intensive care units.

Success will look like:

- A reduction in local deaths, hospitalizations, and calls for service related to Opioid overdose.
- A multi-year plan for the effective use of the City's Opioid settlement funds which support harm reduction strategies like street-level interventions, specialized SAFD Naxalone/Narcan units, educational outreach, and linking clients to the appropriate prevention, treatment, or recovery programs.
- COSA providing smaller community-based organizations, like, but not limited to Harper's Chapel, with Naxalone (Narcan) and resources to obtain a Standing Order and the proper training needed to administer Naxalone (Narcan). COSA should also work with City Council and the Local Government Corporation (LGC) to provide training to all LGC workers.
- Increasing the number of new and expecting mothers who participate in addiction and recovery resources. And a reduction in local Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and other diagnoses related to Opioid addiction which impact fetuses and newborns.
- A public education campaign within the next year to warn about the dangers of Fentanyl, mental health stigma, and youth education.
- More physicians who refer patients to the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program when an opiate use disorder is suspected or identified.

Harm Reduction & the COSA Opioid Settlement:

COSA and Bexar County convened a Joint Opioid Task Force in 2018, which shifted San Antonio towards harm reduction strategies. Harm reduction is a proactive and evidence-based approach to reduce overdoses and overdose deaths, and the harms associated with drug use at both the individual and community levels.

Previous studies indicate that it is possible to effectively reduce the impact of opioid use disorder through a harm reduction approach, including improved syndromic and disease surveillance, community-based outreach and linguistically accessible public education, expanded access to

[deaths.html#:~:text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20opioids,these%20overdose%20deaths%20involved%20opioids.](#)

² 2019 Bexar County & Atascosa County Community Health Needs Assessment Report



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medically assisted treatment, prescription drug take-back and disposal, use of Fentanyl testing strips, and the increased availability and training on the use of Naloxone.³ An example is the City's Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Unit which responds directly to 911 calls for apparent opioid overdoses, and/or follows up with overdose patients and their support networks to offer support services and treatment.

Over the course of the pandemic and incidents like Winter Storm Uri, Opioid use has skyrocketed which illustrates a need for the City to revisit its strategy related to Opioid addiction and deaths.

The City of San Antonio was awarded approximately \$4.4 million (from Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Participants and distributors) which will be paid over the next 15-20 years. The guidelines for these awards are outlined in the Texas Term Sheet. In March 2023, Bexar County approved a policy for how they would allocate their Opioid Settlement funds, which include prevention, training, outreach and intervention, recovery programs, and administration.

COSA should develop a similar policy and plan which ensures settlement funds are used to consistently maximize effective programs which reduce addiction and deaths without duplicating efforts.

Naxalone/Narcan:

The use of opioids, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, Fentanyl, carfentanil, tramadol, methadone, and heroin can be fatal or cause severe side effects. During an opioid overdose, brain damage can occur after 4 minutes without breathing and death can occur 4-6 minutes later.

Furthermore, Opioids and other substances are being laced with Fentanyl, and while pharmaceutical Fentanyl is 50- 100 times more potent than morphine, illicitly manufactured Fentanyl can contain even higher concentrations, increasing the danger of overdose, with two out of every five pills laced with Fentanyl containing a potentially lethal dose. Since 2019, the increase of counterfeit pills containing Fentanyl seized by the DEA has increased by 430 percent.⁴

A leading strategy for overdose prevention is targeted naloxone distribution and training as seen with efforts like the University of Texas Health Science Center's More Narcan Please program. Naloxone is an antagonist that rapidly reverses opioid-induced respiratory depression and hypotension that can cause death. Access to naloxone and training on its administration is a public health intervention demonstrated to reduce the incidence of opioid overdose fatalities.

Because naloxone is rarely self-administered, overdose training most commonly supports reversal by a bystander encountering an overdose. However, Narcan/Naloxone is not widely

³ J Gen Intern Med. 2021 Dec; 36(12): 3810-3819. Published online 2021 Jun 22. doi: 10.1007/s11606-021-06904-4

⁴ Information obtained from media reports from the Drug Enforcement Agency (2021-2022)



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accessible for use by community members and social service agencies, and drug recovery programs often have long waitlists in our community. As states legalized naloxone distribution to laypersons, overdose fatalities declined by 14%, and these effects were even greater for Black and Hispanic communities.⁵

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS):

Bexar County accounts for a third of Texas' Medicaid patients who deliver babies born with NAS and has ranked first in NAS cases among Medicaid births since 2009.⁶ Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) occurs when a newborn is exposed to addictive opiate drugs while in the mother's womb. Babies with NAS struggle with a variety of symptoms. They may have tight muscles leading to body stiffness, hyperactive reflexes, tremors and seizures. They may have trouble feeding and gastrointestinal problems, including diarrhea. They may have breathing problems.

Treatment may include:

- Taking medicines to treat or manage severe withdrawal symptoms. Medicines used to treat severe withdrawal include morphine, methadone, and buprenorphine.
- Getting fluids through a needle into a vein (also called intravenous or IV) to prevent your baby from getting dehydrated. Babies with NAS can get dehydrated from having diarrhea or throwing up a lot.
- Being fed higher-calorie baby formula. Some babies with NAS need extra calories to help them grow because they have trouble feeding or slow growth.

Most babies with NAS who get treatment get better in 5 to 30 days.⁷ By providing resources for new and expecting mothers through various City channels like Human Services, Metro Health, Neighborhood & Housing Services, COSA can connect more mothers to resources that will not only improve the quality of life for their infant, but potentially save their life as well.

Submitted for Council consideration by:

Teri Castillo

Councilmember Teri Castillo, District 5

⁵ Mathias CW, Cavazos DM, McGlothen-Bell K, Crawford AD, Flowers-Joseph B, Wang Z, Cleveland LM. Opioid overdose prevention education in Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic. Harm Reduct J. 2023 Mar 24;20(1):37. doi: 10.1186/s12954-023-00769-y. PMID: 36964600; PMCID: PMC10037395.

⁶ 2019 Bexar County & Atascosa County Community Health Needs Assessment Report

⁷ March of Dimes Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome webpage, June, 2019



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Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (4 only)

1.
2. Phyllis Nagai
3.
4.

District

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