

Stand Up, Mississippi Encourages Participation in International Overdose Awareness Day on Saturday, August 31

The world's annual campaign to end overdose, this year entitled "Together We Can," remembers without stigma those who have passed and acknowledges the grief of the family and friends left behind.

August xx, 2024 (JACKSON, MISS.) – Stand Up, Mississippi, a statewide opioid awareness campaign led by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) and seven state and federal agencies, calls on all Mississippians to participate in International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) on Saturday, August 31.

This global event aims to raise awareness about overdoses and reduce the stigma surrounding drug-related deaths. According to provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), an estimated 105,303 Americans died from drug-involved overdoses in 2023, including from illicit and prescription drugs, with two-thirds of these deaths involving synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl.

"In Mississippi, we lose hundreds of people to opioid overdoses each year. Those who have suffered the loss of a loved one to an overdose know that even one death is too many," said Wendy Bailey, Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH).

The theme for this year's IOAD campaign, "Together We Can," emphasizes the collective effort needed to combat overdose, honoring those who have lost their lives and supporting the families and friends left behind.

"We urge Mississippians to stand up for their communities by educating friends, family and neighbors about the warning signs of overdose," said Bailey. "We also encourage business owners and community organizations to light up their building or property with purple lights to highlight this awareness day."

How to Get Involved in IOAD 2024:

In alignment with the 2024 theme, Stand Up, MS is offering various opportunities for individuals and communities to raise overdose awareness on IOAD and throughout the entire month to make a positive impact:

- **Wear Purple:** Encourage others to wear purple (the official color of addiction recovery)
- **Light Up Purple:** Illuminate your homes, businesses, city buildings, and landmarks in purple to honor those lost to overdose and acknowledge the grief of loved ones.
- **Get Social:** Post pictures, infographics and videos on social media to inform your online community about the dangers of opioids and how to find support resources.
- **Go Grassroots:** Hand out educational materials and information about local addiction resources at the places where you live and work.
- **Share Stories:** Reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths by sharing stories of loved ones lost to honor their memory and raise awareness.
- **Organize Events:** Invite speakers and local government leaders to sign proclamations or attend an IOAD rally or overdose-related support group in your community.

Click [HERE](#) to find resources to help you get started. You can also visit Stand Up, MS's social media pages below, for IOAD inspiration and find posts to share.

[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Opioids & the Rise of Fentanyl

Opioids are a class of drugs that include legal prescription pain relievers like oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, and morphine, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, as well as illegal drugs like heroin. The use of opioids, either by themselves or in combination with other drugs, is a significant driver of the drug overdose crisis in the United States. Fentanyl and other potent, synthetic opioids, which may be added to other drugs and consumed unknowingly, are the most common drugs involved in [overdose deaths](#).

According to [a study published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*](#). Over 115 million pills containing illicit fentanyl were seized by law enforcement in 2023, compared to 49,657 in 2017. This research highlights the increasingly dangerous illicit drug supply and the risk of using pills from any source other than a pharmacy.

Adolescent Drug Use & Overdose Deaths

Drug overdose deaths among adolescents increased substantially beginning in late 2019. While fatalities appear to have started declining in late 2021, they are still alarmingly higher than in 2019. Among persons aged 14–18 years, overdose deaths increased 94% from 2019 to 2020 and 20% from 2020 to 2021. Although studies indicate a decrease in illicit drug use in 2023, the widespread availability of counterfeit prescription drugs or other illicit substances containing fentanyl and the ease of purchasing pills through social media have heightened the risk of fatal overdoses among adolescents.

Naloxone (NARCAN) Saves Lives

Through Stand Up, Mississippi, DMH has provided more than **25,000** doses of the life-saving drug [naloxone](#) to law enforcement officers and first responders in each of Mississippi's 82 counties and provided training on how to administer the drug to people who they suspect may be experiencing an opioid overdose. If administered correctly, naloxone can reverse the effects of opioid overdose.

"In **2023 (Need last year's updated number) 20627.pdf (ms.gov)**, Mississippi first responders administered the highest annual amount of naloxone since the distribution program began in August 2017. With **2,551 (need 2023 number)** doses given, their efforts likely saved countless lives," said Charlotte Bryant, Outreach Coordinator for DMH. Learn more about Naloxone and other training offered by Stand Up, MS [HERE](#).

Treatment & Prevention

Stand Up, Mississippi, a collaborative effort led by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH), offers a variety of treatment options across the state for people struggling with substance use disorder. Information about treatment centers can be found on the program's website [HERE](#).

"A major effort of overdose prevention is to inform individuals, students and teachers, employers and community organizations about the dangers of opioids and how to identify someone at risk of a substance use disorder, said Charlotte Bryant, Outreach Coordinator for DMH. "Stand Up,

Mississippi offers in-person or virtual presentations, including Opioid Workplace Awareness ~~workforce awareness~~ and Naloxone training to empower Mississippians to Stand Up to opioids and help others begin their journey toward recovery.”

For more information about Stand Up, Mississippi or International Overdose Awareness Day, visit www.standupms.org.

###

About Stand Up, Mississippi

Stand Up, Mississippi is a state-wide initiative to end the opioid crisis and inspire all Mississippians to work together to create a stronger and healthier future. The primary goals of this comprehensive effort are to improve public perception of people dealing with substance use disorder, strengthen policies for prevention and treatment, and promote state-wide partnerships to combat the opioid crisis in Mississippi. This project is a collaborative effort by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Safety, Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, Mississippi Board of Pharmacy, Mississippi Attorney General’s Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mississippi Department of Human Services, and Drug Enforcement Agency. Funding is provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

About the Department of Mental Health

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) administers and operates state behavioural health programs, and regional programs for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and provides a several community services and supports through DMH-certified providers. These services are provided through a state-wide network of providers, which includes state-operated facilities, regional community mental health centers, and other non-profit community-based programs. DMH is responsible for establishing, maintaining, monitoring and evaluating a state-wide system of alcohol and drug use services, including prevention, treatment and recovery support services. The goal is to provide a continuum of community-based services accessible to all Mississippians.