

Community Overdose Engagement (CODE) At-A-Glance: Central Providence

May 2021 - August 2022

The Central Providence CODE Initiative is a community-driven response to the local substance use and drug overdose epidemic. Each CODE is guided by a diverse collaborative of organizations that works in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to develop and implement an action plan in response to the most pressing needs of the community. This summary reflects the successes, challenges, and lessons learned throughout the initiative as reported by CODE partners.

Note: *The activities and data below reflect the work of the first three years of this initiative. In Year 4, the state combined the three Providence neighborhood-based CODE projects into one citywide effort. This was done in response to community feedback to improve coordination and reach and decrease burden on local organizations.*

Primary Activities

- Collaborated with the other neighborhood-based Providence CODE initiatives.
- Worked with local harm reduction organization, Project Weber/RENEW (PWR), to identify an appropriate space to open and operate a fixed drop-in location in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence.
 - Provided harm reduction supplies, recovery services, and housing resources.
This space closed in May 2022 due to limited foot traffic.
- Increased outreach capacity throughout Central Providence.

Data Overview: Central Providence CODE Activities¹

Encounters	Unique clients	Naloxone doses distributed	Fentanyl test strips distributed	Treatment referrals	Basic needs distributed	Basic needs referrals
1,173	744	1,263	431	28	1,068	44

¹Data extracted from PWR Google Data Studio dashboard.

Facilitators and Successes

Outreach coordination:

- Central Providence CODE leveraged existing funding to respond to community needs by:
 - Expanding outreach capabilities with Crossroads Rhode Island and The Providence Center to streamline connections to housing and treatment services.
 - Partnering with AIDS Care Ocean State (ACOS) to provide weekly HIV and hepatitis C testing at the Smith Street shelter.

Safer smoking kit distribution:

- Began in February 2022 and helped to reach members of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

Naloxone training:

- Coordinated with community partners to provide naloxone training with Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Providence Housing Authority, and the Olneyville YWCA.

Outreach:

- Outreach workers increased awareness of naloxone by engaging with community members as they walked through neighborhoods, visited local parks, and outreached to businesses.

Drop-in:

- The drop-in center provided space for community naloxone training and distribution of harm reduction supplies.

Barriers

Housing:

- Most clients served by the Central Providence CODE initiative did not have access to stable housing.

Treatment bed availability:

- Due to the lack of available beds in the state, peer recovery support specialists and overdose prevention staff faced significant barriers to connecting clients to treatment services.

Fentanyl contamination:

- The presence of fentanyl in a variety of substances increased overdose risk.

COVID-19 pandemic:

- The pandemic impacted the ability to serve clients (i.e., trainings, referrals, outreach) due to unique staffing shortages and mandated social distancing.

Drop-in center:

- PWR's Olneyville drop-in center closed, partly due to limited foot traffic.

Silo-ing of CODE work:

- Separating work by ZIP code increased administrative burden and led to the duplication of efforts for the contracting agencies.

Weather:

- Extreme weather such as a July 2022 heat wave made it difficult to locate clients.

Lessons Learned

A citywide CODE approach is more effective:

- This approach facilitated faster pivoting to meet the needs of the community.

