



Mayor Tishaura O. Jones Declares “International Overdose Awareness Day” In The City Of St. Louis

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ST. LOUIS - Today, Mayor Tishaura O. Jones will sign a proclamation declaring August 31, 2022, International Overdose Awareness Day in the City of St. Louis. The City joins the [White House](#), St. Louis County, and other municipalities across the country in raising awareness about the dangers of opioid abuse and overdoses.



“Opioid abuse and overdose take a heartbreaking toll on St. Louis families and communities,” said Mayor Tishaura O. Jones. “Addiction is a root cause of crime, and addressing it will make our neighborhoods safer in the long run. From funding for community violence intervention programs to the pivotal work at the City of St. Louis Department of Health, my administration is working to educate residents about opioid addiction while taking steps to prevent it from taking hold in our communities. County

Executive Page and I have discussed how we can work together on this issue, and I'm ready to collaborate with all of our regional partners to protect our residents."

The overall trend in drug overdose fatalities and non-fatalities in the City of St. Louis has increased over the past five years. According to data from the Medical Examiner's Office, drug overdose fatalities increased in the city by 30% percent, from 317 in 2017 to 448 in 2021; fentanyl was the illicit drug responsible for most deaths followed by cocaine. The City of St. Louis Department of Health (DOH) is positioning itself to better address the opioid crisis. This year, the Department will be launching a new behavioral health bureau and one of its two focus areas will be substance use disorders in the city, including the opioid crisis.

"The complex public health issue of substance use disorders requires collaborative response efforts," says Dr. Mati Hlatshwayo Davis, Director of Health for the City of St. Louis. "The department has already brought several organizations onboard to help, including Behavioral Health Response (BHR), Emergency Medical Services Office, the City of St. Louis Medical Examiner's Office, Washington University, the St. Louis Mental Health Board, and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)."

DOH has hired six new employees through a partnership with the CDC following Dr. Rochelle Walensky's visit to St. Louis this past winter. These new employees will be with the Department for a year to work on strategic planning and implementation of an initiative to address the opioid crisis in St. Louis using a data-driven approach.

The St. Louis Fire Department urges those in emergency overdose situations to call 911 for EMS. A fire apparatus and ambulance are deployed to suspected overdose calls instead of police due to their training to use naloxone, a nasal spray that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose.

"All fire apparatus are equipped with naloxone, and have an approximate response time of four minutes," said St. Louis Fire Department Chief Dennis M. Jenkerson. "If you suspect an overdose, please don't delay, call us immediately and help save lives."

Opioid use must be viewed through a public health lens, and that treatment works and recovery is possible. Find out where to reach out for [free treatment](#), [naloxone](#), and [fentanyl strips](#) in the St. Louis region at nomodeaths.org. Through the American Rescue Plan Act, the City has allocated funding for [The T](#), a community organization working to address root causes of crime like opioid addiction and abuse through education and naran distribution.

"Overdose is an often fatal and yet preventable complication of drug use," said Dr. LJ Punch, Founder of The T. "With the right knowledge and resources, we can collectively

reduce the harm of opioids and prevent overdose-related deaths. Even more, we strive to #BrakeThePain that is driving opioid use overall.”