



2024 CAMPAIGN  
IDEAS BANK



International Overdose  
Awareness Day  
31 August

# ABOUT THE IDEAS BANK

This Ideas Bank has been designed to inspire you by presenting several ideas for ways you can run your campaign and what you might like to campaign for this International Overdose Awareness Day.

Read through these ideas and let your creative juices flow. We have shared just a few ideas and there are many more. So, we encourage you to think about what campaign methods will work best for your community and what initiatives and actions you need now to reduce and prevent overdose from occurring where you live.



## WAYS TO CAMPAIGN

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- **Organise an event with your peers and connections:** You will join more than 1,000 other International Overdose Awareness Day event holders around the globe as they host events to call for an end to overdose. The more events there are, the stronger this movement becomes.
- **Run a printed poster campaign:** Print out International Overdose Awareness Day posters and put them everywhere, including around your workplace. You can find them and many other resources on the IOAD website.
- **Order awareness raising merchandise:** Simply wearing a t-shirt or displaying a sticker shows your support for the International Overdose Awareness Day campaign. Every piece of merchandise can start a conversation and create opportunities for people in your community to learn more about the overdose crisis.
- **Share messages on social media:** We can reach more and more people with important overdose awareness and overdose prevention information by harnessing our social media accounts. Use the hashtags #IOAD2024 and #EndOverdose to draw more attention and start a conversation online.
- **Run a screening of a documentary about the overdose crisis.** Some great documentaries about the crisis from a North American perspective: *Recovery Boys*, *Heroin(e)*, *The Pharmacist*, *Do No Harm*, *Dr Feelgood and Painkiller: Inside the Opioid Crisis*. You could raise money and donate the proceeds to your local needle exchange or to people who use drugs and are doing it tough in your community.
- **Petition your local government to fly flags at half-mast on August 31:** An important way of growing our campaign is to make more people aware of International Overdose Awareness Day and its mission. Talk to your local elected officials about flying flags at half-mast on August 31 to commemorate the thousands of people who have lost their lives due to overdose.
- **Request that your Governor or Mayor issue a Proclamation for International Overdose Awareness Day:** a great way for the campaign to keep gaining in profile and publicity is to get your Governor or local government to recognise the overdose crisis in your area by issuing a proclamation declaring August 31 to be International Overdose Awareness Day in your community.

## WAYS TO CAMPAIGN

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- **Start a petition or a letter-writing campaign:** politicians will often ignore community demands unless the community makes it clear that change needs to happen. Organising a petition (there are many ways to do this online) or a mass letter-writing campaign about an important drug-related policy issue to get politicians paying attention to the overdose crisis.
- **Run a training event in the use of naloxone - and invite your elected officials to join in:** Support your community members to feel confident when using naloxone to reverse an opioid overdose and know what to do next. You might even follow the example of other event holders in the past who have organised to train local members of Parliament or Congress in the basics like recognising the signs of an overdose and administering naloxone. The more elected officials understand about the realities of drug use and overdose, the more likely they are to support the goals of harm reduction and overdose prevention.
- **Support people doing it tough:** many communities have lots of people who are struggling because of drugs. They might be experiencing homelessness, unemployment and/or mental health issues. Think about how you and your friends/colleagues can invite them into your event planning or actions to show your support and demonstrate they are not alone.
- **Work with your local health department to create a community education campaign:** many people still do not know about the harms that drugs can cause. Try and work with your local health department on a public education campaign which teaches people in the community about how to stay safe and where to get help.
- **Engage your local doctors, pharmacists and health professionals:** Doctors, pharmacists and other health professionals are vital in the ongoing battle against addiction and overdose. They are often highly trusted as experts on complex and sensitive subjects. Talk to them about the goals of International Overdose Awareness Day, ask them to display IOAD posters in their clinics or work spaces, and ask them to hold and register an awareness-raising event.
- **Remember a loved one who has passed away due to overdose:** Hold a candlelight vigil either with others in your community or privately. Post a tribute on our website or on the campaign's dedicated Instagram page, The Overdose Tribute.
- **Make a donation to the campaign:** We do encourage donations to International Overdose Awareness Day to support our ability to reach more people with this campaign and bring an end to overdose. To make a donation, visit our website.

# WHAT TO CAMPAIGN FOR

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- **Campaign for an end to punitive drug laws:** the War on Drugs has cost billions of dollars and many thousands of lives either lost or ruined by people being convicted and incarcerated for drug-related offences. Overturning these punitive laws, ending pre-trial detention for people charged with drug-related offences, and expunging the records of people convicted of minor possession offences would be a big step forward for justice.
- **Campaign for better access to heroin-assisted treatment:** in areas with high amounts of drug use, supplying people who use with pharmaceutical-grade drugs can guarantee that they are not using drugs which have been adulterated by dangerous substances such as fentanyl.
- **Campaign for better funding for confidential hotlines:** many communities operate a confidential service which anyone can ring to ask for advice about their own drug use or the drug use of a loved one. However, these services are often under-resourced and not widely known about. Pushing for greater funding and awareness will enable these crucial early-intervention services to grow.
- **Campaign for better access to drug equipment vending machines:** drug disposal vending machines allow for the disposal of used material (syringes) and the dispensing of new equipment. They are especially useful at times when local syringe exchanges and health clinics are not operating.
- **Campaign for better naloxone training and access (e.g. for police officers):** successfully getting naloxone into the hands of more frontline responders, like police officers, will reduce the number of overdose deaths in your community.
- **Campaign for prison-based needle and syringe exchange programs:** people in prison are at higher risk than the general public of contracting blood borne diseases like hepatitis C from unsafe injecting practices (especially because, typically, needles are not allowed in prisons). Allowing needle exchange services to operate in prisons will support prisoners who use drugs to stay safe. This can be combined with an in-prison treatment program to encourage prisoners to stop using drugs or reduce their drug use.

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- **Campaign for more funding for your local needle exchange:** needle exchanges are vital services that provide information, support and sterile injecting equipment for people who use drugs. They are also a vital health referral service which can help with health issues other than drug use. Many of these services receive little funding. Show your community's support for what they do and start a campaign to increase their funding.
- **Campaign for quality drug treatment services:** some drug treatment services are not based on solid evidence or exist mainly to make money at the expense of vulnerable people. These services can give people who use drugs and their loved ones false hope. It is important for every community to have access to treatment services which are based on evidence and have the best interests of patients at heart.
- **Campaign for a safe consumption site/medically supervised injection site:** these centres are one of the most effective harm reduction interventions. They have been proven to save hundreds of people from potentially fatal overdoses and serve as an important referral service so people who use drugs can get healthy.
- **Campaign for a safe supply of drugs:** many overdoses happen when people use illicit drugs which have been spiked with a dangerous agent like fentanyl. Campaigning for a safe drug supply (which could involve more frequent police checks of product or even distribution of pharmaceutical-grade drugs) recognises the reality of drug use and would save the lives of many people who use illicit drugs.
- **Campaign for the decriminalisation or legalisation of cannabis:** in places where cannabis remains illegal, people are often caught up in the criminal justice system. Removing penalties for the possession and use of small quantities of cannabis will improve their lives and allow law enforcement to spend more time fighting real crime.
- **Campaign for better access of methadone, buprenorphine and suboxone, including for doctors:** in places like the United States, methadone can only be accessed at federally licensed Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) and most patients are required to attend these programs up to six days a week in order to receive their medication. This makes it hard for people living in rural communities and in areas with limited access to transportation. Buprenorphine (a very effective opioid-based treatment) can only be prescribed by doctors and certain other health care providers who have received an advanced training and waiver from the government. Due to these hurdles, most doctors in the United States have not received this training and cannot prescribe this potentially life-saving medication to their patients.



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- **Campaign for your local elected official to make a policy announcement on August 31:** International Overdose Awareness Day is the perfect occasion to announce more funding for needle exchanges, treatment services or mental health services, or to announce a new evidence-based drug policy. Petition your local elected officials to respond to the crisis in your community with an announcement on August 31.
- **Campaign for improvements to prescribing guidelines:** physicians and pharmacists must abide by guidelines when prescribing potentially harmful medications. The prescribing guidelines for opioid drugs have often been too lenient, meaning that some doctors prescribe them even when doing so is irresponsible and potentially harmful to patients.
- **Campaign for local schools to incorporate overdose awareness into the curriculum:** it is never too early to learn facts about drug use and overdose, especially for children and teenagers in highly affected areas who may have already seen overdoses in their lives. Petition your local school to introduce basic overdose awareness lessons into the curriculum.
- **Campaign for more funding for alternative pain management services:** increasing knowledge of and access to alternative pain management services can help people confront their pain without turning to opioids that can potentially cause addiction.
- **Campaign for stronger Good Samaritan laws:** Good Samaritan Laws protect people who call an ambulance or paramedic for a drug-related injury (like an overdose) from arrest and/or prosecution. Many states in the USA already have Good Samaritan Laws in some form, but many of them can be strengthened. Many other countries do not have them at all.
- **Campaign for better access to drug treatment and support programs after release from prison:** the immediate period following prison can be a dangerous time for recently released prisoners who use drugs. Along with a general lack of support services, if they cannot source drugs they will lose some of their tolerance, which puts them at high risk of overdose when they first use. Directing prisoners to treatment and support programs will provide them with reliable contact on the outside and encourage them to seek help for their drug use.