

Overdose Prevention Policy

San Francisco Human Services Agency | FY23-24

I. Purpose of Policy

Ordinance 084-21, passed by the Board of Supervisors in June 2021, requires SFHSA to annually submit to the Board of Supervisors a departmental policy describing how the department and its grantees that provide direct services to clients who use drugs will promote strategies to reduce drug overdoses (“Overdose Prevention Policy”).

As a City department which serves over 200,000 San Franciscans annually with a robust network of social service programming, the San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA) has a responsibility to help address San Francisco’s drug overdose epidemic. The purpose of SFHSA’s Overdose Prevention Policy is to empower our staff and community partners with information and resources to prevent and effectively respond to drug overdoses when we interact with members of the public who use drugs.

II. Principles of Policy

In 2021, the San Francisco Human Services Agency, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) and the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) all committed to a collective and collaborative approach to address San Francisco’s overdose crisis. Together, we developed a set of guiding principles to support the development and implementation of each of our departmental Overdose Prevention Policies as required by Administrative Code Section 15.17. Advancing a citywide approach to the drug overdose epidemic in San Francisco, SFHSA’s policy is guided by the following Citywide principles:

- ✓ City staff and contracted service providers are responsible to the wider community for delivering interventions which aim to reduce the economic, social and physical consequences of drug- and alcohol-related harm and harms associated with other behaviors or practices that put individuals at risk.
- ✓ Each program within a system of comprehensive services can be strengthened by working collaboratively with other programs in the system and across the City
- ✓ Clients are responsive to culturally competent, non-judgmental services, delivered in a manner that demonstrates respect for individual dignity, personal strength, and self-determination.
- ✓ Because those engaged in unsafe health practices are often difficult to reach through traditional service venues, the service continuum must seek creative opportunities and develop new strategies to engage, motivate, and intervene with potential clients.
- ✓ Ongoing training, support, and access to naloxone for civil service and contracted staff will help create a space free of judgement for our clients increase opportunities to prevent overdose death.

- ✓ Comprehensive care and treatment should include strategies that reduce harm for those clients who are unable or unwilling to modify their unsafe behavior.
- ✓ Relapse or periods of return to unsafe health practices should not be equated with or conceptualized as “failure of treatment”.
- ✓ People change in incremental ways and must be offered a range of treatment outcomes in a continuum of care from reducing unsafe practices to abstaining from dangerous behavior.
- ✓ In order for programs to be successful, there must be an opportunity for input and feedback from community/consumers.

III. Overdose Prevention Policies

A. DRUG TREATMENT AND HARM REDUCTION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

SFHSA currently refers CAAP and CalWORKs clients in need of substance abuse treatment to both contracted community-based and City treatment providers. In the coming year, we will work with DPH to explore further partnerships for SFHSA and our CBO partners to refer other people in need of support to drug treatment and harm reduction programs and services, as appropriate. We will also actively encourage SFHSA community partners, as appropriate, to provide harm reduction resources and referrals in their programs and locations.

B. TRAINING

SFHSA case managers, psychologists, and physicians stationed at our 1235 Mission Street Service Center, which serves a very vulnerable population of extremely indigent single adults, have all been trained how to detect a drug overdose, and six on-site physicians have learned how to administer Naloxone, if needed. We also trained all of our security guards at 1235 Mission Street Service Center on how to recognize an overdose and to consult an onsite physician if there is an overdose. Finally, through a contract with RAMS, onsite CBO staff provide drug and alcohol counseling as part of their counseling program.

For the rest of our staff, DPH developed a virtual overdose recognition and response training, which became available to all City staff through the Controller’s E-Learning Platform in August of 2022.

The overdose recognition and response training includes:

- The philosophy and guiding principles of overdose prevention and harm reduction;
- How to detect an overdose;
- How to respond to and reverse overdoses; and
- How to effectively debrief and support staff and guests with the trauma that can accompany the experience of an overdose.

Implementation by SFHSA Staff:

Since the on-line overdose prevention training module became available, we have been strongly encouraging SFHSA’s staff members to participate. In addition, we have a designated cadre of SFHSA staff working at each of our public-facing service centers who

have taken the training so that we are prepared in the event of an overdose incident at any of our service centers.

In addition, Naloxone is easily accessible at all SFHSA public-facing service centers and is available to our staff who work in the field so they can have it on them in case they encounter an individual overdosing while working off-site.

Implementation by Contracted Community-Based Partners:

DPH also made its training module available to all City contracted providers through the DPH E-Learning Platform (<https://learnsfdph.org/user-login/>). SFHSA is strongly encouraging all contracted community partners to participate in the training. SFHSA will solicit feedback on the quality of the training and the best approaches for encouraging others to attend.

C. POSTING INFORMATION ABOUT NALOXONE, SYRINGES, AND OVERDOSE PREVENTION SERVICES

DPH has created a [public website](#) of overdose prevention resources. Each month the overdose prevention resource webpage is updated so that City staff, providers, and the public may have convenient access to the updated schedules.

The resources on the website include:

- Up-to-date information about the location and schedule of syringe access and disposal services;
- Up-to-date referral information about naloxone access and the schedule of overdose prevention and naloxone distribution services.

SFHSA links to this information on www.SFHSA.org and posts the information publicly at SFHSA's service centers.

D. ONSITE OVERDOSE RESPONSE POLICY

All SFHSA service centers have a documented on-site overdose response policy and protocols that provide specific guidance on what to do if an individual overdoses on the property.

SFHSA requires staff to submit a Critical Incident Report in the event of an onsite overdose so that we may track and understand the frequency of such events.