



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 26, 2025**

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**MILWAUKEE JOINS CITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY IN RESPONSE TO OVERDOSE DEATHS IN  
BLACK COMMUNITIES**

**New Campaign Promotes Overdose-Reversing Naloxone in Seven U.S. Cities:  
Milwaukee, WI; Louisville, KY; Durham, NC; Newark, NJ; Albuquerque, NM; Philadelphia, PA;  
and Detroit, MI**

**MILWAUKEE, WI** – In the wake of a decade-long surge in drug overdose deaths among Black Americans nationwide, a coalition of Black community leaders, government officials, and health experts in Milwaukee and across seven cities today launched *You Have the Power to Save Lives*, a campaign to promote the use of the overdose-reversing naloxone in Black communities.

A ZOOM press conference and rally was held today with media and community, civic, and government leaders from the target cities. A video of the press conference will be available after the event [HERE](#).

The campaign also released [a report](#) consolidating recent evidence that illustrates the need for urgent action to save lives, finding:

- Despite an overall decline in overdose deaths in Milwaukee County in 2024, [the overdose death rate for Black Milwaukee residents remained twice as high](#) as the rate for whites in the city.
- In 2024, Black Milwaukee residents [accounted for 42% of all overdose deaths in the county](#), despite accounting for 27% of the county's population.
- Overdose deaths in the City of Milwaukee [are concentrated in the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the Northside](#).
- Overdose is the [leading cause of preventable death](#) for Black adults in the United States, surpassing gun violence and car crashes. In many cities, older Black men are [four times more likely](#) to die of overdose than other men in their age group.
- [Overdose rates in Black communities have been rising for the past ten years](#) but have skyrocketed since 2020 when overdose rates in the Black population overtook rates in the white population.
- Nationwide, there has been [a recent 24% decline](#) in overdose deaths, but data suggests the number of deaths in Black communities remains disproportionately high and calls for equitable investment and focus on health interventions to address this problem.

The campaign, with its strong focus on community engagement, focuses on activating community leaders in Black communities to expand the availability and utilization of naloxone, a lifesaving, overdose-reversing nasal spray medication. At the heart of the campaign is a new website –[YouCanSaveLives.org](https://www.youcansavelives.org) – where people can find out where to get naloxone near them, hear powerful, real-world testimonials, and take action to spread the word about the importance of naloxone.

“I am an example of the human suffering created by the overdose crisis,” said Anita Garrett, a Milwaukee advocate who lost a son and nephew to drug overdose. “In both cases, knowledge about Naloxone should have saved them, and they would be here today. We need our community to learn how to stop these needless deaths. We need people to know about naloxone and that it can save lives. I can't stop people from using drugs, but I can help educate my community about how to save lives. That's why I am engaged with the You Have the Power to Save Lives Campaign. I urge you to do the same as we protect our family, friends and neighbors. They might not make the best choices, but we can help them stay alive.”

Supported by public health organization Vital Strategies, with funding from the [Elton John AIDS Foundation](#), the campaign includes more than a dozen community groups, health organizations, and local government agencies. Their efforts focus on establishing new naloxone distribution points in Black communities—including firehouses, neighborhood gathering spaces, and local

health providers—to reduce stigma around carrying naloxone and empower individuals to save lives in the event of an overdose.

The seven cities participating are Milwaukee, WI; Louisville, Kentucky; Durham, North Carolina; Newark, New Jersey; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Detroit, Michigan.

The campaign wants to ensure that residents are aware of free naloxone, motivated to get it and use it, and inspired to share about this resource with their communities.

[YouCanSaveLives.org](https://www.youcansavelives.org) directs visitors to locations in their neighborhoods where naloxone is available and provides information on the medication, its benefits, and its use.

“We are cautiously optimistic about declining overdose death rates nationally, but after years of skyrocketing rates, the wide disparities experienced by Black communities are raising the alarm,” emphasized Daliah Heller, Vice President for Overdose Prevention Initiatives at Vital Strategies. “Rates are higher among Black adults than their white counterparts; we urgently need equitable and focused strategies. This campaign is making lifesaving naloxone more widely available in Black communities in Milwaukee and six other cities, and mobilizing Black people to carry it to protect friends, family, and community.”

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that reverses the effects of an opioid-related overdose within minutes. Available over-the-counter as a nasal spray, naloxone is safe and easy to use. Opioids relieve pain by attaching and activating specific receptors in the brain. Naloxone reverses opioid overdoses by blocking the receptors and preventing opioids from attaching. Naloxone can be purchased over the counter at pharmacies and is available for free through community distribution sites. It can be administered as a nasal spray without any specialized training.

Top radio personalities in Milwaukee are taking to the airwaves and raising awareness in a campaign to stem the rising tide of overdose deaths in the Black community. They will inform audiences that they have the power to save lives when they have Naloxone on hand. They will urge their audience to pick up Naloxone free at any City of Milwaukee Fire station, no questions asked, or to go to [YouCanSaveLives.Org](https://www.youcansavelives.org) and find other distribution points in Milwaukee. Radio hosts participating in the campaign include Don Black, Mid-day Host and Program Director of Milwaukee Radio Group’s Jammin 98.3 WJMR, and Trey White, afternoon drive host of iHeartMedia’s V100.7 FM. The campaign airs March 24th for 3 weeks.

“WJMR (Jammin’ 98.3) is honored to be part of a campaign that has the power to save lives,” said Don Black. “This cause is deeply personal—not just for me, but for so many who have experienced the heartbreaking loss of a loved one to an overdose. Too many lives have been cut

short, and too many families have felt that pain. That's why we are committed to spreading awareness and sharing resources that can help someone see another day".

Further, Trey White of V-100.7 said: "My dad taught me to always be a blessing to others. We've all experienced the pain of losing someone to an overdose, which is why I'm grateful to use our platform to spread awareness. Together, we can be part of the solution to fight this crisis in our communities. "

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#### **About Vital Strategies:**

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. Our overdose prevention program works to strengthen and scale evidence-based, data-driven policies and interventions to create equitable and sustainable reductions in overdose deaths in several U.S. states and local jurisdictions.

#### **About the National Black Harm Reduction Network:**

The National Black Harm Reduction Network is dedicated to advancing harm reduction principles that optimize health and wellness for Black people who are disproportionately harmed by public health initiatives, the criminal legal system, and drug policies.