



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2025

Contact:

Michael K. Frisby: Mike@frisbyassociates.com 202-625-4328

Tony Newman: tnewman@vitalstrategies.org 646-335-5384

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

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

PHILADELPHIA – 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 Philadelphia 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:

- In Philadelphia, the rate of overdose death in the Black population [was almost twice the rate](#) in the white population in 2023.
- The rates of overdose deaths in North and West Philadelphia, both historically Black communities, [are among the highest in the city, respectively](#).
- 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 – where people can find out where to obtain naloxone near them, hear powerful, real-world testimonials, and take action to spread the word about the importance of naloxone.

"We know that naloxone can save Black lives," said Keli McLoyd, Director of the Overdose Response Unit, City of Philadelphia. Naloxone is easy to use and available for free. The key to saving a life with naloxone is administering it as quickly as possible. Think of it as another tool in the toolbox, another medicine in the medicine cabinet – one without judgment. It doesn't say anything about who you are or what's happening in your house. There's aspirin, there's Pepto, and now there's naloxone too."

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 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Louisville, Kentucky; Durham, North Carolina; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Newark, New Jersey; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Detroit, Michigan.

The campaign aims to ensure that residents are aware of the availability of free naloxone, motivated to obtain it and use it, and inspired to share information 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 Philadelphia 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 a safe and easy-to-use medication. 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.

Moreover, top radio personalities in Philadelphia are taking to the airwaves live and raising awareness of the campaign. They will inform audiences that they have the power to save lives when they have Naloxone on hand. Radio hosts participating in the campaign include iHeartMedia’s Mikey Dredd, host of the WUSL Power 99 Rise and Grind Morning Show, and Adimu Colon, host of the Quiet Storm on 105.3 WDAS from 7 pm to midnight. The campaign airs March 24th for four weeks.

“I am excited about the continued collaboration with Vital Strategies as we unite our efforts in expanding access to Narcan,” said Dredd, Morning Show Host on Power 99 WUSL. “Together, we are committed to tackling the opioid crisis by ensuring that life-saving resources are available to those who need them the most. This partnership reflects our shared dedication to saving lives, reducing harm, and creating healthier communities for all.”

Further, Adimu Colo of Quiet Storm Host on WDAS FM 105.3 said: “I have friends and family who have been impacted by the overdose crisis within the Black community, which makes me

eager to collaborate once more with Vital Strategies to tackle this issue. WDAS has consistently invested in the community, and my show provides a powerful platform with unmatched reach, enabling us to educate, raise awareness, and deliver essential resources across the tri-state to our loved ones who need them the most.”

###

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.