



## **The You Have the Power to Save Lives Campaign Energizes Black Community Leaders to Reduce Overdose Deaths**

Vital Strategies is launching a media campaign to urgently increase awareness of the need to make life-saving medication more accessible in Black communities. While overdose deaths have slowed among the white population, high rates of overdose deaths are continuing in many Black communities. Even with [a recent 24% decline](#) in overdose deaths overall, [a study](#) predicts a doubling of drug fatalities among Black men ages 31 to 47 from 2020 to 2025. The *You Have the Power to Save Lives* campaign has paid and earned media components in seven U.S. cities - Louisville, KY; Durham, NC; Milwaukee, WI; Newark, NJ; Albuquerque, NM; Philadelphia, PA; and Detroit, MI. At the core of the campaign are personal stories of individuals directly affected by overdose deaths. Their narratives are powerful pleas to keep naloxone readily available to save friends and loved ones who may overdose on opioids, such as heroin, fentanyl, or prescribed medications. Community and government partners in these cities are increasing free access to naloxone. A goal of the campaign is to make residents aware of naloxone availability. Through our campaign website, [YouCanSaveLives.org](http://YouCanSaveLives.org), we link with local websites that provide specific information on obtaining free naloxone in each city.

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses. Often given 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 administered with a nasal spray without any specialized training. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health [reported](#) that in over 40% of opioid overdose deaths in 2018, a bystander was nearby, and nearly 19,000 lives could have been saved if naloxone had been administered. Think of carrying naloxone as similar to someone having an EpiPen that can protect friends and family with allergies.

In cities around the country, The New York Times has [exposed](#) an overdose epidemic among Black men ages 54 to 73, a demographic dying from overdoses at more than four times the rate of other men that age. The distribution of naloxone can significantly reduce the risk of overdose deaths. Community-based initiatives that expand naloxone availability in Black communities are critical in addressing this acute public health crisis. The more hands that naloxone reaches, the more lives it can save.

Black populations must be made aware that this life-saving medicine is available. We have the power to stop preventable overdose deaths.