



**NATIONAL BLACK HARM  
REDUCTION NETWORK**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 14, 2025**

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## **BILLBOARDS TOUTING NALOXONE BOLSTER CAMPAIGN ADDRESSING BLACK OVERDOSE CRISIS IN ALBUQUERQUE**

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM** – The "*You Have The Power to Save Lives*" campaign is in full swing in Albuquerque, where up to six highway billboards will urge people to get free naloxone. This life-saving, overdose-reversing medication is saving lives.

The campaign, led by Vital Strategies, a global health organization, is expanding the availability of naloxone in seven cities across the United States: Albuquerque, NM; Newark, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Durham, NC; Louisville, KY; Detroit, MI; and Milwaukee, WI.

The campaign goal is to reduce overdose deaths in Black communities by organizing local, civic, community, and government leaders in these cities to distribute more naloxone at neighborhood locations and educate residents about the benefits of naloxone, which is also known by its brand name, Narcan.

"There has been an uptick in our distribution of naloxone since the campaign launched in March," said Stacy Burleson, Executive Director of Women in Leadership, a lead agency for the campaign in Albuquerque. "We are very excited about the billboards; that is our latest effort to bring attention to the Black overdose problem in New Mexico."

Since late March, Burleson said at least 211 Narcan kits have been distributed as part of the "*You Have the Power to Save Lives*" campaign. At the heart of the campaign is a new website – [YouCanSaveLives.org](https://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.

While overdose rates in New Mexico have [declined 8% since 2021](#), for much of the past two decades, [New Mexico has had significantly higher drug overdose deaths](#) than other states. In Bernalillo County, where Albuquerque is located, the rate of overdose deaths among Black residents was [70 deaths per 100,000](#), among the highest in the country. Across the country, overdoses are the [leading cause of injury 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.

Burleson, who is a recovered drug user, said their billboard strategy is designed to raise awareness of the overdose crisis. Currently, billboards are located on US-85 in Belen, on the I-25 West loop in Socorro, and W. Pierce St. in Carlsbad, New Mexico. The billboards cite the benefits of naloxone and showcase the story of a person who is a recovered drug user. Additional billboards will be in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Clovis, and Hobbs, New Mexico.

Queva Hubbard, a woman in her 40s, is featured on one billboard. She is a recovering drug user and will receive her bachelor's degree this month. "Queva has been incarcerated several times, so she is well known on the inside and in the community," said Burleson. "We want to lift the fact that she is recovering, doing well, and is receiving a college degree. She becomes a role model. Her peers listen to her when she tells them to get Narcan so you can save lives."

Also portrayed on the billboards are Christopher Anderson and Shanicka Green. Anderson, who had struggles with substance abuse, is a passionate advocate for awareness surrounding drug use, conflict resolution, and gun violence and its profound impact on individuals and their families. Green has been in recovery for over 6 years and is determined to lead others into recovery.

Burleson said her organization is exploring other innovative ways to raise awareness about the crisis and the benefits of naloxone. For instance, they recently visited a casino where there have been reports of overdose events and distributed 84 Narcan kits to staff and customers. Further, they are planning a social media push.

Kendall Bell, a well-known local internet influencer with a large following, has signed on to manage social media channels to amplify the campaign's messages. His expertise in engaging online communities will be instrumental in reaching a wider audience.

"We're living in an era where campaigns that are trying to get a message out have to push on social media," Bell said. "Everyone has their phones on throughout the day. Social media is how we connect the messages about events and other engagements to audiences. We will vastly expand the message distribution with a strong social media presence."

Bell said he has already attended two campaign events and has footage that he is ready to transform into engaging 'reels', a popular format on social media platforms. These reels will provide a compelling visual narrative of the campaign's impact and the importance of naloxone.

“We will be reaching the majority of people who need to hear the information about Narcan,” Bell said. “They may not know right now the broad spectrum of people who Narcan can save, but after they see the reels and the social media posts, they will get it. An overdose can come from your grandmother not taking her prescriptions properly. If you understand Narcan, you can save her life.”

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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.