

**Press Room**

“You Have the Power to Save Lives” Campaign is Effective in Raising Awareness and Promoting Access to Naloxone in Black Communities

Charlotte and Las Vegas are the Latest Cities to Join Campaign to Prevent Overdose Deaths in Black Communities

Briefing on October 1st to Share Campaign Impact and Promote Expansion

Sept 24, 2025 (New York)— Across the United States, overdose deaths decreased in 2024 by nearly 27% from the previous year—a massively positive development. But the United States still loses more than 80,000 people every year, and Black and Indigenous communities continue to be disproportionately affected by high rates of overdose death.

To address the overdose crisis in Black communities, public health organization Vital Strategies launched a major communications campaign, “You Have the Power to Save Lives,” in March 2025. The campaign was designed to raise awareness and promote the availability of naloxone in Black

communities in seven cities—Newark, NJ; Durham, NC; Philadelphia, PA; Detroit, MI; Louisville, KY; Milwaukee, WI; and Albuquerque, NM—uniting community leaders, public officials, and health experts to spread the word. Vital Strategies partnered with community leaders, city agencies, and other critical partners, including the National Black Harm Reduction Network and the Elton John AIDS Foundation to develop and launch the campaign.

Across participating cities, the campaign promotes low-barrier, confidential access to naloxone in everyday neighborhood places and helps to reduce the stigma that has often discouraged open conversation about overdose in Black communities. Backed by a robust advertising strategy and featuring stories from parents, pastors, and other community leaders, *You Have the Power to Save Lives* has already reached hundreds of thousands of Black Americans where they live, work, worship, and gather.

Campaign media generated over 32 million total impressions, nearly 1.5 million video views, and hundreds of media hits nationwide. People who saw the campaign were at least five times more likely to carry naloxone, three times more likely to know where to get it, and two times more likely to feel confident using it to reverse an overdose. Close to half reported talking about the messages in the campaign with friends, family, or other people around them.

The impactful effort is already generating interest from other cities where Black overdose deaths are disproportionately high, with Las Vegas, NV and Charlotte, NC recently joining the campaign. Organizers welcome and encourage other jurisdictions to get involved, to continue expanding the reach and visibility of naloxone access in Black communities across the country.

A briefing on **October 1st at 1 pm ET** will feature organizers of *You Have the Power to Save Lives* sharing data and stories about the impact of the campaign, and opportunities for cities and communities to get involved. **Click here to RSVP** for the press briefing.

Quotes and Stories from City and Community Leaders in the Campaign

“Our campaign is helping get naloxone in the hands of those who need it, but it’s local leaders who are now carrying this effort forward,” said Daliah Heller, Vice President for Overdose Prevention Initiatives at Vital Strategies. “Cities like Detroit and Philadelphia are expanding naloxone distribution through new community-based boxes, and Albuquerque has taken the lead by launching their own locally designed billboards featuring Black residents. That’s exactly what we hoped to inspire. Vital Strategies is here to support and partner with

any city ready to join this life-saving effort—we offer creative materials, messaging guidance, and a proven framework to help communities make this campaign their own.”

On August 28th, the City of Philadelphia’s Office of Public Safety’s Overdose Response Unit (ORU), launched the “Naloxone in Black” (NIB) initiative with a press conference that generated extensive media attention. In partnership with the Philadelphia Fire Department (PFD), the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and with the support of Vital Strategies, NIB is Philadelphia’s iteration of the nationwide “You Have the Power to Save Lives” campaign focused on overdose prevention and increasing access to naloxone in Black communities. The Naloxone in Black campaign ensures that every fire station across Philadelphia is equipped with an easy-to-use newspaper style naloxone distribution box stocked with free naloxone for the community. These boxes will be easily accessible to the public on the exterior of 61 of the Fire Department buildings where residents can access the life-saving resource with no questions asked.

In **Durham, NC**, Dr. Wanda Boone of Together for Resilient Youth hosted a press event at the historic Stanford L. Warren Library, a building established in 1913 as a safe haven where African Americans could gather to read, learn, network, and discuss ideas. “It still gives me chills, quite frankly,” she said. “The community responded in force. Community members became more involved. The health department director and the sheriff participated, thereby aligning with the community’s mission. The campaign has spurred a groundswell of interest that has been translated into so much more.

In Durham, COVID-era infrastructure was repurposed to train 25 Health Ambassadors (youth – seniors) who now distribute naloxone through residents, businesses, housing developments, and convenience stores. So far, over 400 kits have been distributed.

“In Milwaukee, people are finally saying, ‘I need to get naloxone,’” said Tahira Malik, founder of Samad’s House. “People who never would’ve carried it now have it at home. They’re having the hard conversations. It’s hitting home.”

Bryan Winters of Men Mending Men, a Milwaukee-based community group, has also seen the shift. “A year ago, people asked ‘what is harm reduction?’ Now they know. People want to be part of something bigger.”

He noted the engagement of nontraditional groups like Change Today, Change Tomorrow, and a new focus on older adults, a group heavily impacted in some

cities.

Malik added that all Milwaukee emergency personnel now carry naloxone, and distribution is growing to restaurants, vape shops, and summer festivals like Juneteenth.

In **Louisville**, Dr. John Broadus said the campaign has spurred new harm reduction partners, including Vocal Kentucky and the Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition. “As we empower more community organizations, overdose deaths will continue to drop.”

“In New Mexico, we’ve never had a harm reduction effort centered on the Black population,” said Stacy Burleson, Executive Director of Women in Leadership. Billboards now feature Black community leaders promoting naloxone. “That visibility matters,” added Donette Perkins, program manager at Vital Strategies. “People are seeing themselves in this campaign.”

Across the country, city partners are taking the lead—representing the campaign at community events in Black neighborhoods, sharing naloxone resources, and helping spark vital conversations. Photos from Durham and Milwaukee [\[provide link\]](#) highlight how these trusted voices are bringing the message directly to the people.

“We have a disproportionate impact of overdoses in our communities. Naloxone has been both unavailable and underutilized,” said Tracie Gardner, Executive Director of the National Black Harm Reduction Network. “The urgency of Black overdoses must be matched by the power of lifesaving naloxone. The You Have the Power to Save Lives campaign is making it available, saving lives, and transforming communities.”

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 Elton John AIDS Foundation

The Elton John AIDS Foundation was established in 1992 and is one of the leading independent AIDS organizations in the world. The Foundation’s mission is simple: an end to the AIDS epidemic. The Elton John AIDS

Foundation is committed to overcome the stigma, discrimination and neglect that keeps us from ending AIDS. With the mobilization of our network of generous supporters and partners, we fund local experts across four continents to challenge discrimination, prevent infections and provide treatment as well as influencing governments to end AIDS. www.eltonjohnaidsfoundation.org, @ejaf on Instagram.

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.

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