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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

ELIZABETH HERTEL  
DIRECTOR

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**CONTACT:** Lynn Sutfin  
517-241-2112  
[SutfinL1@michigan.gov](mailto:SutfinL1@michigan.gov)

## **MDHHS study finds harm reduction efforts make significant impacts on overdose deaths, hospitalizations, cases of hepatitis C**

LANSING, Mich. – Harm reduction programs have saved lives, reduced hospitalizations and emergency department (ED) visits and prevented hepatitis C (HCV) cases, according to [a new modeling study](#) by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Harm reduction programs provide life-saving tools like naloxone, which can reverse the effects of opioids and prevent overdose deaths. These programs also help to stop the spread of HIV and HCV. Since 2018, MDHHS has been integral in developing Michigan's robust harm reduction infrastructure, currently comprised of 37 harm reduction agencies (HRAs) with more than 100 locations.

"Harm reduction is a key component of our opioids response in Michigan, and it is working," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "According to the most recent year of data, Michigan ranked in the top five states in the country for greatest reduction in overdose deaths."

"Our modeling shows that the more we increased investments in harm reduction programming the more lives we saved, with more than 550 Michigan lives saved in 2024 alone with naloxone," said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. "These are not just statistics, they are our neighbors, our family members and our friends."

Analysis of provisional data from earlier in 2025 indicates a 36% reduction in overdose deaths from 2,931 deaths in 2023 to a provisional 1,877 in 2024. A recent MDHHS modeling analysis has examined the impact of Michigan's expansion in harm reduction efforts from 2017 to 2024 and estimated:

- More than 1,650 deaths prevented due to increased access to naloxone.
  - An increase from 135 deaths prevented in 2019 to 569 deaths prevented in 2024.
- More than 13,000 hospitalizations due to injection drug use prevented between 2018 and 2024.
  - An increase from 323 hospitalizations prevented in 2018 to 2,800 hospitalizations prevented in 2024.
- Approximately 13,200 ED visits prevented between 2018 and 2023.

- An increase from 2,521 ED visits prevented in 2021 to 5,300 ED visits prevented in 2024.
- More than 4,000 HCV cases avoided through the impacts of Medicaid treatment initiatives like We Treat Hep C and the expansion of HRAs.
  - An increase from 211 HCV cases averted in 2018 to more than 1,000 cases of HCV prevented in 2024.

The analysis was funded through the State of Michigan Opioid Healing and Recovery Fund, which is receiving payments from the nationwide settlement with the three largest pharmaceutical distributors, as well as opioid manufacturer, Johnson and Johnson. Michigan is slated to receive nearly \$1.6 billion from the settlement by 2040 with half being distributed to the state's fund and the other half being distributed directly to county, city and township governments. Over the last several years, MDHHS has been authorized by the Michigan Legislature to invest these funds in the state strategy addressing prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery.

### **Key harm reduction programs**

The outcomes shown in the modeling analysis reflect the result of sustained, community-based work made possible through ongoing MDHHS investment in HRAs. These local agencies serve as trusted frontline partners, delivering crucial prevention and care services across the state – producing results that have reduced strain on EDs, prevented community outbreaks and saved lives from overdose.

- **Overdose prevention:** Through the launch of Michigan's Naloxone Direct Portal, more than 1.3 million free naloxone kits have been distributed statewide and there have been nearly 34,000 reported uses to reverse overdoses and help save lives. In 2024, HRAs ordered more naloxone from the portal than any other agency type.
- **Infectious disease testing and linkage to care:** To reduce the risk of transmission and outbreaks, HRAs and syringe service programs have expanded access to infectious disease prevention. Today, more than 100 community-based sites – up from just 29 in 2019 – offer tools to prevent the spread of HIV, HCV and other bloodborne infections. From 2018 to 2024, HRAs provided more than 9,000 HIV and HCV tests and connected people living with these infections to social services, medical care and treatment.
- **Substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and referrals:** People who engage with HRAs are five times more likely to access SUD treatment and recovery services, and three times more likely to reduce or stop substance use. From 2018 to 2024, HRAs made more than 8,000 referrals to SUD treatment, supporting recovery for thousands of Michigan residents.
- **Data-driven innovation and early warning tools:** State funding has also supported early detection of emerging contaminants in the drug supply and the development of data tools that inform both local and statewide response strategies, ensuring a responsive, evidence-based approach to public health.

“Harm reduction agencies are making a measurable, life-saving impact across Michigan, and MDHHS remains deeply committed to supporting these agencies and the communities they serve,” said Bagdasarian.

To learn more about harm reduction and treatment programs, visit [Find Help at Michigan.gov/SUD](https://www.michigan.gov/SUD).

To find an HRA, visit [Michigan.gov/SSP](https://www.michigan.gov/SSP).

More information about programming and resources can be found on the [SUD Resources website](https://www.michigan.gov/SUD).

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