

October 21, 2019

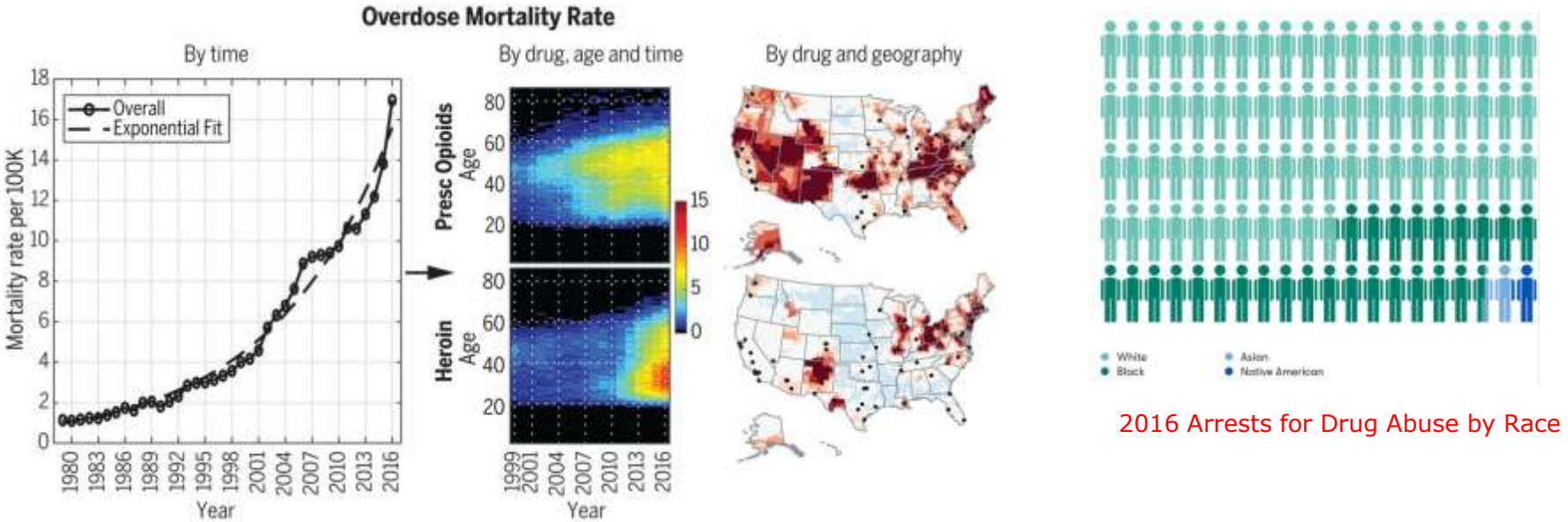
Emerging Police Responses to the U.S. Overdose Crisis

Leah Pope, Vera Institute of Justice

Presentation Outline

- U.S. Overdose Crisis in Context
- Project Background
- Emerging Police Responses: Two strategies in two locations
 - Post Overdose Response Team (Chillicothe, Ohio)
 - Pre-Arrest Diversion (Atlanta, Georgia)
- Reflections: The role of police in the matrix of harm reduction

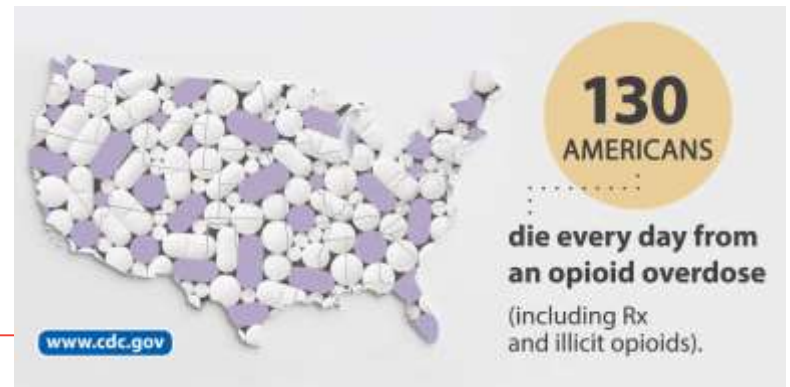
U.S. Overdose Crisis in Context



Jalal et al. 2018

#ChangingTheNarrative

In Heroin Crisis, White Families Seek Gentler War on Drugs



Project Background

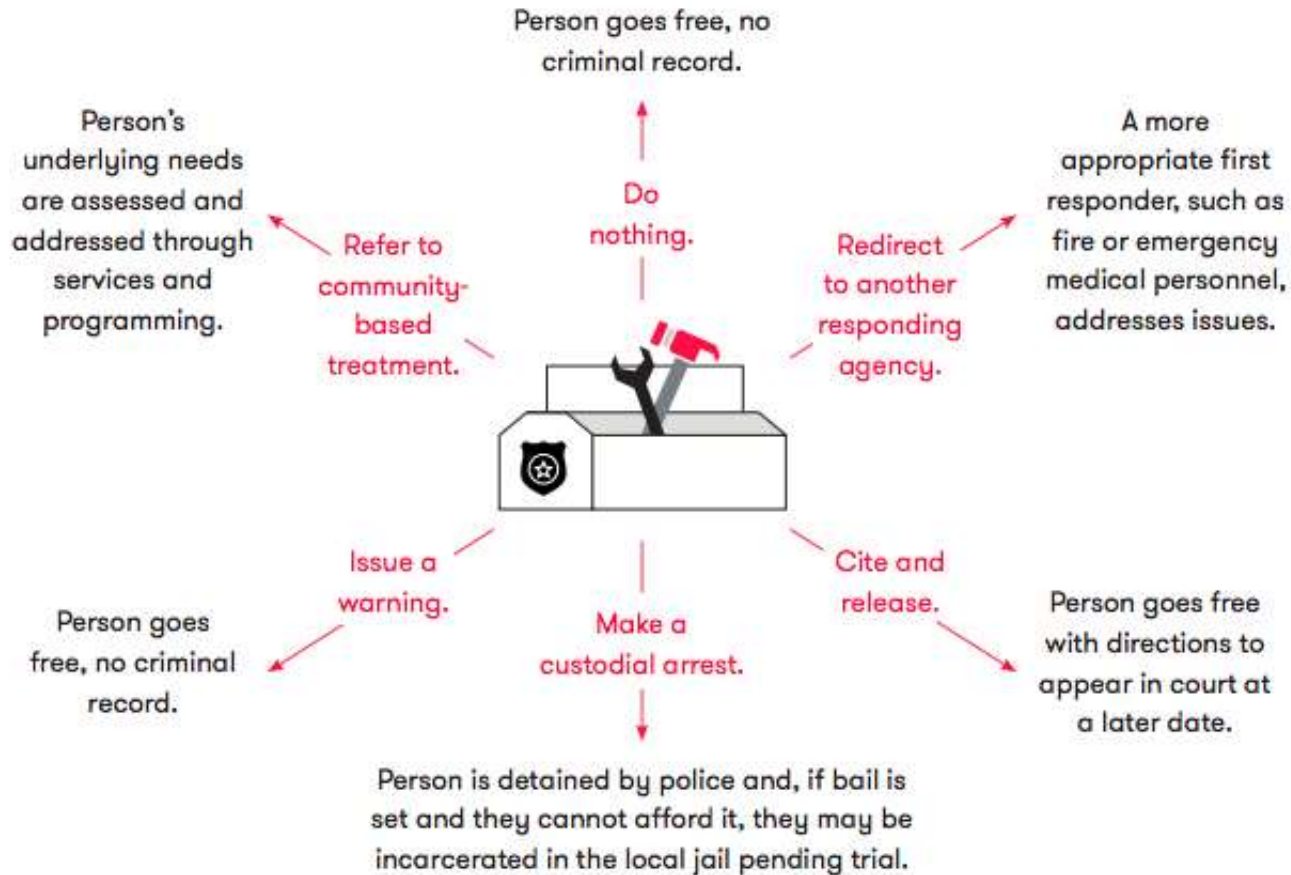
Methods:

- Interviews (19 experts)
- Site Visits (2) -- Chillicothe, Ohio & Atlanta, Georgia

Site	Population	Race		Drug overdose deaths (2017)	Drug overdose death rate (2017)
Chillicothe, Ohio	21,698	85.9%	White	28 (Ross County)	36.2
		7.0%	Black		
		0.5%	Asian		
		5.9%	Two or more		
Atlanta, Georgia	498,044	40.1%	White	164 (Fulton County)	15.7
		52.3%	Black		
		4.0%	Asian		
		2.3%	Two or more		
United States	327,167,434	76.5%	White	70,236	21.7
		13.4%	Black		
		5.9%	Asian		
		2.7%	Two or more		

Emerging Policing Strategies

An officer's toolbox



Chillicothe: Post Overdose Response Team

Team Composition

- Law enforcement (police and sheriff's office), district health staff, treatment providers, Hope Partnership Project coordinator

Team Objectives

- Review weekly overdoses
- Provide post overdose response
 - Naloxone
 - Connections to treatment
 - Information for family members

"Success is when we go to someone's house and we give them hope... We show up with a bag full of opportunity."
-- PORT member



Chillicothe Gazette 2016

Chillicothe: Post Overdose Response Team

Successes

- Capitalizes on natural connection police have with community
- “Culture change” with law enforcement
 - Reframed perceptions about the role of law enforcement in responding to overdoses

Challenges

- Police officer is the lead of the response team rather than a harm reduction outreach worker
 - Potential to limit engagement due to mistrust



Atlanta: Pre-Arrest Diversion (PAD)

Origins in community organizing

- Coalition to support Black transgender and gender non-conforming sex workers in Midtown Atlanta

Pre-Arrest

- *Before* an arrest is made
- Officer initiates diversion and is met at scene by PAD case management team
- 118 diversions over last two years

“We were not doing jails. We were about healthcare, not handcuffs.”
– Marilyn Winn, Women on the rise

Housing First/Harm Reduction philosophy

- No conditions for engaging in services
- Do not stop working with people when they experience setbacks



“We’re really trying to do that reframing ... bringing the harm reduction framework into every conversation we are having with all these partners.”
– PAD Program Manager

Atlanta: Pre-Arrest Diversion

Successes

- 118 diversion to date (October 2017 – June 2019)
- Diversions made by 43 different officers
- Building new collaborations/new culture

“It gave me time to stop worrying about other things, where I could take care of business and start getting things right ...”
-- PAD participant

Challenges

- Reach versus need & challenges to scaling
- Model relies on police discretion

“You have to make a judgment call. You want to make a diversion when it makes sense.”
-- Atlanta Police Officer

Different models, different goals?

- Justice-system-led versus community-led
- No social contact referrals
- Ultimate goal of decriminalization

The role of police in the matrix of harm reduction

- Meeting police where they are *and* making them less a source of harm
- Disentangling justice and health systems
- Viewing program creation and implementation through a racial equity lens
- Pushing the conversation about how we define harm reduction and recovery

Contributors

Thank you to the study team!

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