



Massachusetts
Lowell Police Department
City of Lowell Community Opioid Outreach Program

10/01/19 Grant Start → 09/30/22 Grant End

Overview

The city of Lowell, population 111,000, is located in Northeastern Massachusetts. The population is very diverse, with 62 percent white, 25.4 percent Asian, 6.8 percent black, and 19.9 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Lowell has a median income of \$50,391, which is almost 35 percent lower than the state median of \$77,385. Almost 23 percent of Lowell's population is below the poverty line, and more than 26 percent have a household income of less than \$20,000 in the last 12 months. In the past three years, Lowell has experienced a 20 percent increase in nonfatal overdoses, from 676 in 2016 to 811 in 2018. Lowell experienced 78 fatal overdoses in 2016, 59 in 2017, and 72 in 2018—and additional cases are still being confirmed for 2017 and 2018. In comparing cities of similar size in Massachusetts for 2018, Cambridge (113,631) had an overdose rate of 15 per 100,000 residents compared to Lowell's rate of 65 per 100,000 residents. The opioid epidemic also has affected

the quality of life in and around the city because of the increase in syringes being disposed of on streets, in parks, and around schools. In response, the city hired a syringe program coordinator to manage collection efforts. Since this position began in April 2019, 1,775 syringes have been collected.

Grant Focus

- Expand law enforcement diversion and first-responder models that connect individuals to substance abuse treatment and recovery support services.
- Prioritize real-time data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Support children and youth affected by the opioid epidemic.

Program Approach

This project will expand the city of Lowell's existing Community Opioid Outreach Program (CO-OP). In 2016, the Lowell Police Department (LPD) created the CO-OP team to connect persons who recently survived an opioid-related overdose to services. The LPD intends to expand the CO-OP team by adding comprehensive components to the existing program.

- A youth services coordinator will be added to focus on the needs of children affected by the opioid epidemic. If a child was present during an overdose or there is evidence that a child lives with the individual who overdosed, the coordinator will conduct outreach and provide referral information and coordinated case management for the child, working with service providers and the Department for Children and Families to coordinate services. As part of the CO-OP team, the coordinator will meet with local youth service providers and schools as a resource for agencies assisting with the coordination of services for affected children and youth.
- The CO-OP team will expand its service to the homeless community. During its outreach in the encampments to locate individuals with substance use disorders, CO-OP will engage all individuals to assess their needs. Team members will provide information about available community services to help individuals get assistance from the consortium of homelessness service providers. Many homeless individuals have a substance use disorder, and some may have a co-occurring mental illness. The CO-OP team will serve as a liaison to improve communication between agencies in order to facilitate coordination of services to meet the individual needs.
- The CO-OP team also will expand its role by conducting proactive outreach to any individuals with a substance use disorder. Through outreach

efforts, presentations, and family support groups, the CO-OP team will receive referrals. Through these connections, team members can reach out and offer support and services as a preemptive overdose measure.

- By the end of the project, the project coordinator will work with the UMass Lowell research team to create a manual with relevant project materials.

CO-OP team members will collect data from the individuals they encounter, including demographic and contact information. They will also collect data on post-overdose encounters, naloxone provided, families contacted, the status of stages of change/treatment/recovery, and numerous other data points. The UMass Lowell research team will assist in the evaluation of the project to understand the effect the program had on the opioid epidemic in the city of Lowell.

Project Partners

- Lowell Fire Department
- Lowell Health Department
- Trinity Emergency Medical Service
- Lowell House, Inc.

Contact Information

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