



New York  
Niagara County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Niagara County PATH (Presenting Alternatives for Treatment and Healing)

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

## Overview

Niagara County exceeds New York State's rates on all Department of Health Opioid-related indicators and is federally designated as a High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). As the largest population center in the county, with 48,976 residents, the city of Niagara Falls has the highest number of opioid-related overdoses and fatalities and the most significant amount of drug-related crimes in the county. More than 27 percent of Niagara Falls residents live below the poverty line, and more than 60 percent of residents require some public assistance. According to HIDTA data from 2017 and 2018, the three cities in Niagara County, Niagara Falls, Lockport, and North Tonawanda, have the highest concentrations of opioid-related overdoses (498 out of 746, or 66.8 percent) and related fatalities (53 out of 69, or 76.8 percent). The city of Niagara Falls is leading the overall county in both categories, with 303 (40.6 percent) opioid-related overdoses and 21 out of 69 (30.4 percent) fatalities. Niagara County's numbers continue to rise at an alarming rate. According to DOH and HIDTA data, from

2016 to 2018, there was a 73.8 percent increase in opioid overdose rescues performed by first responders and a 33.33 percent increase in fatalities. Often the community's first line of defense, Niagara County law enforcement and first responders lack the resources and ability to connect those struggling with opioid use disorder to community-based supports and services while diverting them from criminal justice settings.

## Grant Focus

- Expand law enforcement diversion and first-responder models that connect individuals to substance abuse treatment and recovery support services.
- Employ the use of alternatives to incarceration programs for nonviolent drug offenders.
- Expand peer support services and recovery housing.
- Increase access to naloxone.

- Prioritize real-time data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Link data sets to identify trends and focus resources.
- Develop and disseminate research on opioid policies and interventions.
- Expand models of public health, behavioral health, and public safety information sharing and collaboration at state and local levels.
- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Expand public awareness about opioid abuse.
- Integrate standardized screening practices into the criminal justice system.
- Educate public safety and criminal justice stakeholders about substance abuse.

## Program Approach

The PATH (Presenting Alternatives for Treatment and Healing) Team provides a two-pronged, harm-reduction approach that enables law enforcement officers and first responders to connect individuals struggling with opioid use disorders with community-based supports and services while diverting them from criminal justice settings.

Through the PATH Team project, the Niagara Falls Police Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Department, the Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse, community peer supports, and treatment providers will implement a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. Utilizing a harm-reduction approach, LEAD will divert 235 individuals from the criminal justice system while linking 50 percent of participants with recovery supports.

The PATH Team, using the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP), will also implement a Quick Response to Overdose Team (QRT). The QRT, comprising a certified recovery peer specialist, a qualified

health professional, and, where applicable, a harm-reduction-trained law enforcement officer, will conduct follow-up with individuals post-nonfatal overdoses and may also serve family members. The QRT will assist individuals with a broad range of social, medical, and recovery support needs.

Niagara University will serve as research partner, providing process and impact assessments on the LEAD and QRT programs. Statistical analysis will evaluate outcome measures and criminal justice savings accrued through diversion and harm-reduction efforts.

## Project Partners

- Niagara County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services & Niagara County Department of Health
- Niagara County Sheriff's Office, local police departments (Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Lewiston, North Tonawanda, Lockport), Niagara County Emergency Management, and Niagara Falls Fire Department
- Katal Center for Health, Equality and Justice
- Niagara County District Attorney's Office
- Best Self Behavioral Health
- Save the Michaels of the World, Inc.
- Independent Living of Niagara County; Addict2Addict
- Niagara University (research partner)

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