

Overdose?

Call 911.

Every time.



# Good Samaritan Campaign

## Materials encouraging people to call 911 to prevent overdose deaths

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### Background

Over the last 2 decades, drug overdose deaths related to opioids have increased dramatically. Between 2002 and 2015, the total number of deaths involving opioids – including heroin and synthetic opioids – nearly tripled.

Calling 911 can save the life of someone who is having an overdose, and the Good Samaritan Law protects people who call for help during an overdose. But we know that many people are afraid to call – potentially due to stigma related to opioid use or fear of being arrested themselves. To raise awareness about the Good Samaritan Law and encourage people to call 911 when witnessing an overdose, we developed a suite of educational materials.

### Audiences

People who use opioids and their friends and family and community members who may witness an overdose.

### Approach

We applied a user-centered design (UCD) approach – a method for developing materials that involves end users as co-creators in every step of the design process. We used the following approach:

- **Developed prototype campaign materials** based on focus group findings from sessions held by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH).
- **Conducted in-depth interviews** with people who currently use opioids (n=4), people who were previously incarcerated and are in recovery (n=6), and family members of people who use opioids (n=6). Our goal was to find out how clear and easy to understand the materials are – and to explore what types of materials and messages are most likely to prompt the target audiences to take action.
- **Refined campaign materials** – including posters, stickers, and talking points – based on findings from testing with target audiences. The posters and stickers will be distributed throughout Western Massachusetts communities to reach people who use opioids, their friends and family, and community members who may witness an overdose.

### Implications

People who use opioids, and the friends and family of this group, play an important role in preventing opioid-related overdose deaths. These authentic and engaging materials provide clear action steps for this audience to take during an overdose. Overall, this project provides a model of how involving end users in the development phase can make messages more effective.

### Involving the Target Audiences

We used feedback from the people who need these materials the most to help us improve and tailor the messages and designs.

### Testing with People Who Use Opioids

We tested draft materials with people who are currently using opioids, and they gave us incredibly honest, valuable feedback. This helped us identify the types of messages and designs that will resonate most. We learned that messages tapping into the desire to do the right thing – not messages about the Good Samaritan Law – were more likely to cause them to act.

“ Even if there was a warrant for my arrest, I’d still probably call because it’s someone’s life on the line. I might hesitate for a few seconds, but I don’t want someone to die in front of me.”

### Addressing Stigma

We heard from participants that drug use can be isolating. We included more than 1 person in some of the posters to give them a feel of people coming together – to channel an “it takes a village” type of message. We also avoided using language that can be stigmatizing, like “user” or “addict.”

### Tailoring materials

Testing revealed that who actually communicates the message really matters. Participants said they liked when they could relate to the “speaker” of poster messages. To tailor posters to different audiences, we featured people who use opioids, family members, and community professionals (like first responders and doctors).

### Facilitating Communication Between People Who Use Opioids and Professionals

We wrote and tested talking points for professionals who work with people who use opioids – like needle exchange program staff – to facilitate a more comprehensive conversation about barriers to calling 911.

### Focusing on Action

The Good Samaritan Law can be confusing – plus participants overwhelmingly did not trust that the law would protect them. As much as possible, we emphasized the bottom line – to call 911 no matter what – using positive, concise messages. Because during an overdose, every second truly counts.



Every second counts during an overdose.

Call 911.



This project was conducted in partnership with the Western Massachusetts Opioid Prevention Collaboration.



Poster design by Communicate Health