



SPARKING HOPE FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE IN RURAL NORTH CAROLINA

[AIDS Leadership Foothills-area Alliance \(ALFA\)](#) is based in rural Catawba County, North Carolina. They piloted [Overdose Measures Matter \(OMM\)](#) indicators data to learn about overdose under-reporting and the underutilization of services offered by ALFA and other providers.

ALFA supports approximately 2,000 individuals from across nine counties every year. In addition to housing, testing, wound care, education and many other services, they operate a syringe exchange program.

Their team used survey results to build heat maps to effectively promote health and target treatment efforts.

USING OMM INDICATORS TO GUIDE CHANGE



DETERMINING OVERDOSE PREVALENCE AMONG PARTICIPANTS

ALFA surveyed program participants, piloting the indicator "[percent of individuals who have ever had an overdose reversal](#)," which illustrated the ratio of people they served who reported having personally experienced an overdose in the past year.



UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF STIGMA

Survey data revealed that many of ALFA's clients had experienced or responded to an overdose reversal without reporting it to emergency services. ALFA also learned that stigma and fear of police involvement were the most common reasons for not reporting.

"Death by Distribution" laws may have affected how people use emergency services. In 2023, North Carolina passed a new law which makes it a felony to provide controlled substances to someone who later dies using. These laws may deter bystanders from calling 911 about an overdose.



TARGETING EDUCATION AND CONTINUED SURVEILLANCE EFFORTS

ALFA educated program participants about the importance of always carrying naloxone and never using substances alone. They will continue to survey participants about overdose history and reporting.

www.overdosemeasuresmatter.org



IDENTIFYING ACCESS GAPS

ALFA also surveyed community organizations to understand how and where they were distributing naloxone by using the indicator, "[number of naloxone doses distributed.](#)" This showed the gaps in addressing or receiving naloxone and areas that were not being served.



USING DATA TO CREATE HEAT MAPS

ALFA then partnered with the local health department and used census tract data to collect the age, gender and zip code of people who received naloxone. From this data, the local health department partnered with ALFA to create a heat map that showed high and low access areas across the county.



PINPOINTING DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS

ALFA used the heat map to pinpoint underserved regions, targeted their efforts for the greatest need and expanded their distribution network overall.



TURNING DATA INTO ACTION AND INVESTMENT

By identifying important barriers to care, ALFA was able to target interventions to meet the needs of their community more effectively and efficiently. ALFA Chief Executive Officer Liz Ramseur explains that to continue this work, "We will use this data and partnerships to apply for grants and North Carolina opioid settlement dollars."



EXPANDING NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION

Following this pilot project, ALFA used the heat map data to request and receive more naloxone from the local health department. They provided support to their neighbors in western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Catawba County Health Department worked with ALFA to create a Post Overdose Response Team (PORT) which strengthened their partnership. The PORT follows up with people after an overdose to provide naloxone, support and referrals.



EQUIPPING COMMUNITIES WITH TOOLS AND KNOWLEDGE

One Friday night, ALFA received an urgent message. An ALFA participant who needed help wouldn't be able to make it to the center before it closed for the weekend. So an outreach worker met with them to provide them with a life-saving overdose reversal medication, naloxone. That naloxone was used to reverse an overdose and save a life the very next day.

"We're not just reacting to crises. We are equipping people with the tools and knowledge they need to stay alive and well."

–Liz Ramseur, ALFA's Chief Executive Officer