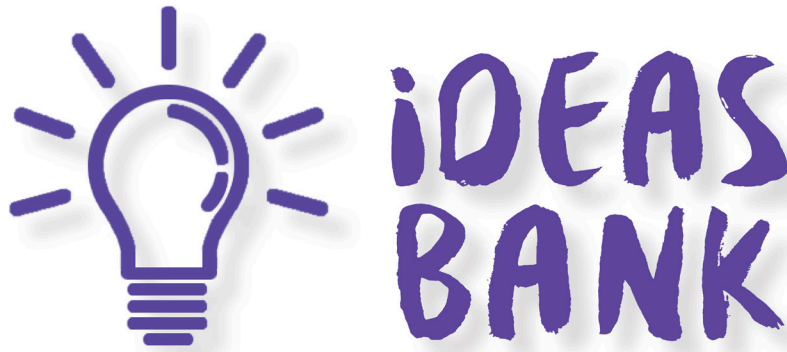


# INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY 2020



**This year's International Overdose Awareness Day will be the most important ever.**

**Coronavirus has exacerbated the overdose crisis around the world.**

**That's why this campaign must keep helping people make real change.**

**To support the campaign and the community that keeps it going, Penington Institute (the organiser of IOAD) has prepared the International Overdose Awareness Day Ideas Bank.**

**The Ideas Bank contains 40 great ideas for a campaign or event to help inspire you as we get closer to August 31st.**

**These ideas can all be linked with each other. For example, if you want to campaign for better access to naloxone in your community, you can use that as the basis for a letter-writing campaign to your local elected officials.**

## 40 GREAT CAMPAIGN IDEAS FOR 2020

- 1. Organise an event** and encourage your connections to organise and register their own events. Last year there were 874 International Overdose Awareness Day events – a record. The more events there are, the stronger this movement becomes.
- 2. Print out International Overdose Awareness Day posters** and put them everywhere, including around your workplace. You can find them and many other [downloadable resources](#) on the IOAD website.
- 3. Order some merchandise** to show your support for the International Overdose Awareness Day campaign. Every piece of merchandise can start a conversation and create new understanding about the overdose crisis.
- 4. Promote International Overdose Awareness Day on social media:** Use the hashtags #EndOverdose, #OverdoseAware and #IOAD2020 to draw more attention and start a conversation online.

- 5. Remember a loved one who has passed away due to overdose** by posting a [tribute](#) on our website or on the campaign's new dedicated Instagram page, [The Overdose Tribute](#).
- 6. Make a donation to the campaign:** International Overdose Awareness Day is currently unfunded. Every dollar helps make a difference: more resources, more support, and more advocacy.
- 7. Help introduce Penington Institute** to other patient advocacy organisations, charities, pharmacies, businesses, philanthropic organisations, treatment and rehabilitation services and local health services who would be interested in supporting the campaign by participating in an event or providing financial support. The more contacts IOAD has on the ground in local communities, the stronger it becomes.
- 8. Stage a screening of a documentary** about the overdose crisis and donate the proceeds to your local needle exchange. Some great documentaries about the crisis from a North American perspective: *Recovery Boys*, *Heroin(e)*, *The Pharmacist*, *Do No Harm*, *Dr Feelgood* and *Painkiller: Inside the Opioid Crisis*.
- 9. Better naloxone training and access (e.g. for police officers):** successfully getting naloxone into the hands of more frontline responders, like police officers, will reduce the number of overdose deaths in your community.
- 10. Call for an end to punitive drug laws:** the War on Drugs has cost billions of dollars and many thousands of lives either lost or ruined by people being convicted and incarcerated for drug-related offences. Overturning these punitive laws, ending pre-trial detention for people charged with drug-related offences, and expunging the records of people convicted of minor possession offences would be a big step forward for justice.
- 11. Support people doing it tough:** many communities have lots of people who are struggling because of drugs. They might be experiencing homelessness, unemployment and/or mental health issues. Think about how you and your friends/colleagues can do something to help support them and show they are not alone.
- 12. More funding for alternative pain management services:** increasing knowledge of and access to alternative pain management services can help people confront their pain without turning to opioids that can potentially cause addiction.
- 13. Call for stronger Good Samaritan laws:** Good Samaritan Laws protect people who call an ambulance or paramedic for a drug-related injury (like an overdose) from arrest and/or prosecution. Many states in the USA already have Good Samaritan Laws in some form, but many of them can be strengthened. Many other countries do not have them at all.

- 14. Start a petition or a letter-writing campaign:** politicians will often ignore community demands unless the community makes it clear that change needs to happen. Organising a petition (there are many ways to do this online) or a mass letter-writing campaign about an important drug-related policy issue to get politicians paying attention to the overdose crisis.
- 15. More funding for your local needle exchange:** needle exchanges are vital services that provide information, support and sterile injecting equipment for people who use drugs. They are also a vital health referral service which can help with health issues other than drug use. Many of these services receive little funding. Show your community's support for what they do and start a campaign to increase their funding.
- 16. Campaign for quality drug treatment services:** unfortunately, some drug treatment services are not based on solid evidence or exist mainly to make money at the expense of vulnerable people. These services can give people who use drugs and their loved ones false hope. It is important for every community to have access to treatment services which are based on evidence and have the best interests of patients at heart.
- 17. Train your local elected officials in the use of naloxone:** the more that elected officials understand about the realities of drug use and overdose, the more likely they are to support the goals of harm reduction and overdose prevention. Follow the example of other IOAD Partners and organise to train your local members of Parliament or Congress in the basics like recognising the signs of an overdose and administering naloxone.
- 18. Campaigning for a safe consumption site/medically supervised injection site:** these centres are one of the most effective harm reduction interventions. They have been proven to save hundreds of people from potentially fatal overdoses and serve as an important referral service so people who use drugs can get healthy.
- 19. Better access to drug equipment vending machines:** drug disposal vending machines allow for the disposal of used material (syringes) and the dispensing of new equipment. They are especially useful at times when local syringe exchanges and health clinics are not operating.
- 20. Decriminalisation/legalisation of cannabis:** in places where cannabis remains illegal, people are often caught up in the criminal justice system. Removing penalties for the possession and use of small quantities of cannabis will improve their lives and allow law enforcement to spend more time fighting real crime.
- 21. Better access of methadone, buprenorphine and suboxone, including for doctors:** in places like the United States, methadone can only be accessed at federally licensed Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) and most patients are required to attend these programs up to six days a week in order to receive their medication. This makes it hard for people living in rural communities and in areas with limited access to transportation. Buprenorphine (a very effective opioid-based treatment) can only be

prescribed by doctors and certain other health care providers who have received an advanced training and waiver from the government. Due to these hurdles, most doctors in the United States have not received this training and cannot prescribe this potentially life-saving medication to their patients.

- 22. Better access to heroin-assisted treatment:** in areas with high amounts of drug use, supplying people who use with pharmaceutical-grade drugs can guarantee that they are not using drugs which have been adulterated by dangerous substances such as fentanyl.
- 23. Campaign for a safe supply of drugs:** many overdoses happen when people use illicit drugs which have been spiked with a dangerous agent like fentanyl. Campaigning for a safe drug supply (which could involve more frequent police checks of product or even distribution of pharmaceutical-grade drugs) recognises the reality of drug use and would save the lives of many people who use illicit drugs.
- 24. More funding for confidential hotlines:** many communities operate a confidential service which anyone can ring to ask for advice about their own drug use or the drug use of a loved one. However, these services are often under-resourced and not widely known about. Pushing for greater funding and awareness will enable these crucial early-intervention services to grow.
- 25. Work with your local health department to create a community education campaign:** many people still do not know about the harms that drugs can cause. Try and work with your local health department on a public education campaign which teaches people in the community about how to stay safe and where to get help.
- 26. Petition your local government to fly flags at half-mast on August 31st:** An important way of growing our campaign is to make more people aware of International Overdose Awareness Day and its mission. Talk to your local elected officials about flying flags at half-mast on August 31st to commemorate the thousands of people who have lost their lives due to overdose.
- 27. Get your Governor or Mayor to issue a Proclamation for International Overdose Awareness Day:** a great way for the campaign to keep gaining in profile and publicity is to get your Governor or local government to recognise the overdose crisis in your area by issuing a proclamation declaring the 31st of August to be International Overdose Awareness Day in your community.
- 28. Campaign for your local elected official to make a policy announcement on August 31st:** International Overdose Awareness Day is the perfect occasion to announce more funding for needle exchanges, treatment services or mental health services, or to announce a new evidence-based drug policy. Petition your local elected officials to respond to the crisis in your community with an announcement on August 31st.
- 29. Engage your local doctor and/or pharmacist:** Doctors and pharmacists are vital in the ongoing battle against addiction and overdose. They are highly trusted as experts on complex and sensitive subjects. Talk to them about the goals of International Overdose Awareness Day, ask them to display IOAD posters in their offices, and ask them to hold and register an awareness-raising event.

- 30. Call for improvements to prescribing guidelines:** physicians and pharmacists must abide by guidelines when prescribing potentially harmful medications. The prescribing guidelines for opioid drugs have often been too lenient, meaning that some doctors prescribe them even when doing so is irresponsible and potentially harmful to patients.
- 31. Talk to local schools about improving overdose awareness:** it is never too early to learn facts about drug use and overdose, especially for children in highly affected areas who may have already seen overdoses in their lives. Petition your local school to introduce basic overdose awareness lessons into the curriculum.
- 32. Prison-based needle and syringe exchange programs:** people in prison are at higher risk than the general public of contracting bloodborne diseases like Hepatitis C from unsafe injecting practices (especially because, typically, needles are not allowed in prisons). Allowing needle exchange services to operate in prisons will enable prisoners who use drugs to stay safe. This can be combined with an in-prison treatment program to encourage prisoners to stop using drugs or reduce their drug use.
- 33. Drug treatment and support programs post-release:** the period immediately following prison can be a very dangerous time for recently released prisoners who use drugs. In addition to a general lack of support services, if they cannot source drugs they will lose some of their tolerance, which puts them at high risk of overdose when they first use. Directing prisoners to treatment and support programs will provide them with reliable contact on the outside and encourage them to seek help for their drug use.
- 34. Get the support of high net-worth individuals and/or philanthropic organisations:** International Overdose Awareness Day is run without any funding. Write to a high net-worth individual or a philanthropic organisation with a local presence, explaining the goals of International Overdose Awareness Day and what their support can help achieve. Alternatively, if you know of someone who might be interested in supporting the campaign, send us (the campaign organisers) an [email](#).
- 35. Write to pharmaceutical companies about the campaign:** some pharmaceutical companies are deeply implicated in the spread of the overdose crisis in the first place. However, many of these companies have also created restitution funds to settle legal cases or increase their philanthropic giving to improve their reputations. Write to senior officials in a pharmaceutical company like Purdue, GSK or Pfizer explaining the purpose of International Overdose Awareness Day and how they can be part of the solution.
- 36. Incorporate the voice of people with lived experience into local decision-making:** the best drug policies recognise and include the voices of people with lived experience. Make sure your local community organisations and taskforces established to deal with the overdose crisis are listening to what people with lived experience have to say.

- 37. Develop a local Lived Experience Speakers' Portfolio:** the experiences of people who use or have used drugs are incredibly powerful and can be the difference between treating the overdose crisis as an abstract issue and understanding what it means to real people. Together with your colleagues, gain the consent of people who are happy to talk about their lived experience and share their details with Penington Institute and your local media.
- 38. Promote general harm reduction messages:** as profound and wide-reaching the overdose crisis is, there are still so many people who do not understand the basics of harm reduction. Work with Penington Institute, local groups and elected officials to produce and promote resources about safer using, how to spot and respond to an overdose, and the potential harms around prescription drugs.
- 39. Create resources about the risks and harms of stimulant drugs:** many of us, when thinking about the overdose crisis, automatically think of opioids. However, stimulant drugs like methamphetamine ("crystal meth" or "ice") are an increasingly prominent and dangerous part of the crisis. Work with us and people in your community to produce accessible, evidence-based resources which teach people how to look out for the harms caused by stimulant drugs.
- 40. Create a video about the overdose crisis in your area:** videos which paint a picture about the devastating effects of overdose can be incredibly powerful. Work with people in your area (maybe a local filmmaker or video production company can help you!) to produce a video which features people in your community who have passed away or been affected by overdose, and their family and friends. Share it with us and we will be happy to promote it on our social media channels.

