

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 12pm

Virtual Meeting

Co-Chairs:

Rev. Robyn Anderson, MS, LPC, LMFT, LADC
Executive Director, Ministerial Health Fellowship

Kevin Elak, RS/REHS, CP-FS, Director of Health, City of
Middletown Department of Health



Member Organizations

- Alliance for Living Program
- BHcare
- CCAR
- Chatham Health District
- City of Middletown
- City of Middletown Department of Health
- City of Middletown Fire Department
- City of Middletown Police Department
- Carelon Behavioral Health
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County
- Community Health Center (CHC)
- Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH)
- CT Harm Reduction Coalition
- DCF Region 3 (Norwich, Willimantic, Middletown)
- Department of Children and Families
- DMHAS (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services)
- Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition / DMYFS
- Gilead Community Services
- Hunter's Ambulance Service
- Middlesex Community College
- Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Middlesex Health
- Middlesex YMCA
- Middletown Harm Reduction Initiative (MHRI)
- Middletown Public School System
- Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Council
- Ministerial Health Fellowship
- Overdose Response Strategy | New England HIDTA
- River Valley Services, DMHAS
- Root Center for Advanced Recovery
- Rushford
- St. Vincent de Paul Middletown
- Street Fire Ministries
- The Connection, Women's REACH Program
- The Village for Families & Children
- Town of Cromwell Department of Health
- Town of Cromwell Police Department
- Wesleyan University

Agenda

- Welcome New Members
- Data Review
- Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey Review:
 - Catherine Rees, MPH, Director, Community Health Improvement, Middlesex Health and Sarah Messier-Smith, LCSW, LADC, Opioid Settlement Program Manager, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Updates
- Workgroup / Committee Updates
- Standing Agenda Items
- Member Announcements



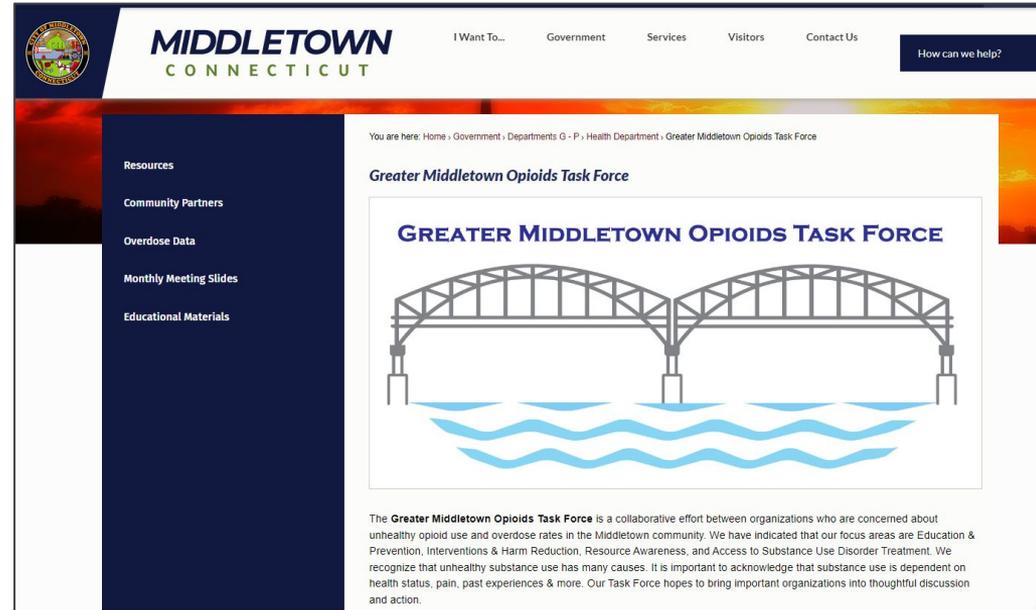
Mission & Vision Statement

- **Mission:** To engage the Greater Middletown community in working together to promote opioid awareness, education, prevention, harm reduction and access to treatment thereby reducing opioid-related overdoses and deaths and building a healthy, safe and drug-free community.
- **Vision:** A community working together to prevent opioid use and to help people experiencing opioid use challenges.



For New Members

- Website:
<https://www.middletownct.gov/1336/Greater-Middletown-Opioids-Task-Force>
- Includes resources and educational material



MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT

I Want To... Government Services Visitors Contact Us

How can we help?

You are here: Home > Government > Departments G - P > Health Department > Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

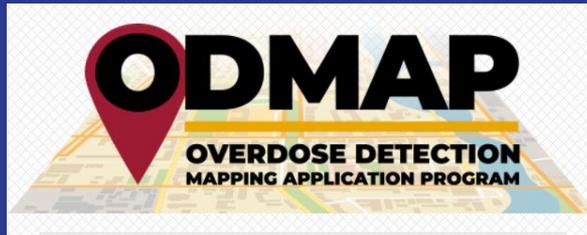
GREATER MIDDLETOWN OPIOIDS TASK FORCE

The **Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force** is a collaborative effort between organizations who are concerned about unhealthy opioid use and overdose rates in the Middletown community. We have indicated that our focus areas are Education & Prevention, Interventions & Harm Reduction, Resource Awareness, and Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment. We recognize that unhealthy substance use has many causes. It is important to acknowledge that substance use is dependent on health status, pain, past experiences & more. Our Task Force hopes to bring important organizations into thoughtful discussion and action.



Opioid Overdoses Nonfatal and Fatal

Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown and Portland



Changes to ODMAP Reporting

- ▶ As of July 1, 2024:
 - ▶ Overdoses are no longer reported to Connecticut Poison Control Center.
 - ▶ The CT Department of Public Health developed a new program called API to capture overdose information in Connecticut.
 - ▶ API used ImageTrend using data from Electronic Patient Care Records

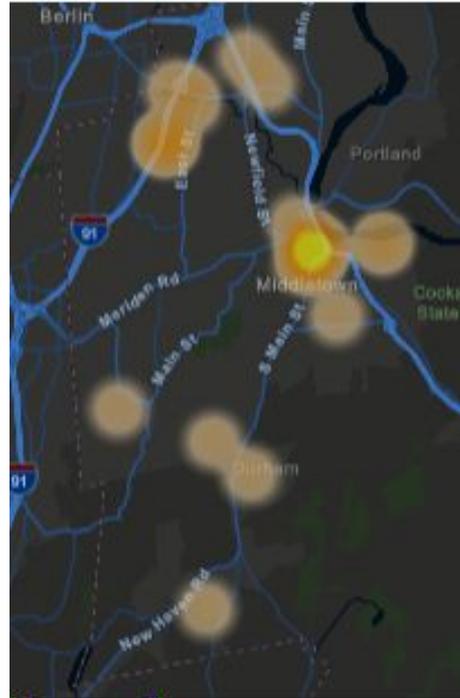
Overdoses from January 1 - December 31, 2024

Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown and
Portland

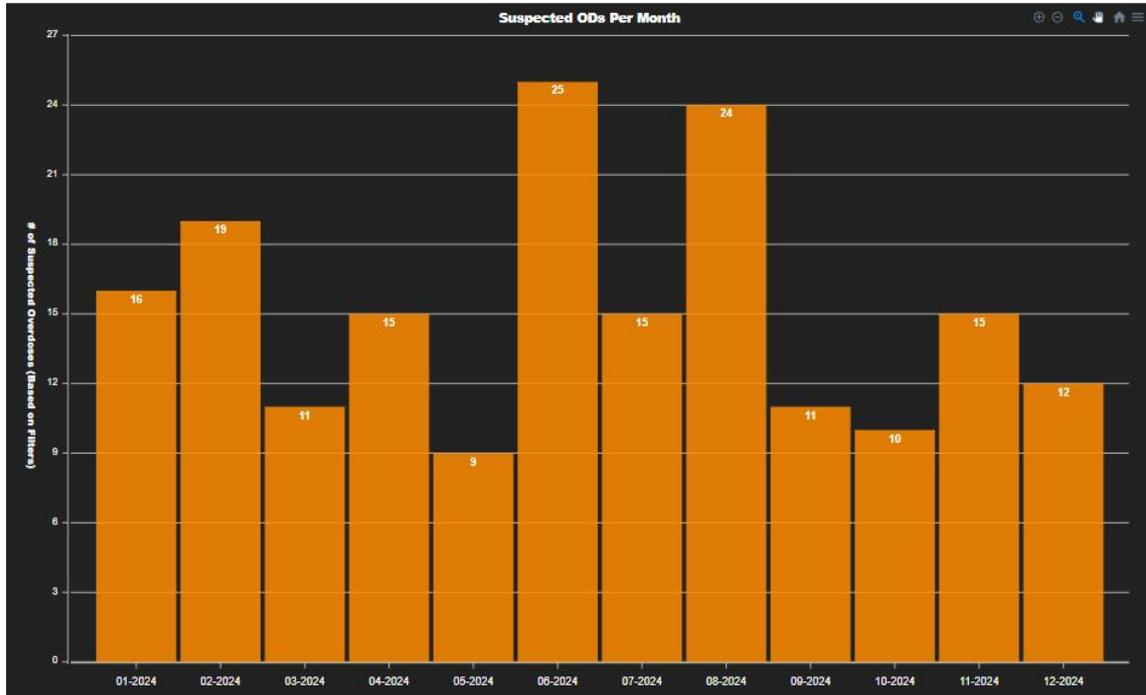
Total Suspected Overdoses	182
Fatal Overdoses	26
Naloxone Administered	52*

*Naloxone Administered data not available after 6/30/24

Overdose Heatmap from 1/1/24 - 12/17/24
Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Portland



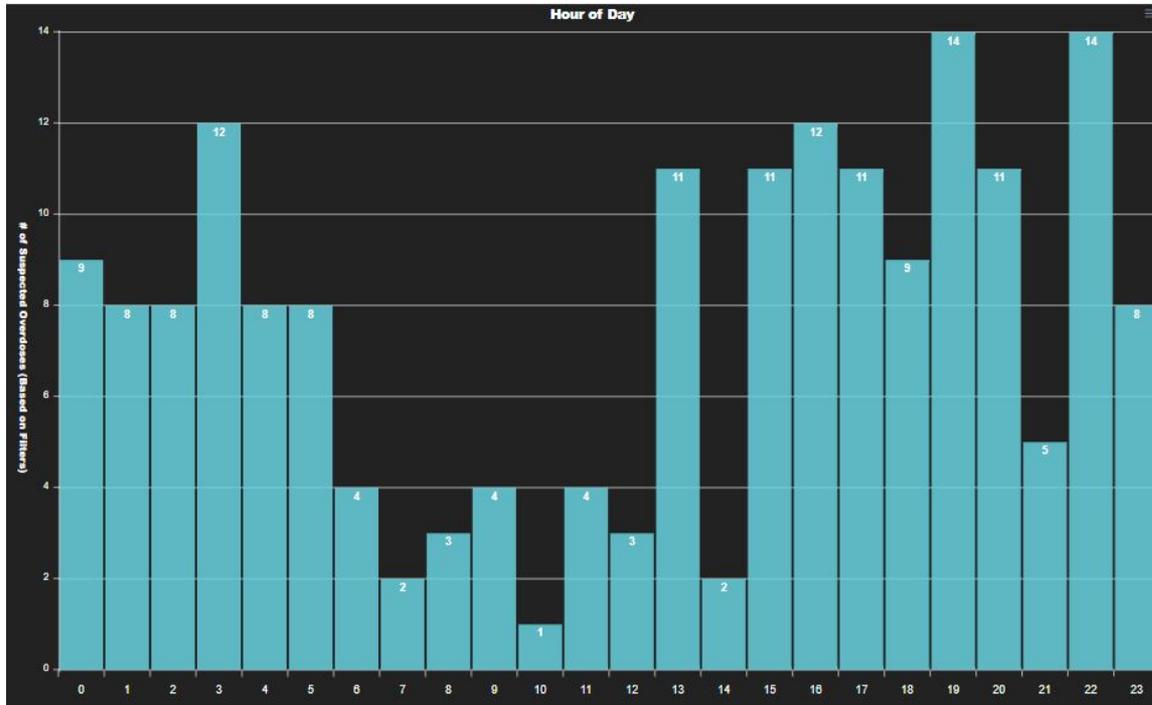
Suspected Overdoses by Month



Overdoses by Day of the Week



Overdoses by Hour of the Day

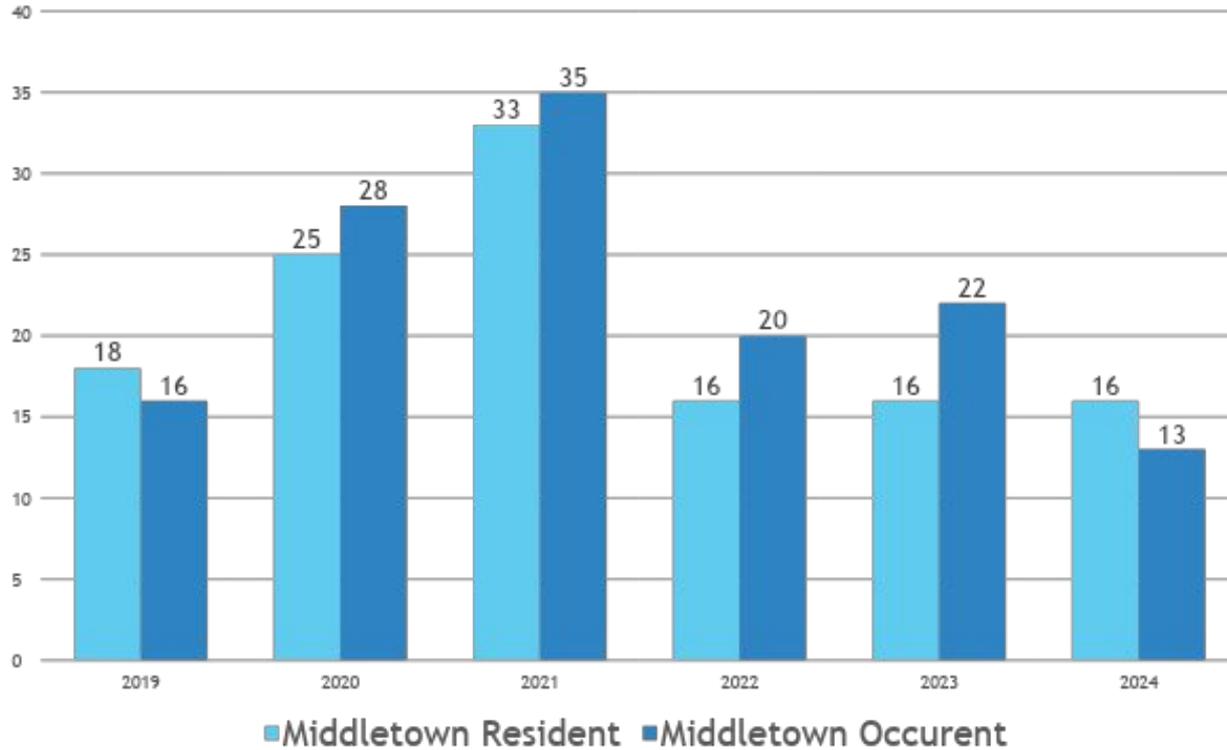


Middletown Unintentional Overdose Deaths

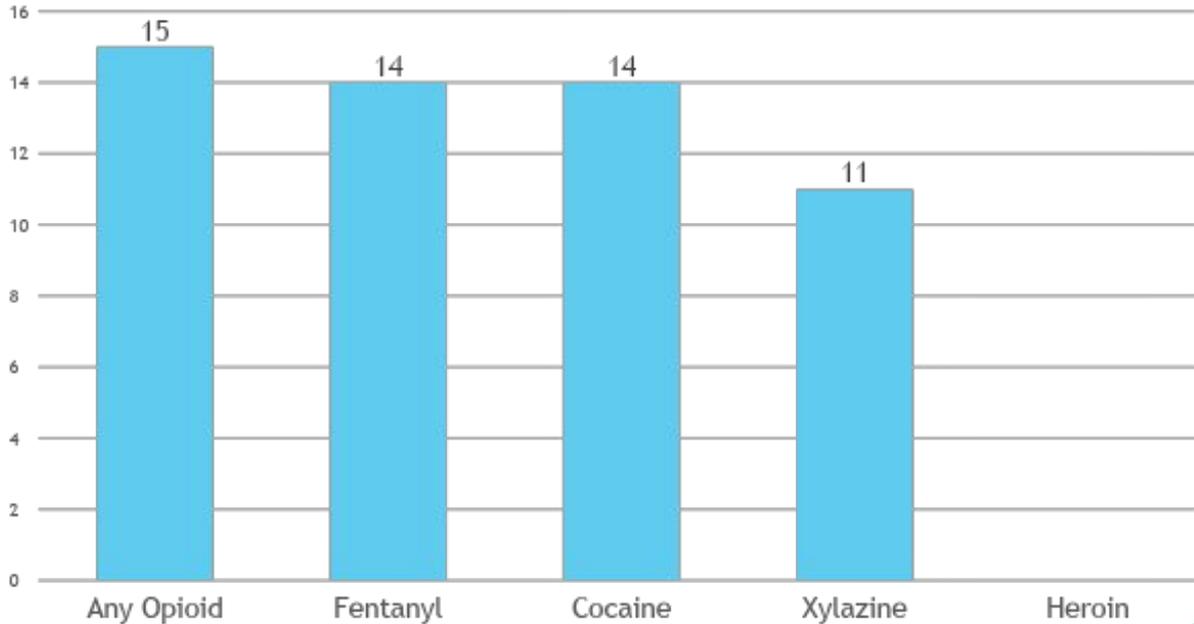
2019 - 2024
(as of 11-12-24)

Source: Office of the CT Chief Medical
Examiner

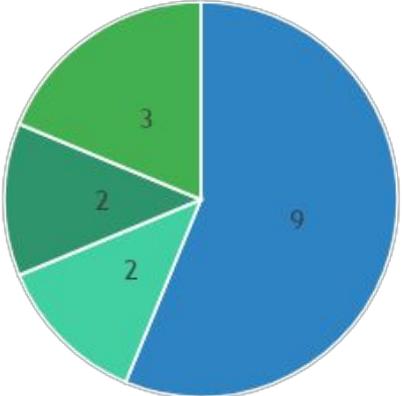
Unintentional Overdose Deaths



2024 Unintentional Fatal Overdoses 16 Middletown Residents Cause of Death (by substance)

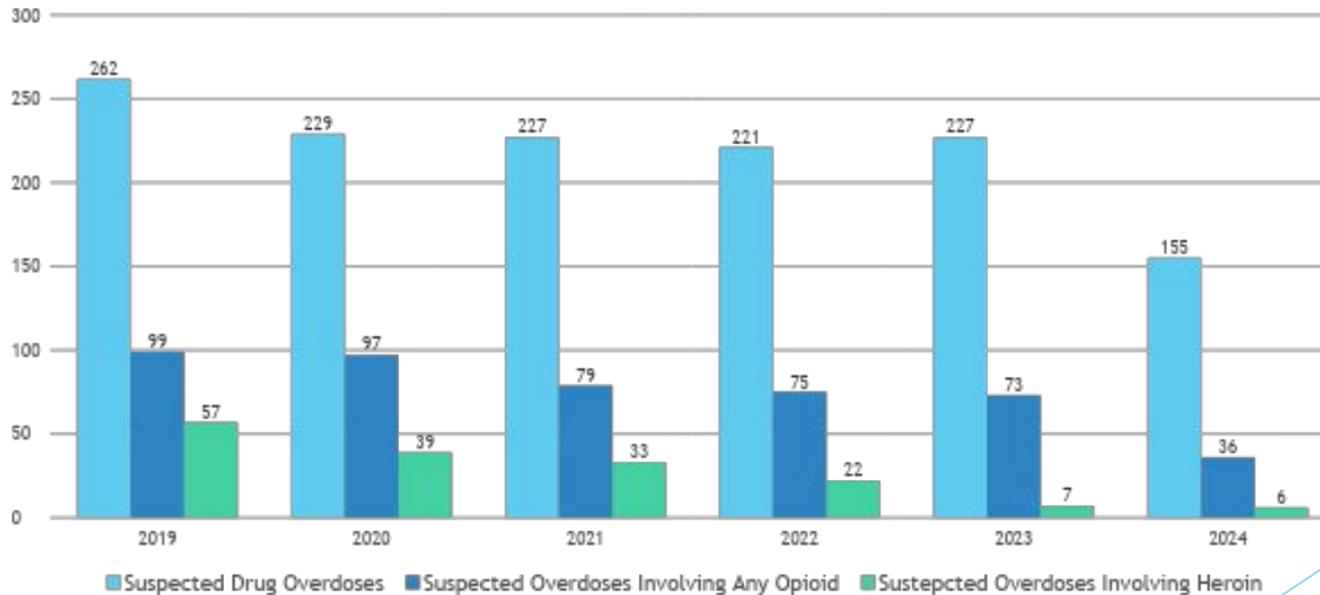


2024 Unintentional Fatal Overdoses 16 Middletown Residents Location of Death



■ Location of Death ■ Decedent's Home ■ Hospital ■ Other home ■ Motel/Hotel

Middletown Non-fatal drug overdoses 2019-2024



Source: EpiCenter 4.0.3

Alerts

Public Health Alert: Emerging and Reemerging Illicit Street Drugs Associated with Fatal Overdoses

- **Alert Date:** 1.2.25
- **From:** CT Department of Public Health (DPH)
- **Details:** This overdose alert was generated by data from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.
 - Between January 1, 2023 - mid-October 2024, *three* highly potent illicit substances were involved in a substantial number of fatal overdoses and are on the rise.
 - This is a cause for concern in the public health and addiction services communities.
 - The substances are carfentanil, designer benzodiazepines, primarily bromazolam, and nitazenes, which are synthetic opioids just as potent or more potent than fentanyl.

Many thanks to Russ Melmed for sharing this information!

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Manisha Juthani, MD
Commissioner

Neil Lamont
Governor
Susan Bysiewicz
Lt. Governor

Date: 01/02/2025
To: Connecticut Local Health Departments and Districts
From: Connecticut Department of Public Health

Public Health Alert: Emerging and Reemerging Illicit Street Drugs Associated with Fatal Overdoses

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing the following information for situational awareness.

This overdose alert was generated by data from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Between January 1, 2023 and mid-October 2024, *three* highly potent illicit substances were involved in a substantial number of fatal overdoses and are on the rise. This is a cause for concern in the public health and addiction services communities. The substances are carfentanil, designer benzodiazepines, primarily bromazolam, and nitazenes, which are synthetic opioids just as potent or more potent than fentanyl.

Emerging Substances Involved Fatalities by Month, Jan. 2023 to Sep. 2024, (N=84)

Month	Bromazolam	Carfentanil	Nitazenes
Jan 2023	0	0	0
Feb 2023	0	0	0
Mar 2023	0	0	0
Apr 2023	0	0	0
May 2023	0	0	0
Jun 2023	0	0	0
Jul 2023	0	0	0
Aug 2023	0	0	0
Sep 2023	0	0	0
Oct 2023	0	0	0
Nov 2023	0	0	0
Dec 2023	0	0	0
Jan 2024	0	0	0
Feb 2024	0	0	0
Mar 2024	0	0	0
Apr 2024	0	0	0
May 2024	0	0	0
Jun 2024	0	0	0
Jul 2024	0	0	0
Aug 2024	0	0	0
Sep 2024	100	0	0

The line graph demonstrates the volume of drug overdose fatalities that occurred between January 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024, that involved these emerging dangerous substances. The blue line graph depicts the trends over time of bromazolam-involved deaths; the orange line graph depicts the trends of deaths by carfentanil; and the green line graph depicts the trends of overdose death involving nitazenes. The graph shows that prior to March 1, 2023, there were zero (0) cases involving any of these three drugs. Since March 2023, there has been a rising number of bromazolam-involved fatal overdoses with spikes in October (36) and December 2023; January 2024 (26); and March 2024 (26). Carfentanil and nitazenes, although less common than bromazolam-involved deaths, are still of great concern because they are high potency (see Table below).



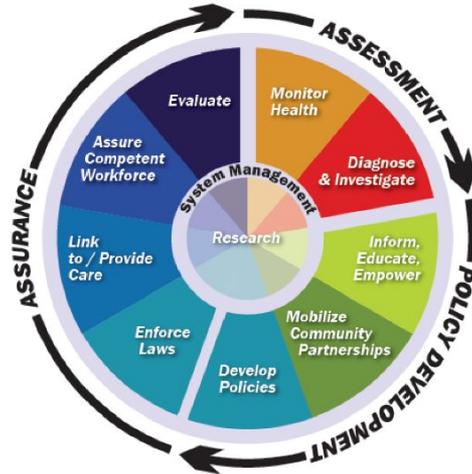


Resource

CT Association of Directors of Health Opioid Toolkit

Essential Measures

Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Toolkit for Connecticut



[CT Opioid Toolkit](#)



Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Middletown Opioids
Settlement Needs Survey
November 2024



Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Ad Hoc Committee

- Survey intention: to ensure community voice / those with lived experience are included in guiding the allocation of local opioids settlement funds by providing personal input.
- Ad Hoc Committee members developed, distributed and analyzed the survey.

Ad Hoc Committee Members:

- Rev. Robyn Anderson, MDiv., LMFT, LPC, LADC, Executive Director, Ministerial Health Fellowship
- Carolyn Camire Ruutel, LCSW, Clinical Program Manager, Middletown Adult Outpatient, Rushford / Hartford Healthcare
- Joanne Comstock, Psy.D., AADC, Supervising Psychologist, Admissions, Hospital Liaison, Housing Services, River Valley Services, DMHAS
- Livia Cox, Director, Middletown Harm Reduction Initiative (MHRI)
- Kevin Elak, MPH, REHS, CP-FS, Director of Health, City of Middletown Department of Health
- Daniela Giordano, LMSW, Regional Network Manager, Eastern CT, Carelon Behavioral Health
- Kathryn Glendon, MPH, CHES, CPS, CPC, Rushford Prevention Manager, Rushford / Hartford Healthcare
- Sarah Messier-Smith, LCSW, LADC, Opioid Settlement Fund Administrator, DMHAS-OOC
- Catherine Rees, MPH, Director, Community Health Improvement, Middlesex Health
- Weldon Russell, Program Coordinator, Recovery Employment Program & Coordinator of the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council (MCSAAC), Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce

Implementation

- Survey Window: 10.15.24 - 11.14.24.
- Shared with the Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force distribution list.
- Flier in English & Spanish.
- Anonymous surveys provided in English & Spanish (12 questions)
- Link / QR code to online survey; paper surveys.
- Assistance from Recovery Coaches (31 collected by Ministerial Health Fellowship How Can We Help? Recovery Coaches!).
- 39 responses.



GREATER MIDDLETOWN OPIOIDS TASK FORCE



Your Voice Matters!

Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey

For individuals who have experience with opioids - either those who use or have used opioids or know someone who uses opioids - please share your thoughts!

Your feedback will help guide the use of opioids settlement funds received by Middletown.

Please click the below link or scan QR code to complete the survey
<https://tinyurl.com/5422daat>



Thank you for your participation!

For paper surveys, please contact Catherine Rees at 860-358-3034 or catherine.rees@midhosp.org



GREATER MIDDLETOWN OPIOIDS TASK FORCE



¡Tu voz importa!

Encuesta sobre las necesidades de liquidación de opioides en Middletown

Para personas que tienen experiencia con opioides - ya sea aquellos que usan o han usado opioides o saben alguien que usa opioides - ¡comparta su opinión!

Sus comentarios ayudarán a guiar el uso de los fondos del acuerdo sobre opioides recibidos por Middletown.

Haga clic en el enlace a continuación o escanee el código QR para completar la encuesta
<https://tinyurl.com/5422daat>



¡Gracias por tu participación!

Para encuestas impresas, comuníquese con Catherine Rees al 860-358-3034 o catherine.rees@midhosp.org



Survey Introduction

Middletown has received settlement funds to address the opioids epidemic locally. We would like to have a better understanding about the Middletown community's needs and barriers to accessing supportive services.

We are reaching out to individuals who have experience with opioids - either those who use or have used opioids or know someone who uses opioids - to ask for your thoughts and opinions. Your voice matters!

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. The Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force would like to hear your opinions about topics related to opioids use. Your responses will be anonymous and only reported as a whole.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. If you don't want to respond to a question, you don't have to, you may skip that question.

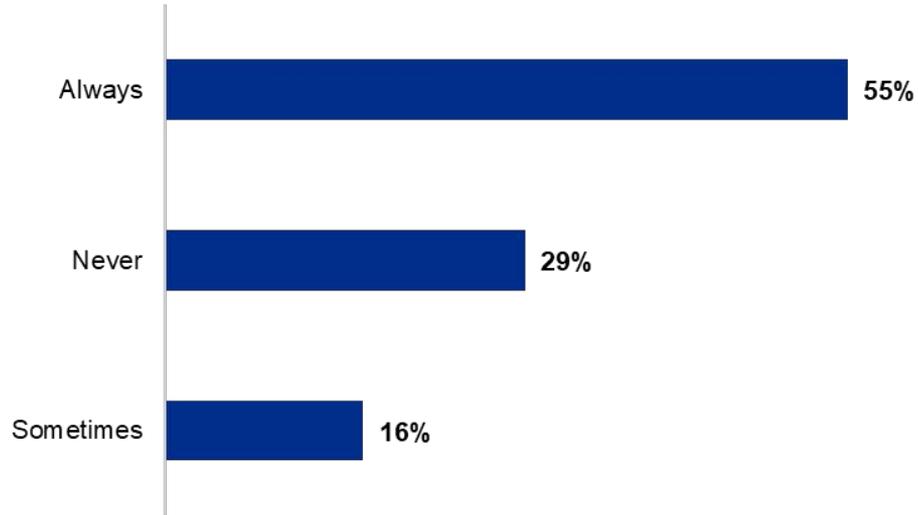
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!



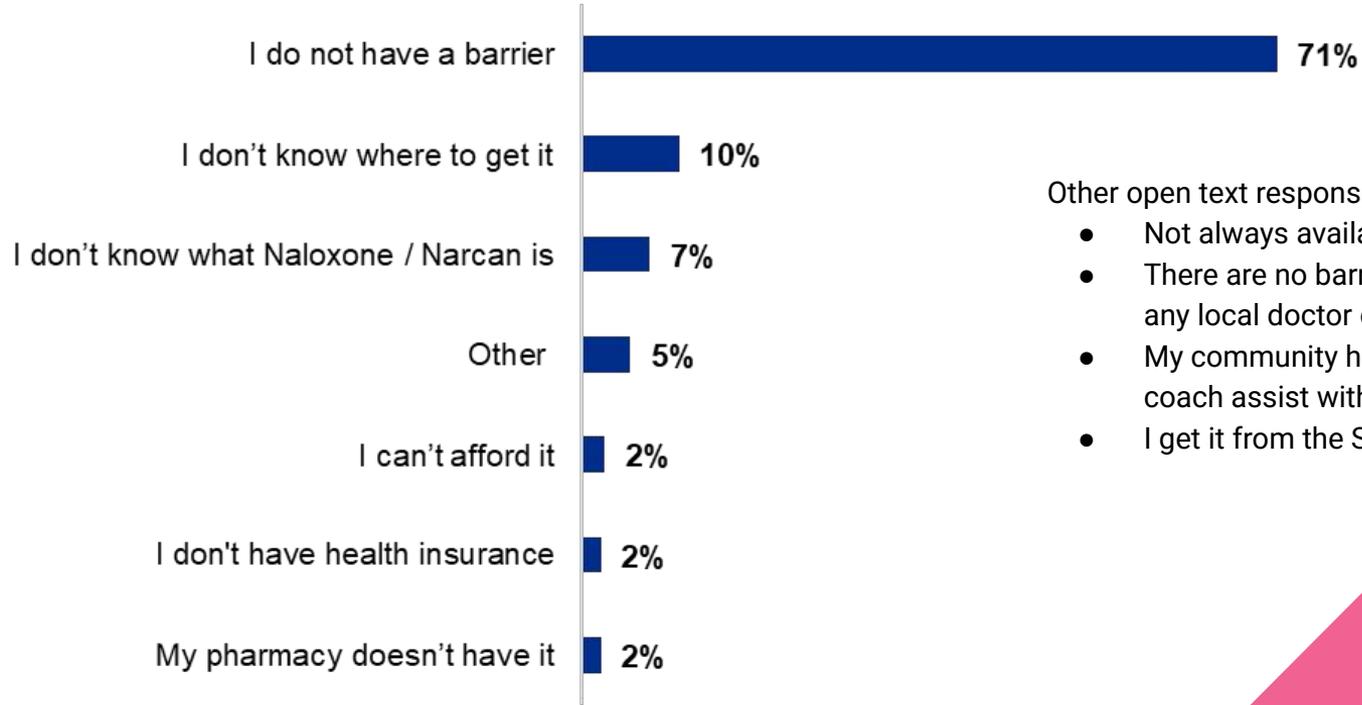
Q1: Do you live, work, attend school or receive services in Middletown?



Q2: Are you able to get a Naloxone / Narcan kit when you want it?



Q3: What are the barriers for getting Naloxone / Narcan? (check all that apply)

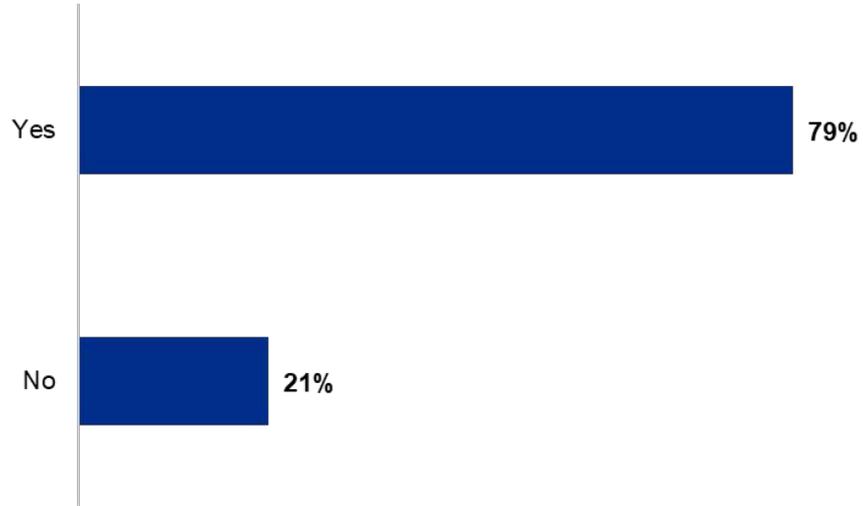


Other open text responses:

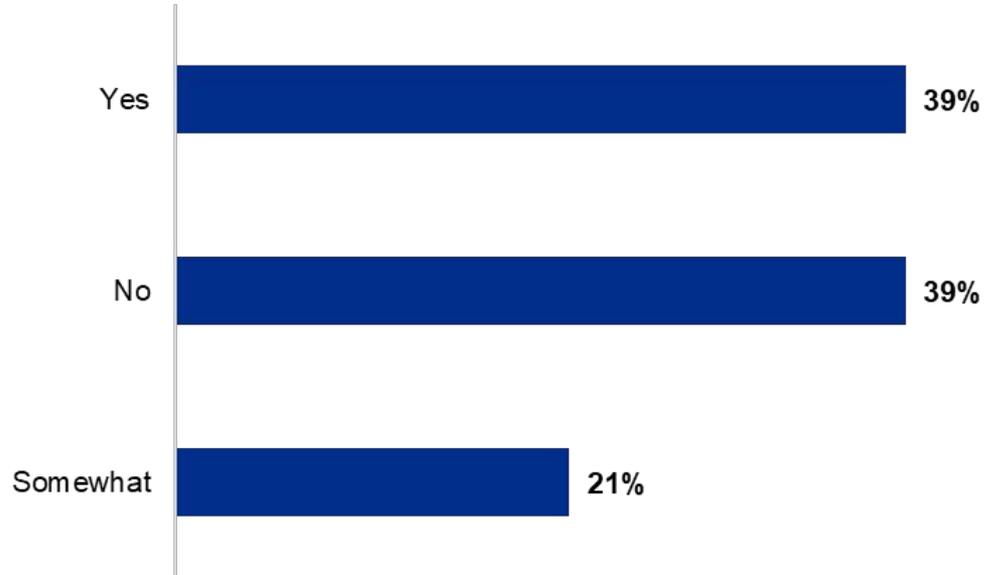
- Not always available.
- There are no barriers, it can be acquired at any local doctor office.
- My community health worker and recovery coach assist with them.
- I get it from the Soup Kitchen.



Q4: Do you know how to use Naloxone / Narcan?



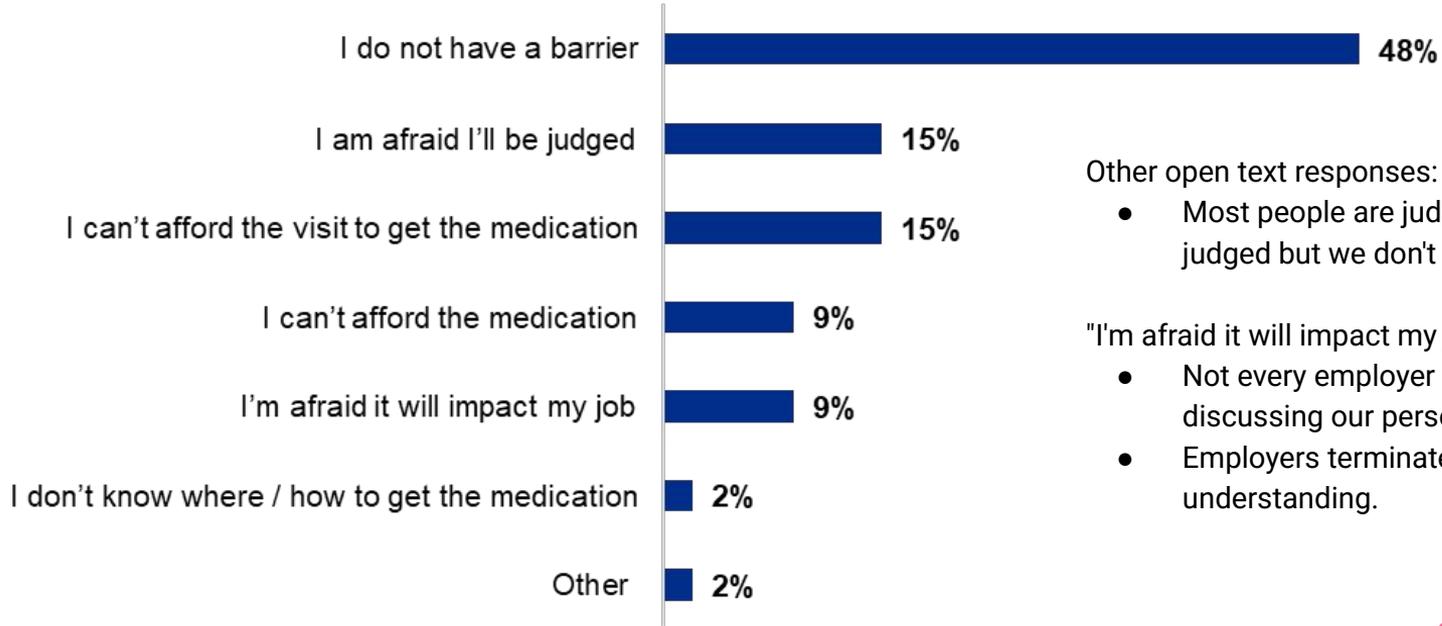
Q5: Do you feel there is a lack of connection to care, services, or treatment for opioid use in Middletown (for example, intensive outpatient services, therapy, residential services, etc.)



Q6: What prevents individuals using opioids from getting care, services, or treatment?

Most Common Themes (in rank order of % of total responses)	Other Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Internal motivation - 20%● Access to care (including not enough beds; long wait times) - 13%● Stigma - 13%● Uninsured / Cost - 11%● Homelessness - 7%● Unmet basic needs (including income; transportation) - 7%● Lack of empathy / Not taken seriously that we need help - 7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Shame / Guilt● Afraid of being reported● Loneliness / Lack of healthy socialization

Q7: Have you experienced barriers for accessing medications for opioid use (for example, methadone, Suboxone, buprenorphine)? If so, what are they? (check all that apply)



Other open text responses:

- Most people are judged and they shouldn't be judged but we don't live in a just world at all.

"I'm afraid it will impact my job" open text responses:

- Not every employer is comfortable with discussing our personal issues.
- Employers terminate people due to lack of understanding.

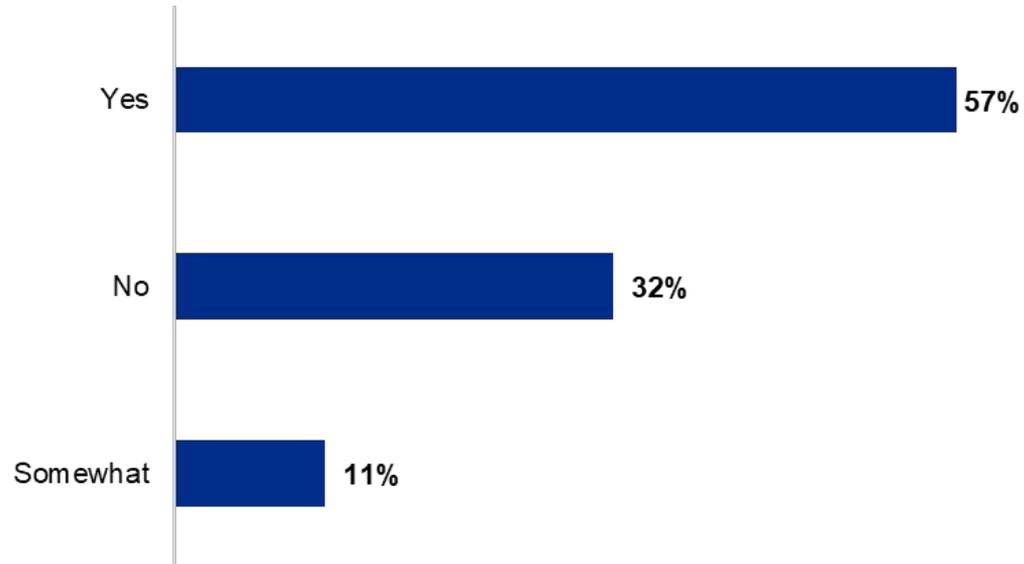


Q8: If you have experienced barriers for accessing medications for opioid use, what would make things easier?

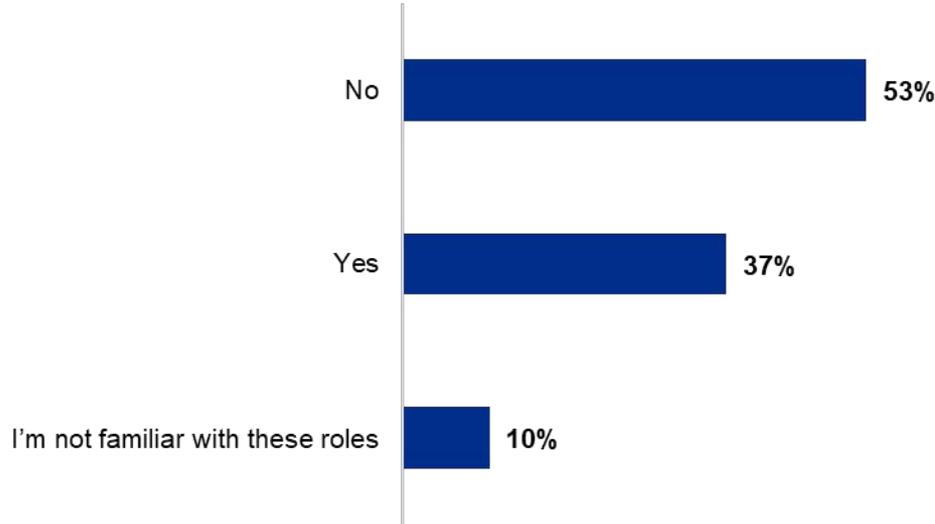
Access / Resource Availability and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Free harm reduction.● Getting it for free.● Availability of medications, including pain medication.● Access to appointments.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Have people care.● Confidentiality / Privacy.● Getting to know the individuals using drugs and the issues leading to drug use.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Communication.



Q9: Are there enough opportunities to get harm reduction supplies in Middletown (for example, Naloxone / Narcan, sterile needles, Fentanyl test strips, safer use kits, wound care products, etc.)



Q10: Are there enough trained community-based Navigators, Peer Recovery Specialists, Community Health Workers who can help connect individuals using opioids to resources in Middletown?



If you checked "No" to the above question, please explain:

Access / Resource Availability and Awareness:

- Van hours are limited and Reach Navigators cut down on length of service.
- There are NO resources.
- Limited free resources.
- Unaware of a peer recovery program, if there is one it isn't well advertised but I believe it would be very beneficial.
- More community navigators are needed.

Training:

- Many service providers are not trained properly or don't know of the exact needs of clients.
- They don't take the time to understand what people are going through and why it has happened to them.

Collaboration:

- They need more staff and a more cohesive work with the methadone and suboxone providers versus siloed services.

Q11: What resources are missing or lacking for individuals who use opioids in Middletown?

Access / Resource Availability and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● "Good" treatment.● Testing for accountability and a gauge on treatment levels.● Everything a person dealing with substance misuse needs.● Awareness of the community of where free products are available.● Affordable housing, free transportation for non-medical needs (to access other services, parks, social activities, shopping), peer support program, free safe recreation center for day and evening hours.● Visible care and support; where are the lawn signs or storefront flyers in support of harm reduction around here?● Places to hold support meetings.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Trainings!!!!● Training for how to use Narcan.● Caring & understanding of the what, where and why's of their mental and physical issues.



Q12: Do you have any additional suggestions on how the Middletown opioid settlement funds could be used to make a difference?

Access / Resource Availability and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More recovery coaches.• Outreach and support to individuals hanging out on Main Street.• Create person centered holistic programs.• Funding towards case management and social work and housing navigators.• Advertising existing resources.• Provide bus passes to social service agencies to distribute in support of wellness needs not covered by NEMT.• Educational programs/distribution of information to inform care providers of resources for access to harm reduction products at no cost or covered by insurance with no copay for those insured.• Help individuals who used opiates and are out of work pay bills.• Funding to methadone clinics and suboxone for more frequent testing to determine effectiveness of treatment vs. harm reduction model.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More trainings for providers on how to work collaboratively with all providers to fully serve the client.• More public awareness trainings.• Learn individuality. Each patient is different, one program doesn't fit all.• Pay people to do the training.• More education & classes for all doctors & patients for mental and physical issues.



Other Considerations

- Using the results of the Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey to guide the GMOTF areas of focus / goals.
- Sharing the Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey and results with other task forces / collaborations for use in their local areas.



Questions? Contact Information For Task Force Co-Chairs

Kevin Elak, MPH, REHS, CP-FS

Director of Health

Registrar of Vital Statistics

City of Middletown

Department of Health

p. (860) 638-4972

email. Kevin.Elak@middletownct.gov

Rev. Robyn Anderson

Executive Director

Ministerial Health Fellowship

p. (860) 817-3330

email. revrmanderson@gmail.com



Updates

Committee / Workgroup Updates

Harm Reduction / Intervention Workgroup	Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Ad Hoc Committee	Recovery Coach / Peer Support Workgroup
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No December meeting due to the holidays• Recovery Friendly Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant Advisory Committee guidelines developed• Scoring rubric finalized• Next steps: distributing grant applications to committee members, followed by a joint meeting to determine an average score per proposal, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First meeting planned
<p>Interested in joining? Email Catherine Rees catherine.rees@midhosp.org</p>	<p>Interested in joining? Email Catherine Rees catherine.rees@midhosp.org</p>	<p>Interested in joining? Email Rev. Anderson revrmanderson@gmail.com</p>





Underway & Standing Agenda Items

Underway, Considerations & Standing Agenda Items

Planned / Underway	Future Considerations	Standing Agenda Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Grant proposal review for Middletown Opioids Settlement funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recovery Friendly CommunityDefinition of Task Force geographic areaCLEAR-type concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC) Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">OSAC WebsiteSeptember 9, 2024 AgendaOSAC BylawsLegislative / Policy Updates





Member Announcements

Member Announcements

The Middletown Health Department is offering the American Lung Association's 8 session Smoking Cessation Group Program conveniently held at the Middlesex YMCA beginning Tuesday, January 21, 2025 from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm.

[Tobacco Cessation Program | Middletown, CT](#)

There is no cost for the program. Participants must be 18 years or older and must attend all 8 sessions over the 7-week period.

Anyone who is interested may RSVP to SmokeFree@middletownct.gov or call Daisy Hernandez at 860-638-4962.



American Lung Association.
Freedom From Smoking™



Public Health

You can quit smoking. We can help.

Join the American Lung Association's eight-week quit smoking program, conveniently held at the Middlesex YMCA hosted by the Middletown Health Department.

Hundreds of thousands of people have become smokefree through a Freedom From Smoking® Group Clinic which offers a structured, systematic approach to quitting smoking.

Overseen by a certified facilitator, you will learn:

- How to know if you're really ready to quit
- Medications that can increase your success
- Lifestyle changes to make quitting easier
- How to prepare for your quit day
- Coping strategies for managing stress & avoiding weight gain
- How to stay smokefree for good

Freedom From Smoking Group Quit Program
Tuesdays at 4:00 - 5:30 pm.

Call (860) 638-4962 or email SmokeFree@middletownct.gov to RSVP. Our first session starts on Tuesday, January 21, 2025 from 4 to 5:30 pm.

Visit Lung.org/ffs for more information about the program or our online Freedom From Smoking® Plus if a Group Clinic isn't right for your quit.



1-800-LUNGUSA | Lung.org/ffs



American Lung Association.
Freedom From Smoking™

Session Dates and Times

Session Name	Date	Time
Session 1: Thinking About Quitting	01/21/2025	4:00 pm
Session 2: On the Road to Freedom	01/28/2025	4:00 pm
Session 3: Wanting to Quit	02/04/2025	4:00 pm
Session 4: Quit Day	02/11/2025	4:00 pm
Session 5: Winning Strategies	02/13/2025	4:00 pm
Session 6: The New You	02/18/2025	4:00 pm
Session 7: Staying Off	02/25/2025	4:00 pm
Session 8: Celebration	03/04/2025	4:00 pm

Location: Middlesex YMCA

Facilitator: Daisy Hernandez & Roseann Sillasen

Contact information: (860)638-4962 or SmokeFree@middletownct.gov

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1-800-LUNGUSA | Lung.org/ffs



Any Member Announcements?



Task Force Member Spotlight



Please contact Catherine Rees at catherine.rees@midhosp.org
if you would like to give a member spotlight



Annual Dates

Annual Dates

- Overdose Awareness Day - August 31, 2024
- Substance Use Prevention Month - October
- National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day - October 26, 2024
- SAMSHA's Prevention Day - February 3, 2025
- National Prevention Week - May 11-17, 2025

Work Status / Tracking

Completed Work

Completed 2025

- Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey Analysis & Presentation (December 2025)



Completed Work

Completed 2024

- Formation of Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Ad Hoc Committee (February 2024)
- Task Force Logo developed (March 2024)
- Development of Narcan How To educational piece in English and Spanish (August 2024)
- Participation in The Governor's Prevention Partnership Overdose Awareness Day Press Conference (8.28.24)
- Leave Behind Kits Launch (September 2024)
- Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey - centering voices with lived experience to identify needs to guide distribution of Middletown opioids settlement funds (October 2024)
- Grants application process for Middletown opioids settlement funds (December 2024)
- Pending Completion:
 - Formation of Recovery Support / Peer Support Workgroup



Completed Work

Completed 2022	Completed 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Formation of Task Force (January 2022)● Member Prioritization Survey (April 2022)● Formation of 4 Workgroups (Access to Treatment; Education & Prevention; Intervention / Harm Reduction; Resource Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Flier for Narcan Leave Behind Kits (April 2023)● Narcan Leave Behind Kits partnership with South Fire District, Middletown (April 2023)● Xylazine Informational piece (May 2023)● Harm Reduction Training by Mark Jenkins, Executive Director, CT Harm Reduction Coalition at Cross Street A.M.E. Zion Church (8.16.23)● Harm Reduction RV - Village Expanded Recovery Vehicle (VERV) (Launched 9.6.23; Ribbon Cutting 10.25.23)● Resource Guide (9.30.23)



Next Meeting

- Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 12pm, Zoom

