



Office of the Mayor

City of Seattle

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Executive Order 2023-04: Addressing the Opioid and Synthetic Drug Crisis in Seattle

An Executive Order directing City departments to build, invest, and expand the City's public health infrastructure in partnership with other stakeholders to further combat the opioid and synthetic drug crisis.

WHEREAS, opioid use disorder is a leading cause of preventable death in the United States and has caused significant mortality and morbidity in the City of Seattle and King County; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health conditions and economic stressors, which are common risk factors for unsafe opioid use; and

WHEREAS, substance use disorders affect brain function and behaviors that cause negative outcomes for individuals, their social networks and the community; and

WHEREAS, opioids and synthetic drugs, most notably fentanyl and methamphetamine, are highly addictive, cheap, ubiquitous, and deadly; and

WHEREAS, fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid, up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100x stronger than morphine, that can quickly cause respiratory depression and is often mixed with substances to increase euphoric effects; and

WHEREAS, fentanyl can be mixed with many types of substances and is especially dangerous when the person using drugs does not realize that fentanyl may be present as an additive; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites the prevalence of illicitly manufactured fentanyl, also known as non-pharmaceutical fentanyl, including fentanyl analogs, as contributing to the rise in overdose deaths nationwide; and

WHEREAS, from April 2020 to April 2021, 100,306 people died from opioid overdoses in the United States, with two-thirds of those deaths attributed to fentanyl; and

WHEREAS, on April 11, 2023, the Biden Administration designated a fentanyl-laced drug cocktail an "emerging threat" to public safety, the first time in American history that any federal administration has made this declaration and committed to "cracking down on the production, sales and trafficking of illicit fentanyl to help save lives, protect public health, and improve the public safety of our communities;" and

WHEREAS, there were 589 overdose deaths in Seattle in 2022, with the majority attributed to fentanyl and methamphetamines, compared to 342 in 2021, an increase of 72%; and

WHEREAS, in King County, there were 712 fentanyl-involved overdose deaths in 2022, compared to 385 such deaths in 2021, an 85% increase. Methamphetamine-involved deaths increased from 365 in 2021 to 528 in 2022, a 45% increase; and

WHEREAS, in both 2021 and 2022, overdose was the leading cause of unintentional fatal injury in King County; and

WHEREAS, the City will continue to build on its investments delivering care to the most vulnerable and those suffering from substance use disorders. This includes, but is not limited to, LEAD, REACH, and the Regional Homelessness Authority; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle will continue its partnership with local, regional, and federal stakeholders to address the public safety and public health impacts opioids and synthetic drug use has on our communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, hereby order the following actions to comprehensively address these concerns, to reduce levels of addiction in Seattle and mitigate the harm that it causes to our community, to preserve life, and to disrupt the sale and use of drugs in public places:

- A.** The Seattle Fire Department will launch a pilot expansion of its Health One program to include an overdose response unit dedicated to quickly engaging overdose survivors to increase acceptance of services or referrals for support, providing warm handoffs for opioid treatment through same-day or next-day follow ups to non-transported overdose patients, in coordination with DCHS and its network of community providers.
- B.** In cooperation with King County, the Washington Health Care Authority, Washington State University, Plymouth Housing, the King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), and DCHS's existing contingency management program, the City will launch a new non-clinic based contingency management pilot program that will provide incentives to those enrolling and staying in a substance treatment program to reduce their consumption of synthetic opioids, stimulants, and alcohol. The City may also supplement existing programs. This evidence-based approach has been cited as a highly effective treatment for substance abuse disorders.
- C.** The City will explore funding for and site additional naloxone access locations in areas in the City where overdose rates are highest.
- D.** The City will work to expand access to buprenorphine and methadone in high overdose areas.
- E.** The City will site, explore funding for, and work with the University of Washington Addictions, Drug and Alcohol Institute (UW ADAl), and County partners to establish a post overdose diversion facility where EMS can bring people after non-fatal overdoses to recover, get stabilized on medications, and access resources.

- F. The City will advocate for the legalization of fentanyl testing strips and drug checking services to make this harm reduction strategy more widely available for those struggling with substance abuse disorders.
- G. The City's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) will partner with DCHS and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) around trainings on opioid and synthetic drug use and substance abuse disorders. The City will also offer stipends to Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA's) and other nonprofit organizations who organize and host education programs to increase awareness among young people and their parents and guardians around the risks of opioids and synthetic drugs.
- H. The City will convene a workgroup to map out the various local, county and state programs and services available to treat and respond to the opioid and synthetic drug crisis. This time-limited workgroup will be tasked with identifying gaps in our current systems and making recommendations on how to better coordinate a treatment-first approach to reducing substance abuse disorders and overdose rates. The workgroup will also assess ongoing investments and programs to determine what is working well and how existing investments could be expanded to serve more people. The City would consider the recommendations of the workgroup in any decisions it makes for use of Opioid Settlement funds.
- I. Recognizing the harm caused by illegal opioids and synthetic drugs, the Seattle Police Department will prioritize enforcing sales and distribution related crimes to the fullest extent permissible. The City will convene a task force and invite the Seattle City Attorney's Office, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and federal, and state partners, including the United States Attorney for the Western District of Washington, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Homeland Security, to collaborate on and develop innovative approaches to target dealers and traffickers of illegal drugs.
- J. Finally, in an effort to fully leverage all available resources to support the rebuilding of a healthy Seattle community, the City will seek to pursue additional upcoming Federal investments announced by the Biden Administration on April 11, 2023 in order to expand the prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services critical to our region's health.

This Executive Order will be in effect until rescinded or modified by the Mayor.

Any questions regarding this Executive Order should be directed to Dan Eder, Director of Policy, at Dan.Eder@seattle.gov, Office of the Mayor.

Dated this 17th day of April, 2023.



Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor of Seattle