

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON THE DECISIVE YEARS IN AMERICA'S OVERDOSE CRISIS

2021 - 2024

THE WHITE HOUSE  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY



## Background

Over the past decade, the Nation has faced critical challenges in its fight against the overdose crisis. The environment of drug production, trafficking, and use has significantly transformed into the most complex and dynamic in human history, and drug overdose deaths have been on a steady climb, often exponentially, with year-over-year increases of more than [30 percent through 2021](#), devastating communities and leaving families facing empty seats at their dinner tables each night. Drug-involved mortality was increasing faster than any other type of injury-related death in the United States during that time, with [80 percent](#) of those deaths due to the potent and deadly synthetic opioids, such as illicitly-produced fentanyl, that were being manufactured outside the United States and brought into the country through a variety of means.

Since day one of his Administration, President Biden recognized the challenges associated with the Overdose Crisis and set forth a bold set of drug policy priorities that encompassed efforts to comprehensively address the myriad of issues driving the epidemic. As the first physician to serve as the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, I knew first hand that saving American lives from overdose had to be our primary mission. The tragic toll the drug overdose crisis is having on Americans, their families, and their communities demanded nothing less. The Administration's actions have focused both on improving public safety and public health, resulting in a historic reduction in overdose deaths – nearly 17 percent and the largest on record – expanded access to treatment, by making it more available, more mainstream, and less stigmatizing, and more effective interdiction of illicit drugs, precursor chemicals, and pill pressing equipment at our borders.

The past decade has witnessed a strategic transition across the continuum of illicit drug production, trafficking, sale, and use, the likes of which has not been experienced in human history. The era of large volume, plant-based drugs like heroin and cocaine has not ended, but the era of small volume, high-potency, synthetic lethal drugs has clearly begun. Today, the synthetic opioid production and supply chain has reached a high potential as a global business enterprise, exploiting the 21st century global economic backbone to obtain the raw materials and machinery to produce illicit drugs; using physically dislocated payments to move profits and operating capital across borders; conducting internet and social media-based sales of raw

materials and finished drugs using both fiat and cryptocurrency; and physically moving chemical precursors and their finished drugs around the world.

Within the United States, the ability for an American of any age to find illicit drugs has become as simple as opening a social media app on your phone or computer, and the variety of drugs available from the global marketplace is larger than ever. The relatively limited product line of fentanyl-related substances that dominated the illicit market just a few years ago has now exploded to include non-fentanyl synthetic opioids like the nitazene class of drugs, non-opioid analgesics such as xylazine, and a wide array of synthetic stimulants with high abuse potential. In some cases, these drugs are used alone, but in many they are adulterated into illicit fentanyl or another principal drug. Polydrug use has become the norm as illicit drug users show an increased willingness to combine drugs from different classes during a single use, complicating the effectiveness of opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone. Routes of administration have changed as well, with intravenous drug use taking a back seat in favor of smoking, inhalation, or pill-taking. Moreover, the rapid increase in the availability of counterfeit pills has brought drug traffickers the widest possible customer base, and the American people the greatest ever threat of inadvertent drug poisoning, particularly for unwitting consumers.

The *2022 National Drug Control Strategy* called for bold, targeted, and consequential actions to bend the curve on overdose deaths in the immediate term, and reduce drug use and its damaging consequences over the long term. The Strategy primarily addressed the two key drivers of the overdose crisis: untreated addiction, and the profitable business of illicit drug production and trafficking. In releasing his Strategy, President Biden stated, “through these [actions], we strive to usher in a new era of drug policy centered on individuals and communities.”

Two years later, encouraging signs have emerged indicating that the Administration’s efforts were on the right track. The most recent [provisional data](#) for the 12-months ending July 2024 show nearly a 17 percent reduction in overdose deaths. This is the largest decline in United States history. This remarkable outcome was no accident. Rather, it was the culmination of a coherent and deliberate strategy, composed of a series of tangible and meaningful actions, all focused on saving American lives by addressing untreated addiction and disrupting the profitable

business of illicit drug production and trafficking on a global scale. Other indicators showing that these efforts are working include a 48 percent increase in the percentage of Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) that offer some type of drug safety checking support service, including, but not limited to Fentanyl Test Strips, and a 40 percent increase in the number of peer-led recovery community organizations. Both goals have exceeded their 25 percent projected increase.

In subsequent years, we have doubled down on the successful efforts laid out in the 2022 Strategy, and better refined its approach on addressing the two key drivers of the overdose crisis. The Administration recognizes that substance use disorder is a disease that must be treated and that the illicit drug supply chain is a global business that must be disrupted. The Administration has been working tirelessly to relieve the pressure of an inexorable flow of drugs into our communities so the Administration's historic investments in public health interventions, [\\$167.2 billion in total drug control funding](#), could take hold in a sustainable way.

This approach is working. Below, we lay out specific strategic actions that we believe were critical to achieving this historic decline in drug-involved mortality, as well as some areas in which we need to sustain progress.



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## Addressing Untreated Addiction

### *Expanded Access to Evidence-Based Approaches to Urgently Save Lives*

With an American dying every five minutes around the clock, saving lives in the near-term required making opioid overdose reversal medications, such as naloxone, much more widely accessible and affordable. Since 2023, the Administration has made opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone available over-the-counter, saving countless lives. Since that approval, the price of two-dose nasal naloxone has dropped by 22 percent since the Administration granted non-prescription over the counter status. [More recent data](#) demonstrate that layperson-administered naloxone has drastically increased since it became available over-the-counter in September 2023. Additionally, this is supported by [recent modeling data](#) that a supply-based approach could reduce overdose deaths by about 6.3 percent, and a demand-based approach could achieve an 8.8 percent reduction.

The Administration's embrace of naloxone as a fatal overdose prevention measure has been a critical element in reducing overdose deaths. This was principally done by directing additional funding to this service, developing the resources and technical assistance state and local officials needed to effectively disperse overdose prevention resources, and framing messages that reduced the stigmatization of overdose and the use of naloxone. The Administration invested a [historic level of funding](#) in the State Opioid Response and Tribal Opioid Response (SOR and TOR) programs, which delivered nearly ten million kits of opioid overdose reversal medications to those who needed them most.

The Administration complemented its effort to [expand the public availability](#) of this lifesaving medicine by making it easier for established organizations focused on addressing at-risk populations to obtain naloxone directly from manufacturers and distributors. It supported states through [enhanced technical assistance, policy academies, and convenings](#) to ensure existing SOR funds were used to saturate hard-hit communities with naloxone, and delivered funds directly to states to purchase naloxone. Additionally, allowing fentanyl and xylazine tests strips to be purchased with state grant funds has led to increased access. Currently there are 46 states that have legalized fentanyl and/or xylazine test strips and 43 that allow for free distribution of the drug checking equipment.

In 2024, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Domestic Policy Council launched the [\*White House Challenge to Save Lives from Overdose\*](#), a nationwide call-to-action to stakeholders across all sectors to increase access to life-saving opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone and training on their use. The Challenge was an overwhelming success, with more than [260 organizations from various sectors](#) across the country committing to the Challenge. These organizations included private and public entities, the entertainment and hospitality industries, professional sports leagues, health care providers, trade associations, schools and universities, technology companies, transportation partners, faith groups, and private businesses.

Creating the conditions for overdose reversal medications to be in the hands of everyone who may need them was a fundamental element of reducing the number of overdose deaths, and enabled those on the brink of an overdose fatality to survive and enter treatment.

### ***Expanded Access to Evidence-Based Treatment***

Increasing access to overdose reversal drugs has been instrumental in saving lives in the short term, but the Administration's accomplishments in decreasing long-standing barriers Americans have faced in accessing treatment will allow for a sustainable impact over the longer term. According to [2020 data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#), approximately 93.5 percent or 40.3 million Americans who needed substance use disorder treatment were not receiving it. A 2018 National Institutes of Health-funded [study](#) found that treatment of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) with Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) following a nonfatal opioid overdose was associated with significant reductions in opioid-related mortality, with opioid overdose deaths decreasing by nearly 40 percent for those receiving buprenorphine. Recent [research](#) also shows starting medications for OUD prior to release from incarceration and continuing MAT during reentry reduces risk of overdose death by 75 percent. Increasing access to treatment for those who need it not only reduces the risk for overdose and is beneficial for the overall health and well-being of those with substance use disorder; it also reduces the size of the market for illicit drugs within the United States and the profit motive for drug traffickers who rely upon the steady income the drug-purchasing market provides. Over time, this will force producers and traffickers to increase retail prices to cover their operating costs. These increased

retail prices, combined with reduced barriers to treatment, can incentivize individuals to leave the illicit market and seek the help they need.

The Administration has fundamentally changed addiction treatment across the country by making it more available, more mainstream, and less stigmatizing. Working with Congress, the Administration [removed a decades-long barrier](#), known as the “X-waiver,” that required prescribers to obtain an additional registration to prescribe buprenorphine as a medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD). This one action instantly and dramatically [expanded the opioid addiction treatment workforce](#) from approximately 129,000 clinicians to more than 1.8 million. The Administration extended the flexibilities through a [temporary rule](#) and initiated the rulemaking process to make permanent the COVID-19 era flexibilities that allowed for telehealth prescribing of buprenorphine. It also used to the rulemaking process to modernize methadone regulations. Taken together, these three simple actions allowed more prescribers to treat patients using FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder treatment, and [made methadone more accessible](#) to patients through telemedicine, mobile services, and take-home doses. This expansion of treatment availability helped reduce the stigmatization of treatment for opioid addiction, and put quality treatment in the reach of those in rural and underserved areas where a treatment provider was previously not readily available.

The effort to expand treatment also required looking at who was at the highest risk for overdose death. As many as [two-thirds of incarcerated persons](#) have a substance use disorder, and upon their release, this population is at significantly increased risk of overdose death. Extending opioid overdose reversal and treatment medications to those in carceral settings was a fundamental aspect of the Administration’s overall strategy. States are now [permitted to use SOR funds](#) for substance use treatment and services for people who are in carceral facilities and rulemaking has clarified that carceral settings registered as a hospital or clinic may offer methadone for opioid use disorder without becoming a certified opioid treatment program. Moreover, the federal government now permits state Medicaid programs to reimburse for treatment through Section 1115 demonstration projects for those leaving county jails and state prisons to help them succeed and thrive during reentry. Approximately 28 states have applied and six have received approval to begin treatment 90 days prior to reentry.

## ***Strengthened Prevention and Early Intervention***

While saving lives has been the immediate focus of the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts, alerting the public on the dangers of the illicit drug market, and preventing drug use before it starts, are critical elements of sustaining results over time. The Administration [partnered with the Ad Council](#) in a national campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and the life-saving effects of naloxone. This on-going campaign meets young people where they are on social media platforms, and enlists the help of influencers such as college athletes and lifestyle content creators to talk about the pervasiveness of illicit fentanyl in our communities and inform young people on how they can keep themselves, their friends, and their loved ones safe by carrying naloxone. Accurate and reliable information about naloxone is also featured on digital billboards in places that young people frequent, including college campuses, gas stations, bars, and restaurants.

The Administration also made unprecedented investments in the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program, one of the most proven and successful drug prevention programs in history. Between 2021 and 2024, the Administration provided close to \$426 million to support community-led and evidence-based efforts to prevent youth substance use in every state across the country. Nearly all community-based coalitions across the country are working directly with school districts to help address the needs of students, support local action to reduce youth substance use, and create safe environments for young people. Today, more than [75 million](#) Americans live in a community served by a DFC-funded coalition. These coalitions have improved access to overdose prevention materials, provided training on use of naloxone and fentanyl test strips, and educated students on policies regarding naloxone administration. Almost 40 percent of DFC coalitions are working with [at least one school or district](#) tracking fatal or nonfatal overdoses in or near schools, and for nearly half of these coalitions, this tracking was put into place as a result of the DFC grant.



# Disrupting The Profitable Business of Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking on a Global Scale

## *Adopted a New Strategic Approach of “Commercial Disruption”*

For several decades, the United States took an almost exclusively prosecutorial approach towards drug production and trafficking, although this illicit global business continued to flourish in the face of increased arrests and prosecutions. Developing and implementing the means necessary to confront an emerging synthetic opioid production and trafficking environment defined by its complexity, dynamism, and resiliency was absolutely crucial to bending the curve in overdose deaths. This required increased effort, a more sophisticated approach, better use of the tools available to the Federal Government, and the application of 21st century tools not traditionally deployed against the illicit drug problem.

To begin, this Administration transformed its vision of the nature of the overall challenge from a purely law enforcement and public health problem to a national security and economic prosperity one. This involved transforming the dominant view of drug production and trafficking itself to focus on disrupting the entire global supply chain. The Administration approached the global enterprise of drug production and trafficking as a profit-seeking international business, and identified its vulnerabilities; chemical precursors, to include legal and unregulated chemicals used to make immediate precursors; the pill presses, die molds, and encapsulating machines used to make counterfeit pills, which have the widest possible customer base of witting and unwitting consumers; the commercial shipping industry that moves raw materials and finished drugs around the world, often in plain sight and without the shippers’ knowledge; and the illicit profits drug traffickers want and the operating capital they need to sustain their business.

Through Commercial Disruption, the United States has penetrated deep into the production chain to make it more difficult for drug producers to obtain their raw materials for drug production instead of just interdicting them enroute to our borders. This has led to rising production costs for illicit synthetic drug producers; lower purity and therefore lower potential lethality for their products; and lower availability in communities for those inclined to purchase these drugs. Moreover, the disruptive effect achieved has sowed distrust within the illicit market

for precursors and finished drugs as traffickers struggled to provide the same high-quality products they could in the past.

Very early in his Administration, the President declared “that international drug trafficking, including the illicit production, global sale, and widespread distribution of illegal ... fentanyl and other synthetic opioids ... constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.” On December 15, 2021, the President vastly increased the United States’ ability to target the financial enablers of the global drug trade, and not just its kingpins, through the [Executive Order on Imposing Sanctions on Foreign Persons Involved in the Global Illicit Drug Trade](#). On April 11, 2023, the Administration released its [Strengthened Approach to Crack Down on Illicit Fentanyl Supply Chain](#), announcing Commercial Disruption as its new strategic approach, focusing and synchronizing all the tools of national power against criminal facilitators and enablers, and maximizing our impact across the drug producer and traffickers’ spectrum of capabilities. The cumulative effect of these actions made it more difficult, more costly, and more time consuming for illicit drug producers to obtain their raw materials and produce synthetic drugs, and more difficult for traffickers to get their products to market.

### ***Reduced the Availability of Illicit Drugs in the Homeland***

The Biden-Harris Administration complemented its efforts at the very front of the production chain with tangible actions to achieve more effective interdiction of illicit drugs, precursor chemicals, and pill pressing equipment at our borders.

Concrete improvements in the targeting of inbound shipments based upon solid intelligence, technological improvements in the Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment at our land borders, and surges of increased personnel and resources at the most vulnerable land borders made it more difficult for drug traffickers to successfully move their products from the manufacturing site to the market. For small packages and low-value shipments, long a favored vector for synthetic opioids and its precursors and chemicals, we took action to target and block shipments that violate U.S. laws as they arrive in airports, express consignment facilities, international mail facilities, and ports of entry across the country. Improvements in obtaining

advanced data on shipments allowed for better targeting of inbound shipments. Finally, increased emphasis on interdiction at all ports of entry made it more difficult for traffickers to get their products to market and realize profits, and made it more time-consuming as they had to find alternative vectors into the United States.

Within the United States, the Administration expanded the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program to historic levels. This program provides \$298 million to support federal, state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement working to stop drug traffickers across all 50 states and U.S. territories. In 2023 alone, [HIDTAs supported law enforcement](#) in successfully disrupting and dismantling more than 3,000 drug trafficking and money laundering organizations; removing more than \$17 billion of illegal drugs from the market, including more than 9,000 kilograms and more than 117 million pills of illicit fentanyl; and seizing \$641.9 million from drug traffickers.

### ***Exercised Global Leadership and Strengthened Key Bilateral Partnerships to Achieve More Effective Results***

The United States learned a great deal from its opioid epidemic, and no other country has the depth of experience or expertise in navigating this complex problem of caring for those suffering from the disease of addiction, while systematically dismantling the global infrastructure of those who continue to reap obscene profits through the suffering and death of others. However, the simple truth is that no single country alone can make meaningful progress against the vast and resilient global illicit drug business. A coordinated international effort to reduce exploitable seams among countries and leverage the power of international organizations was absolutely essential to our success. The United States led the world in raising global awareness of the nature of the global illicit synthetic drug supply chain, and advanced commonsense and responsible measures to disrupt the exploitation of legitimate commerce a global norm.

Under the United States' leadership, the international community successfully scheduled nearly a dozen precursor chemicals with global partners through the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), making it more difficult for illicit drug producers to obtain their raw materials, and for the first time, the G20 and the G7 explicitly addressed the challenge of synthetic drugs as part of the [Foreign Ministers' agenda](#) and the [Leader's Statement](#).

This Administration [launched](#) the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats. This first-of-its-kind [coalition](#) brought together approximately 160 countries and 15 international organizations to accelerate the global response to the rise in synthetic drugs threats, employ bilateral and multilateral approaches to prevent illicit drug manufacturing, detect emerging drug threats, disrupt trafficking, address illicit finance, and respond to the public safety and public health impacts these dangerous drugs are having around the world.

At the bilateral level, the Biden-Harris Administration [succeeded](#) in placing the counternarcotics issue at the Head of State level with the Chinese, and obtained the cooperation of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the major source of the raw materials used to manufacture synthetic drugs around the world. The [landmark agreement](#) between the two Presidents at the Woodside Summit in November 2023 to formally restart bilateral counternarcotics cooperation after a 15 month pause led to the creation of the [bilateral Counternarcotics Working Group](#) to better cooperate law enforcement and demand reduction efforts, and created the Scientist-to-Scientist Exchanges to share technical information on synthetic drugs and their manufacture. As a result of this [increased cooperation](#), the PRC has taken law enforcement action against chemical companies, shut down hundreds of websites selling illicit items, and took unprecedented action in announcing four major scheduling actions in an eight-week period between June and August 2024.

This Administration also obtained more [tangible cooperation from Mexico](#) to reduce the flow of precursors into Mexico, and the production of illicit fentanyl bound for the U.S. market. U.S. national drug control initiatives in Mexico are part of a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing the flow of illicit drugs to the United States and combating transnational criminal organizations. These security and public safety initiatives are primarily embodied in the U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework that builds on the longstanding U.S.-Mexico security partnership. As a result, Mexico placed increased emphasis and effort on stopping precursor chemicals at its ports to prevent them from being delivered to drug producers, including watch-listing legal chemicals used for the creation of precursors. Mexico is also cooperating on a regional and global scale. In November 2024, the Mexican Government hosted the eighth meeting of the North American Drug Dialogue bringing together officials and experts from the United States, Mexico, Canada, Netherlands, and Belgium to focus on synthetic drug challenges,

border security, trafficking prevention, and public health coordination. During the September Summit of the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, Mexico committed to sharing their recently established traceability model against drug diversion to help countries strengthen their import and export regimes for chemical substances. Moreover, Mexico engaged the PRC directly to work more closely together to combat precursor flows, and Mexico's increased law enforcement cooperation led to more arrests and extraditions to the United States, making the environment for drug producers less permissive in Mexico. The cumulative results of Head of State interest, improved interdiction, increased visibility and accountability, and sowing distrust in the illicit market, have begun to have a disruptive effect on the manufacturing and distribution pipeline from Mexico into the United States.

## **Solidifying Gains and the Need to Accelerate Progress in the Years Ahead**

The holistic and sensible approach taken to address the overdose crisis that has vexed the United States for the better part of a decade now strikes the right balance. Through a deep understanding of the illicit drug production and use environment, and through a comprehensive and sophisticated strategy to address it, we have made it more difficult, more costly, and more time-consuming to manufacture synthetic drugs; more difficult to get them across our borders and to the retail market; easier to save the life of someone suffering an opioid overdose; and easier to access treatment, all while working to inform the American people of the dangers of today's illicit drugs and prevent future generations from falling victim to their use. Now is the time to solidify what we have achieved, and begin work on some exciting new developments on the horizon that hold the promise of sustaining our hard-earned gains in the years to come.

### ***Weakening the Illicit Drug Supply Chain Around the World***

The progress the Administration has made in disrupting the manufacture of illicit drugs, and their flow into our country, has depended upon three critical and mutually reinforcing elements: strong leadership from the White House, the exercise of United States leadership around the world in this issue of global concern, and close and mutually beneficial partnerships

with key countries who not only play a role in preventing the global proliferation of these dangerous synthetic drugs, but can also play a role in advancing global efforts to disrupt it.

The [strategic approach](#) of Commercial Disruption, and the unity of purpose it provides, has already shown results. However, its true value will be years in the making as the global illicit supply chain adapts to sustain its access to raw materials and the freedom of movement it needs to make profits.

The United States needs to press for more action at the multilateral level, through the existing drug policy forums such as the North American Drug Dialogue, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and others, as well as in diplomatic forums that have not fully embraced undertaking tangible action on the drug issue such as the North American Leaders Summit, the G7, G20, and G77.

Collectively, the international community must do much more to disrupt the global illicit business of drug manufacturing and trafficking, as well as public health efforts to reduce the human impact of illicit drug use around the world. The United States' leadership will be necessary to establish a baseline of understanding at the international level on emerging synthetic drugs and their precursor chemicals; public health approaches related to substance use disorder prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services; methods of illicit trafficking via multiple modes of transport; the illicit drug-related financing methods and activities that support operating capital and access to profit from illegal drug sales; and port security initiatives that can increase drug and precursor seizures closer to their point of origin, well before they enter the domain of legitimate commercial shipping.

Bilaterally, the People's Republic of China has been the central player in the story of America's synthetic opioid crisis, either as the producer of the finished drugs or the provider of precursor chemicals. The U.S.-PRC bilateral counternarcotics relationship has steadily, if unevenly, [improved over the past year](#), and deliberate and concrete action of the part of the PRC government to limit the proliferation of precursor chemicals will drive a strategic shift in the illicit synthetic opioid supply chain. Managing that shift will mean the difference between the United States landing a decisive blow against the production or trafficking of these drugs, or facing the years ahead with yet another, and perhaps more deadly, phase of the opioid crisis.

A large-scale shift to India of illicit precursor chemical supply chains would present a wholly different, and arguably more difficult, set of challenges. The shift of illicit supply chains to entrepreneurial, tech-savvy, democratic India, with its expansive federal system of crisscrossing state and national authorities, would present challenges and vulnerabilities wholly different than those seen in the PRC. India has the sixth largest chemical industry in the world, and its thirteen major ports provide it the same worldwide access that China has enjoyed during the time it has been the preponderant source of synthetic drug precursors flowing toward production sites in the western hemisphere. A shift in illicit supply chains to India could also bring a systemic change in the very process by which these illicit drugs are made. A dramatic reduction in the availability of precursor chemicals, including the legal industrial chemicals used to make immediate precursors, may very well drive traffickers to abandon what will likely become an increasingly difficult process of chemical acquisition and synthesis, and shift their focus to obtaining the already-synthesized Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and Key Starting Materials (KSMs) that are used to make legal pharmaceutical products. The U.S.-India bilateral relationship on this issue will be key in preventing a new chapter in the synthetic drug crisis, and it will be crucial to advance this growing and deepening relationship going forward.

### ***Ensuring Economic Opportunity by Building a Recovery-Ready America***

Today, [more than 22 million](#) American adults are in recovery from a substance use disorder (SUD), two-thirds are employed, and [80 percent work full-time](#). Untreated SUD is extremely costly to businesses and the economy. In 2017 alone, opioid use disorder and opioid overdose fatalities cost the United States an estimated [\\$1.02 trillion](#), which includes costs for health care, criminal justice, lost productivity, the reduced quality of life associated with substance use disorder, and life lost due to fatal opioid overdoses.

The Administration provided a [historic level of resources](#) to equip businesses and state leaders with tools to expand employment opportunities for the tens of millions of Americans struggling with SUD or in recovery, and those nascent efforts must be expanded. [Recovery-ready workplace policies](#) support workers with substance use disorder by breaking down barriers to employment, reducing stigma, and creating a safe and healthy work environment through addiction treatment and recovery support services for those in the workforce who need them.

Adopting recovery-ready workplace policies is also critical for businesses seeking to expand and strengthen their workforces and improve their bottom line. The [Recovery-Ready Workplace Toolkit: Guidance and Resources for Private and Public Sector Employers](#) is a blueprint for businesses and employers who want to respond more effectively to substance use disorder among employees, build their workforces through hiring people in recovery, and develop a recovery-supportive workplace culture. The toolkit is also intended to serve as a resource for states, local and Tribal governments, labor organizations, business groups, and non-profits interested in launching multi-employer recovery-ready workplace initiatives at the state or local levels.

[Several private and public sector organizations](#) have already supported new initiatives under the Administration's leadership. For example, Google has announced enhancements to its recovery-ready workplace policies, and the state of New Hampshire announced the creation of a Recovery-Friendly Workplace Institute to help support states and employers as they develop recovery-ready workplace policies across the country.

As the size of the opioid epidemic grew over the past several years, so did its threat to America's economic prosperity and future economic sustainability. One of the most important sources of our national power is an economy that rests upon a foundation of the energy, talents, and capabilities of a reliable workforce. Every one of the Americans lost to a drug overdose is not only a devastating loss to a family and a community, but may also represent a loss to a small business or large company that is less capable than it was the year before. By following through on the Administration's efforts and making workplaces across the country and across all sectors of our economy recovery-ready, we can prevent facing the years ahead with a gaping hole in the very heart of our economic prosperity – the American workforce.

## **Conclusion**

This balanced approach has brought the American people the results they should expect of us. Now is the time to follow through on what has given us proven results: expanding access to evidence-based harm reduction approaches, expanding access to evidence-based treatment, and strengthening our prevention and early intervention, while at the same time commercially disrupting the global business of illicit drugs, reducing the availability of illicit drugs in our homeland, and achieving results from our key bilateral partners and through global leadership.



Now is also the time look forward, anticipate the inevitable changes in the environment of drug production, trafficking, and use, and take the necessary steps to shape the future we want: a society and economy that support those in recovery and those still struggling with the disease of addiction, and a global environment that is working together to disrupt the global illicit drug business.

The nearly [17 percent reduction in overdose deaths the Administration has affected](#) is more than a statistic. It represents almost 16,000 Americans who are alive today and able to get the help they need to enter a life of sustained recovery. And while, for the first time in close to a decade, it appears we are heading in the right direction, this work must continue so more families across America do not face empty seats at their dinner tables each night.