

Substance Use

Our vision **for a healthy Trenton** includes all greater Trenton residents who use drugs having resources to do so safely and to pursue recovery if/when desired.



In Trenton, substance use is deeply tied to cycles of trauma, poverty, and systemic inequities. Harm reduction efforts seek to provide community members who use drugs with the resources they need to mitigate risks associated with using drugs and information necessary to make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

Decades of harmful drug criminalization policies, insufficient care models, and persistent societal stigma have left this population without the opportunity and support needed to break these cycles.

Reducing harm through relationship building, not punishing behavior, is essential to improving community health and safety.



Mercer County's age-adjusted overdose death rate is about **33** per 100,000, significantly higher than the statewide average.

The drug-related hospital visit rate is about **235** per 100,000 in Mercer County and increased since 2022–2023 for opioids, heroin, and stimulants.

Overdose mortality among Black residents was **72** per 100,000 in Mercer County in 2023, over 2x the overall county rate, and rising each year since 2020.

Nearly **1 in 4** adults in Mercer County lack health insurance, creating major barriers to substance use treatment and recovery services.

Mercer County Overdose Fatality Review Team (OFRT)

Since 2020, Trenton Health Team has lead community-wide efforts to identify gaps in the substance use care continuum and develop harm-reduction-centered communications and policies to help prevent overdose deaths. Harm reduction-centered policies seek to build better supportive structures by increasing access to life saving medications, flexible housing supports, and decriminalization efforts that disproportionately impact vulnerable residents.

Implementation and Monitoring of Overdose Prevention Indicators (IMOPI)

In 2023–24, THT also launched the CDC Foundation-funded Implementation and Monitoring of Overdose Prevention Indicators (IMOPI) Project, which focused on harm reduction, care linkage, and stigma reduction. IMOPI produced the overdosemeasuresmatter.org website, a hub for collaboration, data sharing, and evidence-based overdose prevention. In mid-2025, THT was selected to be part of a community of practice to evaluate and use indicators from the OMM website to assess the effectiveness of overdose prevention interventions.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Increased access to harm reduction, treatment, and recovery supports.
- Fewer fatal and nonfatal overdoses in Mercer County.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Decline in the age-adjusted overdose death rate in Mercer County.
- Reduction in substance-use related emergency room visits.