

Health Equity, Justice, and Caring for People Who Use Drugs

w/ Vitka Eisen
President & CEO of HealthRIGHT 360

October 27th, 2022





**“Nothing has contributed more to the
systemic mass incarceration of people of color
in the United States than the War on Drugs”**

Michelle Alexander
*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in
the Age of Colorblindness*, January 5, 2010

A photograph showing several police officers in dark uniforms with "POLICE" on the back, standing near a basketball court. In the background, a chain-link fence and a brick building are visible. A few people are playing basketball on the court. A dark car is parked in the foreground.

War on Drugs

- Nearly **80%** of people incarcerated in federal prison for drug offenses are Black or Latinx
- Prosecutors are **twice as likely** to pursue a mandatory minimum sentence for Black people as for white people charged with the same offense

Source: Drug Policy Alliance

Unholy relationship between carceral systems and the development of public funded treatment

- Drug Courts
- Prop 36
- Other court mandates





Addicted to Coercion

Treatment programs become dependent on **coercion** rather than creativity, innovation, and truly meeting people where they are.

Overdose Crisis

- In CA, over 10,000 people died from all-drug overdoses from October 2020 to September 2021.
- This was a 70% increase from annual rate in 2019.

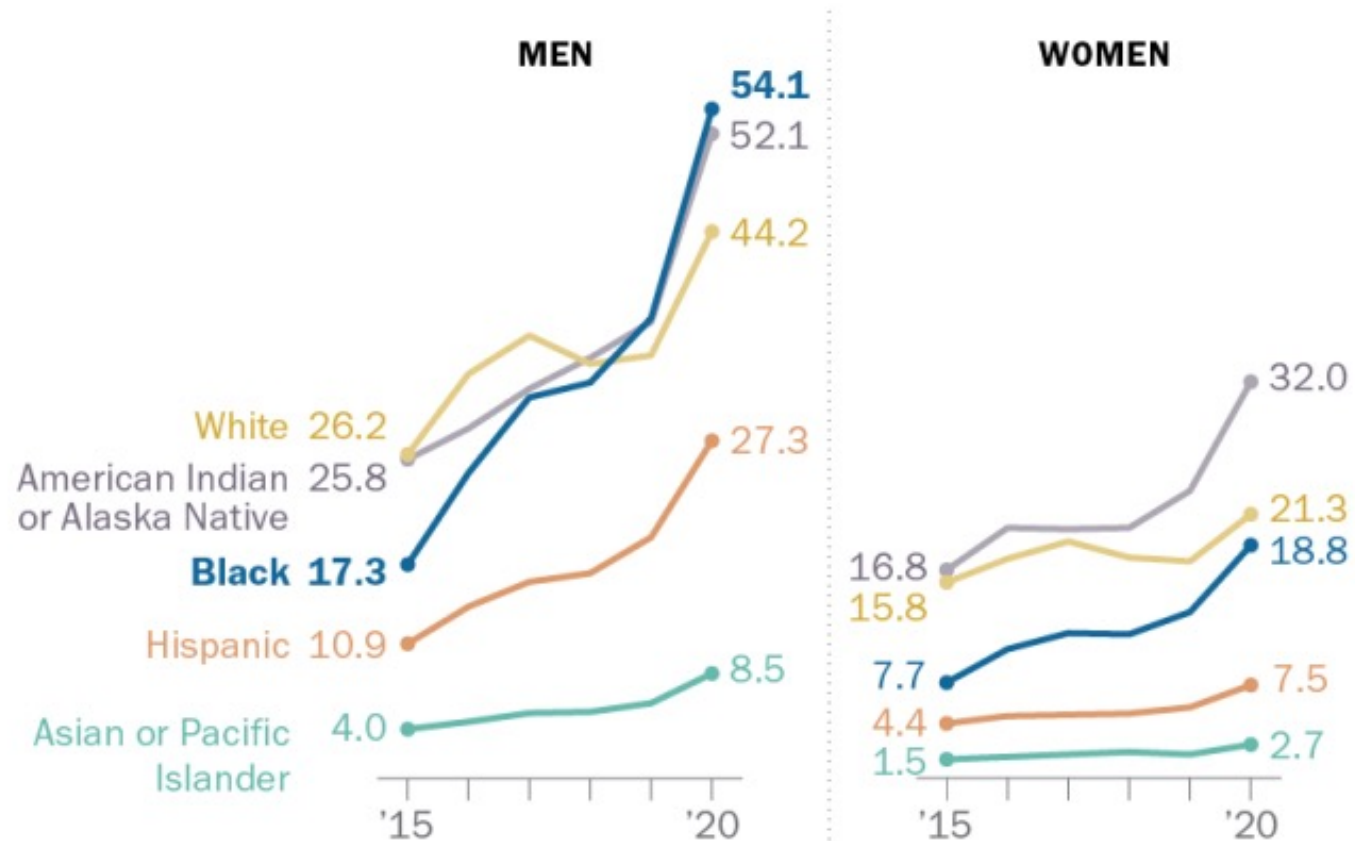
Source: California Department of Healthcare Services



Disproportionate impact of overdose deaths on Black men

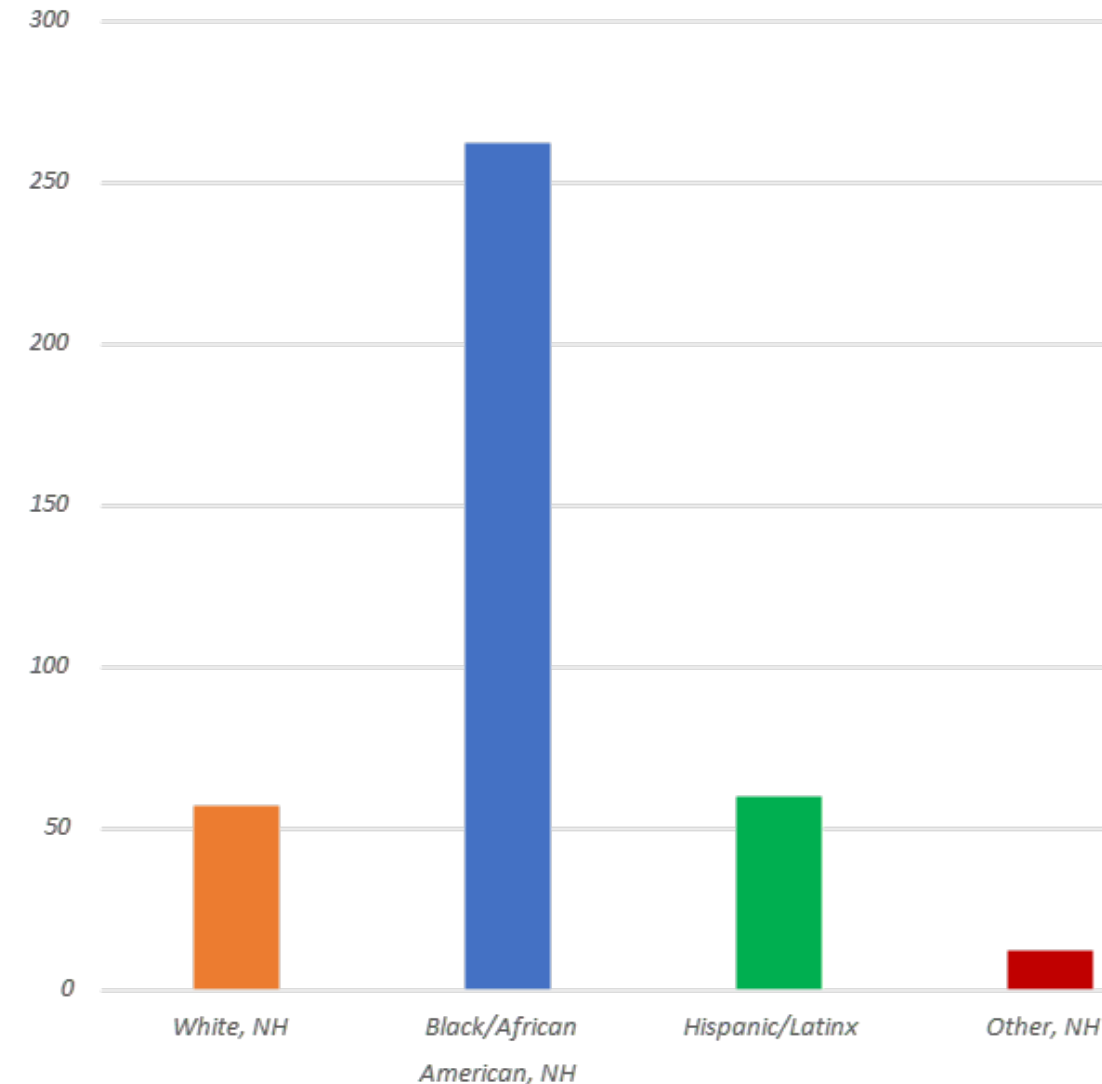
Drug overdose death rate among Black men in the U.S. more than tripled between 2015 and 2020

U.S. drug overdose death rate per 100,000 people, by race and ethnicity (age-adjusted)



Source: Pew Research Center

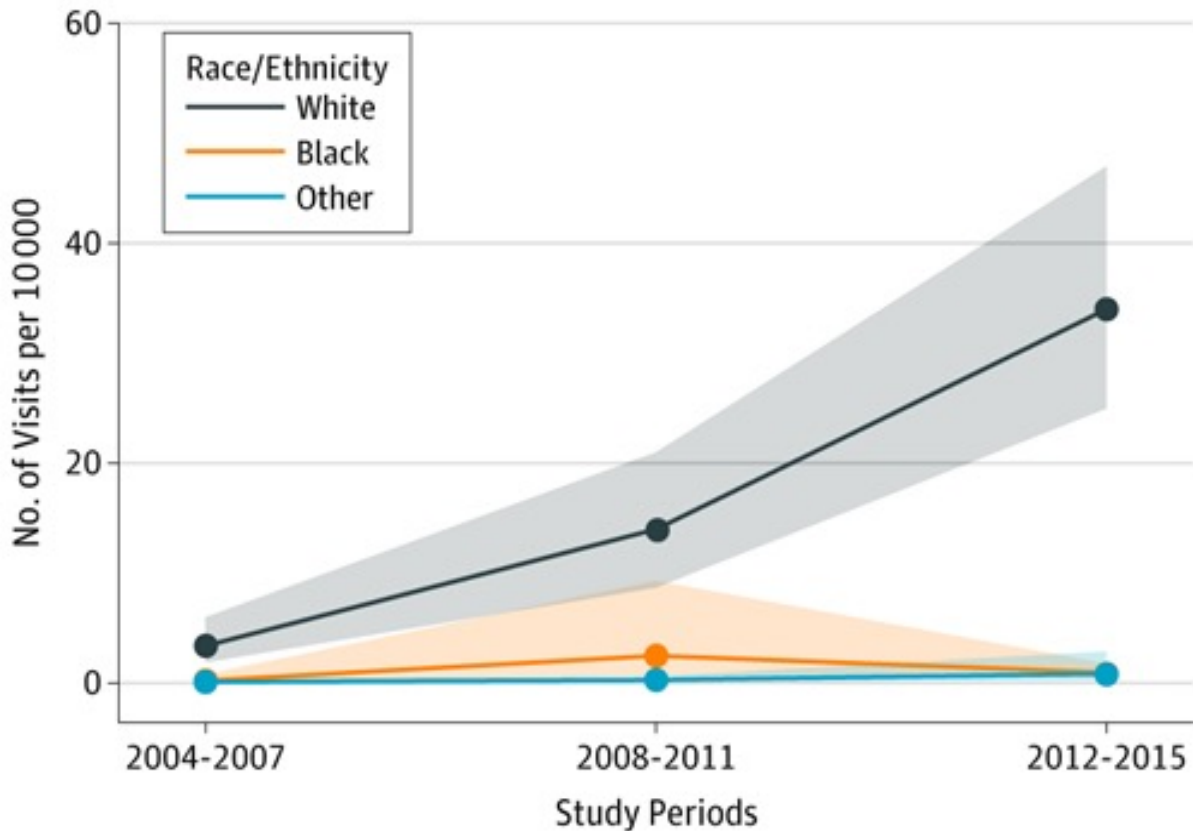
Rate of Opioid Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity in CCSF, 2021



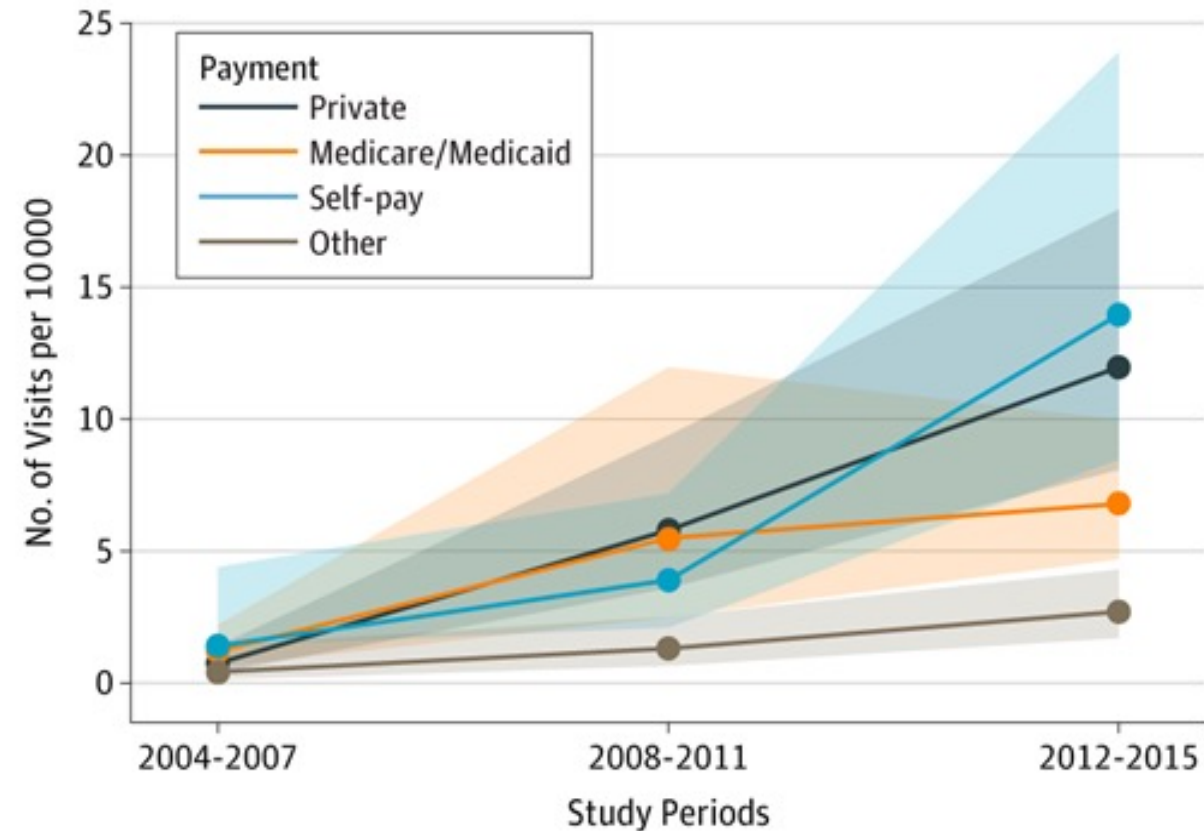
Who gets what treatment?

Racial disparities in prescribing MAT, in general, as well as Methadone over Buprenorphine

A Visits by race/ethnicity



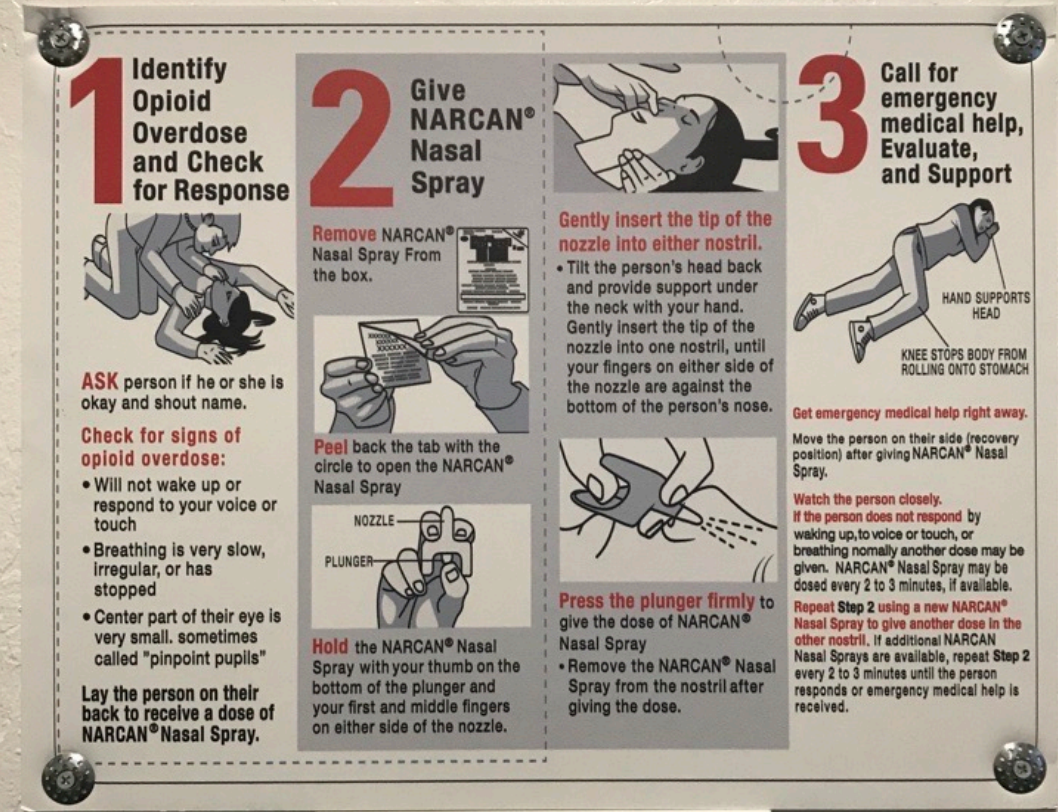
B Visits by payment



Harm Reduction

Harm reduction refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to minimize negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws.

Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support.



Greater Safety



Better Health




Greater Engagement



Oversurveillance of people of color in treatment

Recurrence of drug use and unplanned departures



A photograph of two individuals standing on a paved sidewalk, holding a large black banner. They are positioned in front of a green lawn where hundreds of small white flags are planted. The background shows a city street with a white SUV, trees, and a large building. The banner has white text that reads: "HOW MANY MORE HAVE TO DIE FROM OVERDOSE BEFORE IT'S A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY?".

**HOW MANY MORE
HAVE TO DIE FROM OVERDOSE
BEFORE IT'S A
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY?**

Risk of Arrest, Risk of Death

Early pioneers of CM approaches: PROP for MSM

BMC Public Health



Research article

Open Access

A public health response to the methamphetamine epidemic: the implementation of contingency management to treat methamphetamine dependence

We Are Responsible



Does treatment population match the community?

Does it match the community of PWUD?



TRANSGENDER PEOPLE ARE **TWICE** AS LIKELY TO HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE, BUT **3X** AS LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED.

NINE OUT OF **TEN** TRANS PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION.

TOGETHER WE CAN TRANSFORM LIVES.

HIRE, RESPECT, SUPPORT TRANS PEOPLE.

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#HIRETRANS

TRANSEMPLOYMENTPROGRAM.ORG

CANDY (SHE, HER)



Do staff and leadership demographics mirror clients and community?



Is justice and equity part of our work?



What happened in our programs during the BLM rising in the wake of the murder of George Floyd?



Thank You!

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