

Overdose Prevention Vending Machines: Considerations for Implementation

Updated in October 2025

Overdose prevention vending machines help reduce overdose deaths and promote better health and wellness for people experiencing homelessness who have substance use disorders or co-occurring disorders. This fact sheet introduces the evidence-based overdose prevention vending machine model, describes how it supports overdose prevention strategies, outlines the supplies to include, highlights key considerations for implementation, and shares examples of successful vending machine implementation.

Introduction

Though recent data shows inspiring progress, overdose deaths remain at historically high levels in the United States, driven in part by increasingly lethal and unpredictable opioids. Overdose prevention includes taking steps to reduce the risk of overdose in the first place, responding to an overdose, and referring the person to services and supports after the overdose reversal.¹

Overdose prevention vending machines are stocked with crucial supplies intended to promote public health and reduce overdose deaths. They allow individuals to access these supplies for free or at a very low cost and are one tool in the broader continuum of prevention, treatment, and recovery care.

Why vending machines?

Vending machines are an innovative method of distributing life-saving naloxone and other health and wellness supplies. Strategically placed machines can complement existing overdose prevention and substance use treatment programs by providing these supplies outside typical business hours and potentially reaching a broader population.

What to include

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids when given in time. Naloxone comes in two forms: a prefilled nasal spray (commonly known by the brand name Narcan) and an injectable.² Overdose reversal kits typically include two doses of intranasal naloxone spray and instructions for use.

Learn more:

[SAMHSA Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit](#) | [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \[PDF\]](#)

[Naloxone Frequently Asked Questions](#) | [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \[HTML\]](#)

[Naloxone](#) | [NEXT Distro \[HTML\]](#)

Testing supplies can include test strips for both fentanyl and xylazine. These test strips are small strips of paper that can alert users to the presence of either additive to drugs such as cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine. A positive test result can be used to inform decisions about drug use, including choosing not to use mixed drugs or to use them in a less risky method.³

Learn more:

[What You Can Do to Test for Fentanyl](#) | [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \[HTML\]](#)

[What You Should Know About Xylazine](#) | [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \[HTML\]](#)

[Video: Introduction to Xylazine](#) | [Homeless and Housing Resource Center \[HTML\]](#)

[Xylazine Basics: Overdose Prevention and Wound Care](#) | [Homeless and Housing Resource Center \[HTML\]](#)

[Fentanyl](#) | [National Institute on Drug Abuse \[HTML\]](#)

Wound care kits can include adhesive bandages, non-latex gloves, first-aid triple antibiotic ointment, gauze pads, conforming gauze rolls, sterile water, self-adherent bandage rolls, and sterile alcohol pads. It can also be helpful to include information on how to care for wounds and guidance on when to see a medical professional.

Learn more:

[Wound Care & Medical Triage for People Who Use Drugs and the Programs That Serve Them](#) | [NASTAD \[PDF\]](#)

[Wound & Abscess Care for People Who Use Drugs](#) | [NEXT Distro \[HTML\]](#)

Tobacco cessation supplies can include over-the-counter nicotine replacement products such as gum, lozenges, and patches, as well as literature providing information and referrals to counseling or support services.

Learn more:

[Implementing Tobacco Cessation Treatment for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness \(SMI\) | SAMHSA \[PDF\]](#)

[Tobacco-free Toolkit for Behavioral Health Agencies | SAMHSA National Center of Excellence for Tobacco-free Recovery \[PDF\]](#)

[Smokefree.gov | National Cancer Institute \[HTML\]](#)

Safer sex supplies can include male and female condoms, dental dams, personal lubricants, HIV test kits, Plan B, pregnancy tests, and literature providing information and referrals to additional testing, emergency response, and counseling. These materials help to prevent the spread of HIV and STIs, prevent unwanted pregnancies, and connect individuals to valuable community support .⁴

Learn more:

[Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: practical approaches from collaborative interventions | World Health Organization \[HTML\]](#)

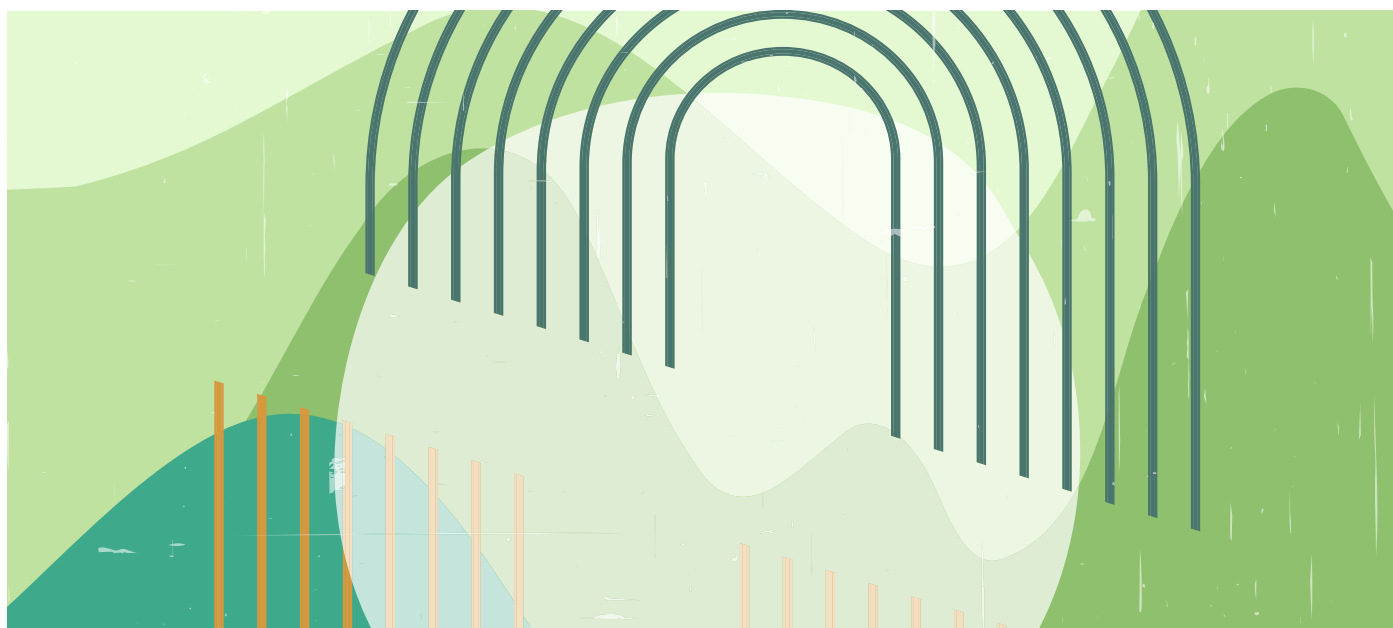
Hygiene kits can include toothbrushes, toothpaste, socks, tissues, soap, shampoo, washcloths, deodorant, sanitizing wipes, Chapstick, lotion, nail clippers, tampons, and menstrual pads. These items address personal care needs that can be hard to meet when experiencing homelessness or housing instability, and help prevent illness, improve self-esteem, and promote dignity.

Other potential supplies include gun locks, snacks, water, medication lock bags, and medication disposal bags.

Considerations for implementation

Access and Location

Questions to Consider	Tips
• Who is your target population? • Will the machine be located near this population? • Will the machine be available to the public? • Do people need an established relationship with a service provider? • Will an individual need to enter a building to access the machine? • If so, is entry limited during certain business hours? • Is the location easily accessed by public transport? • Are the supplies free or low-cost? • Will the machine and its supplies be exposed to changing temperatures?	• Some organizations require individuals to connect with program staff upon their first visit to the machine. Staff then provide a code or access key so that they can dispense supplies freely in the future. Others allow for access without previously speaking to staff at any time. • If your program hopes to reach a specific population, it can be helpful to co-locate machines at related locations. For example, machines could be located within drop-in centers or shelters to expand outreach to people experiencing homelessness. • To lower barriers, it's best to provide supplies at no or extremely low cost. • Some materials can be impacted by extreme weather or temperature changes. When considering both location and the types of supplies included in the machine, take note of potential environmental impacts.



Data Collection

Questions to Consider	Tips
• What information do you want to collect? How often? • What information is required versus optional? • How can you anonymize the data that is collected? • How will you collect data?	• Collecting data is a meaningful way to monitor use and impact. To lower barriers to access, consider what information is necessary versus what information is helpful to have. • Programs can increase participation and broaden impact by allowing machine users to skip questions they do not want to answer and ensuring that surveys are short and easy to complete. • Additionally, programs can simplify machine access for the user by ensuring that individuals do not need to complete the entire survey each time they access the machine. Many programs provide users with an individual code to use when accessing the machine after completing the survey during the first visit. • All data collected should be confidential, and programs can increase participation by allowing users to remain anonymous during data collection. Using the machine itself to collect data or a virtual survey conducted via phone call, text, or QR code ensures individuals can protect their identity.

Maintenance and Supplies

Questions to Consider	Tips
• How will you acquire the machine? • Where will you source supplies? • Who can provide maintenance on the machine? • Who will monitor supplies and restock the machine? • What kind of funding will you utilize?	• Ensure that your organization has a plan for keeping machines in good working order. • Some “smart” machines can automatically report information to staff, including what and when items are dispensed and what items are running low. Otherwise, you may need to allocate staff time to monitor the supply and restock machines. • When sourcing a machine, programs can purchase specially made machines new or retrofit old snack machines to hold supplies of various sizes. It can be helpful to browse resale sites like Craigslist or contact other programs that may be willing to sell their old machines. • Consider partnerships with local organizations already providing overdose prevention or health and wellness supplies in brick-and-mortar settings. • Consider how you may use donated supplies.

Education and Referrals

Questions to Consider	Tips
• What kind of educational materials will you provide? • What information about other organizations can you provide to help someone access additional support or treatment options? • What languages can you provide materials in?	• Educational materials can include: • Overdose reversal instructions • Reproductive and sexual health information • Wound care fact sheets • Drug testing instructions • Information on HIV and hepatitis prevention, testing, treatment, and care services • Information about other local resources, such as shelters, drop-in centers, and food distribution • It's important to consider the commonly used languages where you plan to install the machine and provide translated resources. • It can be helpful to include QR codes linking to various resources, particularly when instructional videos may be helpful. However, it's important to remember that some individuals may not have a phone capable of scanning the code.

Funding and Sustainability

When considering funding to support overdose prevention vending machines, it is important to assess a broad range of partnership possibilities. Programs nationwide have launched vending machine programs in partnership with local colleges, jails, health departments, emergency rooms, and more. These partners can help with identifying a location, acquiring a machine or supplies, maintaining the machine, and more. HHRC's [Guide to Resource Mapping and Assessing Community Needs](#) can help you identify potential partners. Your program does not have to go it alone!

Additionally, some federal grants from HRSA and SAMHSA can be utilized for overdose and disease prevention supplies. Each federal agency has developed its own guidance for its funding recipients. Supplies allowed by some SAMHSA grants include⁵:

Overdose Prevention and Response Supplies

- Opioid overdose reversal supplies, including the purchase of naloxone and nalmefene (OORMs)
- Substance test kits, including fentanyl test strips and xylazine test strips
- Medication lock boxes and medication disposal kits
- Overdose reversal education and training services
- Distribution mechanisms (e.g., bags or metal boxes/containers) for OORMs

Infectious Disease Prevention Services

- Wound care supplies
- FDA-approved home testing kits for viral hepatitis (i.e., HBV and HCV) and HIV
- Sharps disposal kits
- Educational materials on HIV and viral hepatitis and prevention, testing, treatment, and care services
- Navigation services to ensure linkage to HIV and viral hepatitis prevention, testing, treatment, and care services — including antiretroviral therapy for HCV and HIV, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and partner services
- Referral to hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccinations (to reduce risk of viral hepatitis infection)
- Provision of education on HIV and viral hepatitis prevention, testing, and referral to treatment services
- Education and activities to reduce the risk of STIs, including distributing condoms
- Provision of information on local resources and/or referrals for PrEP

Other Supplies and Services

- Food (e.g., snacks, protein drinks, water). Food is limited to \$10 per person and must be used in the course of service engagement.
- Nicotine cessation therapies

Program Examples

Pennsylvania

Penn State Health to Go—Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine has partnered with local organizations to support two vending machines, one outside an emergency department and the other inside a YMCA. Both machines provide a wide array of supplies, including naloxone kits, test strips, personal care items, wound care kits, and safe sex and reproductive health kits. These vending machines automatically capture information on their use to report back to staff and anonymously ask users about their demographics, experiences, preferences, and needs.

AICDAC—To expand naloxone availability in rural Pennsylvania, the Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission (AICDAC) has partnered with the Indiana Regional Medical Center (IRMC) to provide a vending machine outside an emergency room. This machine provides free fentanyl test strips and overdose kits containing two doses of naloxone, instructions for use, and information about accessing treatment for substance use disorders.

Delaware

Delaware Division of Public Health—In Delaware, five vending machines are stocked with four main materials: Narcan, Detera bags for safe medication disposal, test strips, and wound-care kits. Other types of supplies are available through donations. These machines require users to input only a ZIP code to dispense

supplies. If an individual does not have a Delaware ZIP code, each machine also has a designated, clearly displayed code that can be used. Additionally, each machine is brightly colored, with instructions for spotting and responding to an opioid overdose included on the side.

Wisconsin

Milwaukee County Health & Human Services—In Milwaukee County, 12 vending machines are located in various settings, including community centers, recovery services, fire departments, police stations, and counseling and health centers. On the County website, the public can see an easy-to-use map with locations for each machine, a booklet containing instructions for various supplies, video demonstrations, dashboards showing overdose trends and vending machine usage, and information about funding and partnerships.

Milwaukee Veterans Affairs—Inspired by the Milwaukee County program, the Milwaukee VA cafeteria contains a vending machine that sells test strips, naloxone, and gun locks. Machines also offer safe boxes, which Veterans can use to store whichever supplies they choose.

California

San Francisco Veterans Affairs—In San Francisco, the VA Health Care System co-locates vending machines with free supplies within the main VA medical center, seven community-based outpatient clinics, and six Bay Area Veterans housing facilities.

Ohio

Caracole—In Cincinnati, Caracole, a nonprofit dedicated to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, provides a vending machine to complement its other services. This machine contains a wide variety of supplies, including intramuscular naloxone, nasal naloxone, test strips, HIV self-test kits, safer sex kits, and wound care kits. First-time participants must call a dedicated phone number or walk in during open hours to complete a confidential sign-up survey. Then, individuals receive a personalized code allowing them to access the machine once per week for 90 days. After 90 days, participants must check in with staff and sign up for continued machine use.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services—In Oklahoma, vending machines have been deployed to enhance naloxone access across the state. In recent years, previous vending machine efforts were distributed and managed by the state. This centralized top-down model struggled, leading the state to reassess and relaunch the machines in 2025 with a renewed focus on shared responsibility with community partners and local management of the machines.

Endnotes

- 1 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services. (2025, July). *Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit*. Retrieved September 24, 2025, from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services: <https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/overdose-prevention-response-kit-pep23-03-00-001.pdf>.
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- 3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024, January 31). *Fentanyl and Xylazine Test Strips*. Retrieved September 24, 2025, from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/treatment/overdose-prevention/fentanyl-xylazine-test-strips>
- 4 World Health Organization, U. N. (2013). *Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers: Practical Approaches from Collaborative Interventions*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- 5 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2025, July 29). *Dear Colleague Letter: Executive Order on Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets*. Retrieved September 24, 2025, from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dear-colleague-letter-executive-order-ending-crime-disorder-americas-streets-07302025.pdf>



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Disclaimer: This resource was supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant 1H79SM083003-01. The contents reflect the authors' views and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, SAMHSA, HHS, or the US government.

Acknowledgments: HHRC would like to thank Alisha Fletcher from Policy Research Associates, Inc., for contributing her expertise as the author of this resource. Jen Elder, HHRC Director, completed an editorial review and provided subject matter expertise and final approval. Neither have conflicts of interest to report. This resource was originally released in March 2025 and has been updated to reflect current policy.

Recommended Citation: Homeless and Housing Resource Center, *Overdose Prevention Vending Machines: Considerations for Implementation*, 2025, <https://hhrctraining.org/knowledge-resources>.