



ACT ON ADDICTION: 2025 FACT SHEET

Substance use affects individuals and families across Northern Virginia. **In fact, nearly half of the respondents in Inova's Act on Addiction 2025 Survey reported being personally impacted or knowing someone who is dealing with substance use.** While stigma and misinformation persist, recent data show hope through harm reduction strategies and growing awareness.



A TURNING POINT: OVERDOSE DEATHS DECLINE IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Across Northern Virginia, new data highlights encouraging progress in addressing substance use. Virginia ranks 2nd nationwide in overdose death reduction (2024) – Fairfax County saw its lowest count since 2015.

- In 2024, an estimated 80,391 Americans died from drug overdoses, marking a **27% decline** from approximately 110,000 deaths in 2023, **the lowest level since 2019.** ([CDC](#))
- Preliminary data show 1,403 overdose deaths statewide in 2024, **down 43% from 2023.** ([VDH](#))
 - Almost eight out of 10 (79%) drug overdose deaths involving fentanyl, fentanyl related substances, and tramadol.

The decline in numbers doesn't mean the crisis is over. But they do suggest that awareness, prevention, and harm reduction are making a real impact and saving lives..



UNDERSTANDING HARM REDUCTION FOR SUBSTANCE USE:

Harm reduction strategies help keep people safe and reduce the harms associated with substance use. These approaches meet individuals where they are and provide practical, lifesaving tools – especially for those at highest risk.

What is harm reduction?

Harm reduction includes measures like distributing and educating how to use naloxone (Narcan), safe needle programs, and education outreach to minimize the dangers associated with substance use.

There is a growing understanding of harm reduction, but many members of our community report that they have not heard of the term, demonstrating a greater need for education around this approach.



53% of survey respondents have said that they have not heard of the term harm reduction.



Upon hearing the definition of harm reduction, **92%** of respondents agree that harm reduction saves lives.



Awareness is strongest among Millennials (**55%**) and Gen Z (**47%**), suggesting the effectiveness of progressive, digital-first outreach.

What are some examples of harm reduction?

- Needle or syringe exchange programs
- Naloxone (Narcan) for overdose reversal
- Fentanyl testing strips: Can detect some fentanyl in substances
- Supervised consumption sites
- Medication for addiction treatment: Combines medication and therapy for recovery support
- Educational Outreach

Narcan stands out as the most widely recognized and impactful harm reduction tool, both nationally and within Northern Virginia. It can reverse opioid overdoses within minutes, saving lives when seconds count.

- The [CDC](#) reported that community Narcan programs reversed at least 400,000 overdoses between 1996 and 2020.
- In the [NoVA region](#), Fairfax County saw its fewest opioid overdose deaths since 2015 in 2024, with 71 fatalities – a drop from 117 in 2023.



ACTING ON ADDICTION NOW: REDUCING STIGMA. SAVING LIVES.

Our community continues to face challenges due to the prevalence of substance use disorders, but there is good news. We are seeing greater recognition of the stigma that prevents so many from seeking treatment, and there is a tremendous opportunity to educate families in Northern Virginia about harm reduction.

- Among those who need treatment for substance use disorders (~54.6 million people in 2022), only 13.1 million received it, leaving 75% without care. ([CDC](#))
- 75% of respondents thought that people may not seek care because they believe they can manage substance use on their own.
- 74% of respondents pointed to the fear of people knowing or stigma as a major deterrent in why they think people don't seek care for substance use.

We encourage everyone to play a role in addressing the disease of addiction. As a community, we can educate ourselves about the signs and symptoms of substance use, seek out resources for ourselves or a loved one, or better understand harm reduction. There is something we can all do to make a difference.



Learn more by visiting ActOnAddictionNow.org.