

# Communiversality Developed and Tested Toolkit for Opioid Abuse Abatement



## Module 2

# Building Community Coalitions to Address Opioid Abatement

**This section is meant to be used by organizations within communities, local and state government agencies, families, and advocates to show how working together can reduce the impact of opioid problems.**

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# Building Community Coalitions to Address Opioid Abatement

Opioids affect our ability to be empowered to make good decisions for us and our families. For Black and Brown people, opioids open you up to the trap within our justice system to take away what rights, resources, and abilities we have to use to take care of our families and ourselves. Opioids also tear our families apart, break down our communities, and reinforce racism.

Because opioid misuse affects the entire community, the community needs to come together to solve the opioid problem. We must work to delay substance misuse among the young and offer accessible treatment for those trapped in addiction. To combat the stigma associated with treatment, providing accurate information about the nature of addiction and the role of brain functioning is important, as is addressing myths and presumptions about addiction and recovery.

## What is COMMUNIVERSITY?



Communiversality implies a link between a university and the community. The current collaboration attempts to marry a nonprofit harm-reduction organization with a Historically Black University, HBCU, allowing the organizations to effectively work together to reduce opioid misuse, overdose, and deaths in Durham, and throughout North Carolina.

The importance of a community coming together to solve the opioid problem cannot be overstated. This issue affects the entire community. The advantages of working together toward a solution include the following:

- When individuals agree that change is in their best interest, they can accomplish more by working together than by working individually.
- Collaboration can be a powerful force when solving problems that affect society as a whole.

The power of many different minds contributing to an initiative can improve the likelihood of successful outcomes.

## Elements of Effective Community Coalitions



**Common  
Agenda**



**Shared  
Measurement**



**Mutually Reinforcing  
Activities**



**Continuous  
Communication**

## What Is Collective Impact?

Collective impact is the commitment of a group from different sectors working toward a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.

Organizations have been implementing collective impact for a long time. These successful collective impact initiatives have five conditions for their success.

### 1. COMMON AGENDA

All participants share a vision for change. It includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

### 2. SHARED MEASUREMENT

All participating organizations agree on measuring and reporting success. They develop a short list of common indicators they will use for learning and improvement.

### 3. MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Diverse stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing action plan.

### 4. CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

### 5. BACKBONE SUPPORT

An independent, funded staff is dedicated to the initiative. The staff provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.



Source: Community Toolbox (2023). University of Kansas.

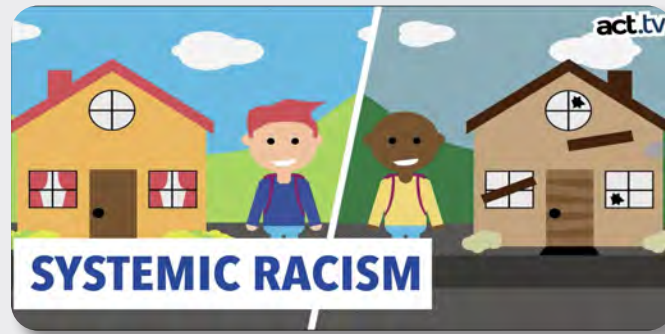
## How Might a Collaborative Reduce Opioid Deaths?

Many factors are responsible for the continuous increase in overdose rates, such as health disparities, social determinants of health, and income inequality. The disparities in opioid overdose (OOD) rates result not only from substance abuse but also from the inequality in or inaccessibility of substance abuse treatment and insufficient mental health access and stigma about seeking treatment. Lack of access to treatment and socioeconomic inequality are barriers against Hispanics and Black people seeking mental health care and substance abuse treatment.

**We must work together to reduce disparities and ensure that the systems in place work for everyone; we can change things so that all people are treated more equitably!**

By coordinating, communicating, and collaborating with education, public health, public safety, and other sectors, we can apply a cross-systems approach to inform and design overdose prevention interventions, programs, and policies and ensure they are available to all our neighbors (Houry, 2022). Several organizations are on paths like ours, and we might work together with such groups that are not directly focused on opioids but on health concerns, including the Prevention Institute and the National Network of Immunization Coalitions, which have several publications and resources that we could use in fulfilling our objectives. See [PreventionInstitute.org](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/phast-toolkit-508.pdf) and use works such as the CDC's Public Health and Safety Team Toolkit: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/phast-toolkit-508.pdf>.

## ACT.tv: Systemic Racism Explained



Source: [https://youtu.be/YrHIQIO\\_bdQ](https://youtu.be/YrHIQIO_bdQ)

### Dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences that impact individuals over a lifespan. They are so important that we have devoted Module 3 to ACEs. However, ACEs are a community problem as well as an individual one. So, we wanted to have you think about what our community can do to make life better for our children. If we can help our children, everyone's life will be better. There will be fewer cases of delinquency, healthier people, and life will be better for all.

### Groups in Durham are working to improve the lives of people here.

They include the Community Health Assessment group that looks at various factors, many of which are ACEs, to see how to make these factors less devastating to our population. The objectives of this group, like ours, are united by the sponsorship of Duke University.

The goals of the Durham County Community Health Assessment, like those of this project, involve various community segments working together to improve people's lives in various areas, including awareness and ACEs remediation. There should be a link or tie-in with this group because we have common objectives (Durham County Health Assessment, 2020).

### Raising awareness of ACEs can help:

- Change how people think about the causes of ACEs and who could help prevent them.
- Shift the focus from individual responsibility to community solutions.
- Reduce stigma around seeking help with parenting challenges or substance misuse, depression, or suicidal thoughts.
- Promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments where children live, learn, and play.

Let's help all children reach their full potential and create neighborhoods, communities, and a world where every child thrives (CDC, 2023).

# Community Organizations Making a Difference

## Safe Kids NC Safe Disposal

Safe Kids North Carolina partners with the State Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration and local Safe Kids Coalitions and law enforcement agencies to provide a safe disposal method for over-the-counter medicines and old or unneeded prescriptions.

## NC Harm Reduction Coalition (NCHRC)

Naloxone kits and instructions are provided by NCHRC throughout North Carolina. Kits are available on Fridays from 4–6 p.m. at the Sunrise Recovery House during the summer.

NCHRC in Durham County provides clean needles and injection supplies to those addicted to opioids. [nchrc.org](http://nchrc.org)

## Community Linkages to Care (CLC)

The Peer Support Program for Overdose Prevention and Response links Durham residents with substance use disorder (SUD) to evidence-based treatment, harm reduction, housing and other support services through community-based partnerships and a proven peer support model.

## Together for Resilient Youth (TRY)

Together for Resilient Youth (TRY) works to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences, racism and historical trauma that can result in substance use, suicide, violence, and other behaviors among youth by creating a resilient community through education, grassroots actions, grassroots mobilization, and collective impact.

**When we work together, we can make many positive things happen that will not only lower the OUD rate but enhance the lives of all people in our community.**

## Test Your Knowledge (answer yes or no)

1. Agreement on goals and how to measure them are elements of effective community coalitions.
2. Collective impact is when members of the group work toward a common goal.
3. Communication is not as important in collective impact as is electing a strong leader.
4. Community engagement means that members of the group get along so well that many of them decide to get engaged and marry.
5. Some of the ways our community can work toward solving the opioid problem include providing fentanyl strips to test drugs and ensuring that there is an adequate supply of Narcan.

Answers: 1 = Yes, 2 = Yes, 3 = Yes, 4 = No, 5 = Yes.