

FACT SHEET



Bill H.1981 | S.927

An Act relative to preventing overdose deaths and increasing access to treatment

Sponsors: Reps. Dylan Fernandes & Marjorie Decker | Sen. Julian Cyr

Overdose prevention centers:

- ✓ Save lives 
- ✓ Increase access to harm reduction methods 
- ✓ And link people to treatment 

THE GRIM REALITY: MA OVERDOSE DEATHS CONTINUE TO RISE

- In 2015, at least **1,750** people died from opioid overdose in MA, and the numbers rise each year. By 2021, the annual death toll had **risen 30% at nearly 2,290**.
- Recent DPH data shows widening racial disparities in overdose deaths. Opioid overdose deaths of Black, non-Hispanic men increased 63% in 2021.
- 6 people die of drug overdose in Massachusetts every day.



6 people die every day in Massachusetts from overdose

Every overdose is preventable.

We must expand our public health approach to the overdose crisis and adopt evidence-based harm reduction services.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTERS SAVE LIVES AND MONEY

DID YOU KNOW: Approximately 200 overdose prevention centers operate in 14 countries around the world and have a proven track record? **ZERO overdose deaths have occurred in these centers.**

New York City established the [OnPoint program](#) in 2021, opening the first two overdose prevention centers in the United States. In the program's first year:

- **2,085** people used the site
- **More than 600** overdoses were reversed, saving lives

A [comprehensive study](#) found that an overdose prevention center in Boston would realize **cost savings of \$4 million by** reducing reliance on costly ambulance rides, Emergency Department visits, and hospitalizations.

\$4m

in potential cost savings with an overdose prevention center in Boston

Every visit to an overdose prevention center gives a person the opportunity to connect with trusted healthcare providers, start treatment, and take the first step on the road to recovery.

Every person who uses drugs deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and trust.



Overdose prevention centers, sometimes called safe consumption sites, are evidence-based, legally sanctioned harm reduction facilities where people who use drugs can safely consume pre-obtained drugs under supervision of trained healthcare workers. In addition to preventing lethal overdoses, such facilities are designed to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis, and connect patients with social services, including drug treatment and recovery services.

Services Provided

- ✓ A safe, stigma-free setting in which to engage with healthcare services
- ✓ Emergency response to overdose
- ✓ Reduction of infection through provision of sterile supplies, wound care, and testing
- ✓ Access to counseling, medical and behavioral health services, and substance use treatment at a critical intervention point
- ✓ Exchange and disposal of sterile supplies

Leading medical and public health advocacy stakeholder groups strongly support the piloting of OPCs including the Massachusetts Medical Society and Massachusetts Public Health Association, major Massachusetts hospitals and providers such as Boston Medical Center, Mass General Brigham and Fenway Health, and non-profits RIZE Massachusetts Foundation and the Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR).

WHAT THE BILL DOES

- Establishes a **10 year pilot program** of overdose prevention centers that require approval by local boards of health
- Includes **civil and criminal protections** for staff, clients, and operators
- Requires **data collection** to inform public health efforts and prevent overdose deaths in the Commonwealth



WE NEED STATE ACTION TO ENABLE A LOCAL OPTION

- Several communities across the state are interested in opening overdose prevention sites, including Somerville and other cities, but legislation is needed to establish the legal and regulatory framework for them to operate successfully.
- Municipalities need to know the state will not stand in the way of local, evidence-based public health efforts. Providers need to know working at a center will not jeopardize their professional license. Clients need to know they will not face legal consequences for utilizing a site.
- **This bill is NOT a mandate.** It's a local option pilot paired with a long-term study.

