



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, December 21, 2021

OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTERS AVERTED 59 OVERDOSES IN FIRST THREE WEEKS OF OPERATION

December 21, 2021 — The Health Department today announced that, in the first three weeks of operation, staff at the two Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in New York City, operated by OnPoint NYC, averted at least 59 overdoses to prevent injury and death. In the first three weeks of operation, the centers have been used more than 2,000 times.

“These data are promising and show how Overdose Prevention Centers will reduce needless suffering and avoidable death,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “The simple truth is that Overdose Prevention Centers save lives – the lives of our neighbors, family and loved ones. Thank you to OnPoint NYC for launching this vital new service to keep New Yorkers healthy.”

OPCs offer supervised, hygienic spaces for people who use drugs to do so safely, and provide connection to health promoting services, such as harm reduction, medical care, mental health therapy, drug treatment, and social supports.

"We are meeting people who use drugs where they are in their life journey to support them in building their self-worth," said **Sam Rivera, Executive Director of OnPoint NYC**. "In celebrating life, we are humanizing people often not treated as human. There is love and care that happens in EVERY room at OnPoint NYC! The staff are very patient, caring and committed to our participants. The trauma people are working through is so deep - it takes time to heal through the pain. It's a very long process for many people. The early data demonstrates the OPC's are reaching exactly who they're meant for, and they're already working. We are courageous enough to work with people who use drugs at their most vulnerable state while they are actively using drugs, with the belief and proof that they can come out of that when they are ready. We are honored to be doing this important work and look forward to more OPC's opening up around the country soon."

Yesterday, by unanimous vote, the NYC Board of Health issued a [statement on taking action to prevent drug overdose deaths](#) and urged the federal government and New York State to support overdose prevention centers and other harm reduction services.

The two Overdose Prevention Centers in New York City are the first publicly recognized sites to open in the United States. The OPCs, operated by OnPoint NYC in Washington Heights and East Harlem, are located within existing Syringe Service Programs (SSPs). SSPs are a core part of the spectrum of care for people who use drugs and provide a multitude of essential services,

including syringe exchange, HIV and hepatitis C testing, counseling, and connections to social and medical services.

###

#055-21

MEDIA CONTACT: Michael Lanza / Victoria Merlino: pressoffice@health.nyc.gov