

# Narcan Distribution and Education Initiative for Phoenix's Homeless Population

## Street Medicine Phoenix

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## Introduction

### Homelessness in Phoenix

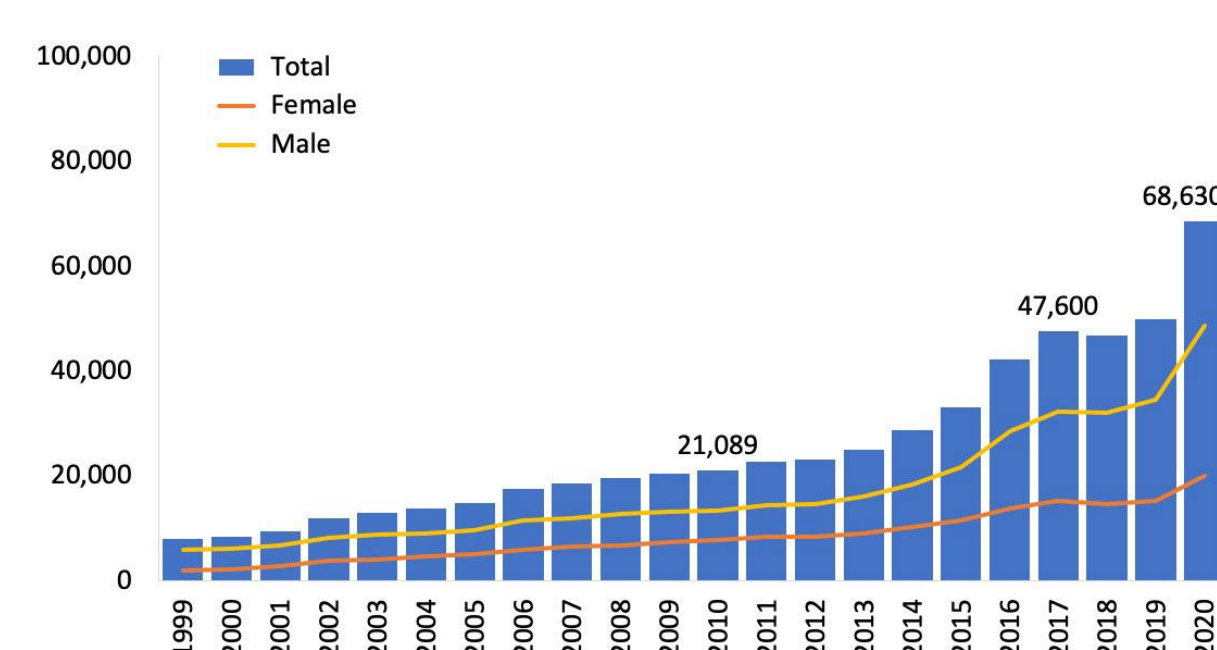


In Arizona, there were 10,979 sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness as of January 2020.<sup>2</sup> These individuals are more likely to experience poor health and have less access to care, including routine health screenings, psychiatric care, and additional support.<sup>3</sup> A lack of access to basic resources like hygiene products and proper nutrition further exacerbates health issues.

### Opioid Use in the Homeless Population

There has been an increase in opioid-related deaths in the US.<sup>4</sup> The homeless population is disproportionately affected, with overdose accounting for 1 in 4 deaths and overdose death rates up to 30-fold higher than the general population.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3. National Overdose Deaths Involving Any Opioid, Number Among All Ages, by Gender, 1999-2020



This increase is attributed to the rising prevalence of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which may be 1000x more potent than morphine, being mixed with other opioids. Synthetic opioid-related deaths surpassed prescription-related deaths in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

### Narcan

Narcan (naloxone) is a full opioid receptor antagonist used to reverse potentially fatal opioid toxicity. It has recently found use in the community to fight the ever-escalating opioid epidemic.<sup>7</sup> Many states now allow individuals to obtain Narcan without a prescription and have given third party organizations, like Street Medicine Phoenix, the ability to distribute Narcan, given they provide adequate education.<sup>8</sup>



Intranasal spray (2 per box)

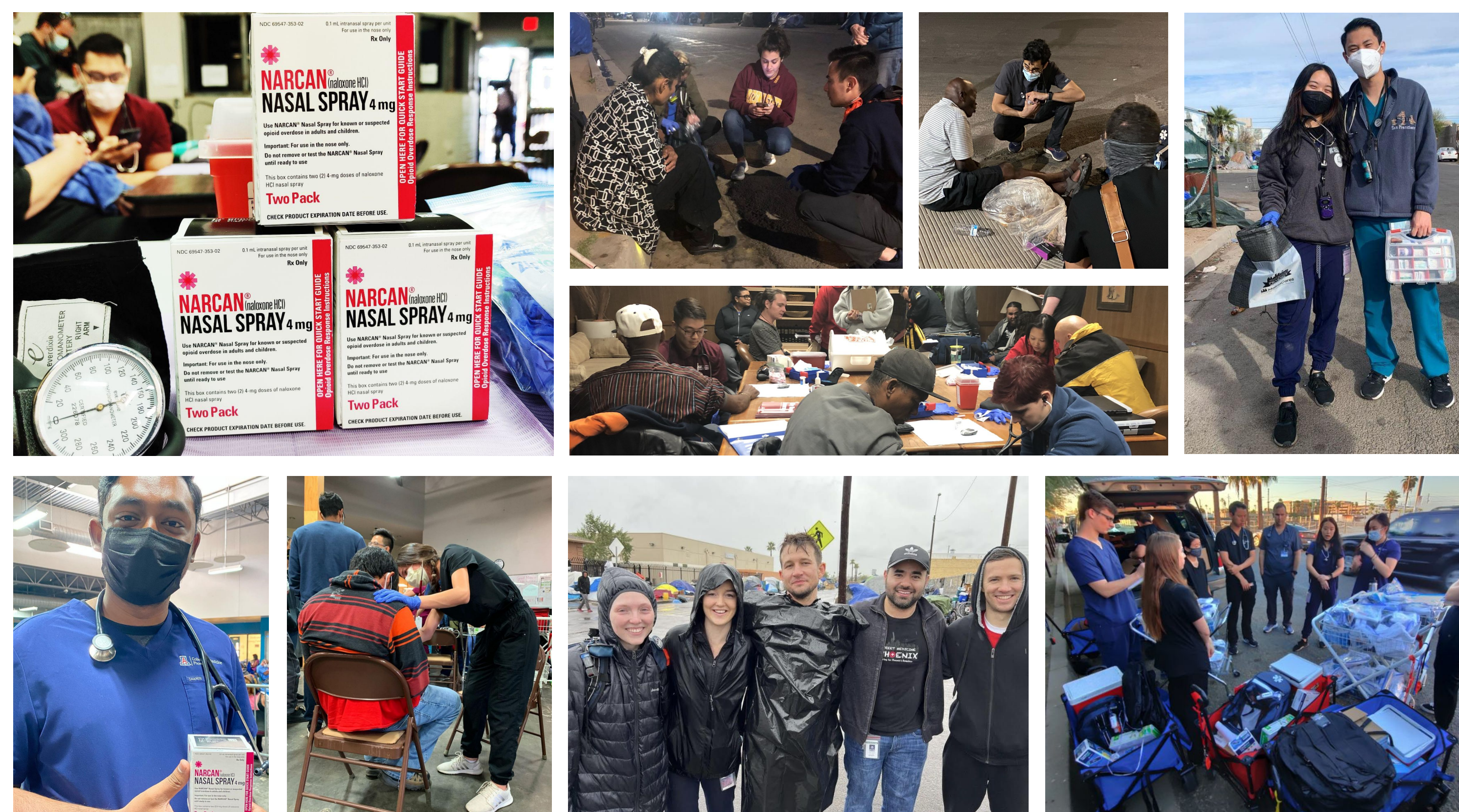
### Street Medicine Phoenix (SMP)

SMP is a student-led interprofessional program that provides health services and education to individuals experiencing homelessness. We operate through the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, Mayo Clinic, and Midwestern University. Other community partners include Molina Complete Care, Maricopa County Department of Public Health, Human Services Campus, and Grace Lutheran Church.



## Goals

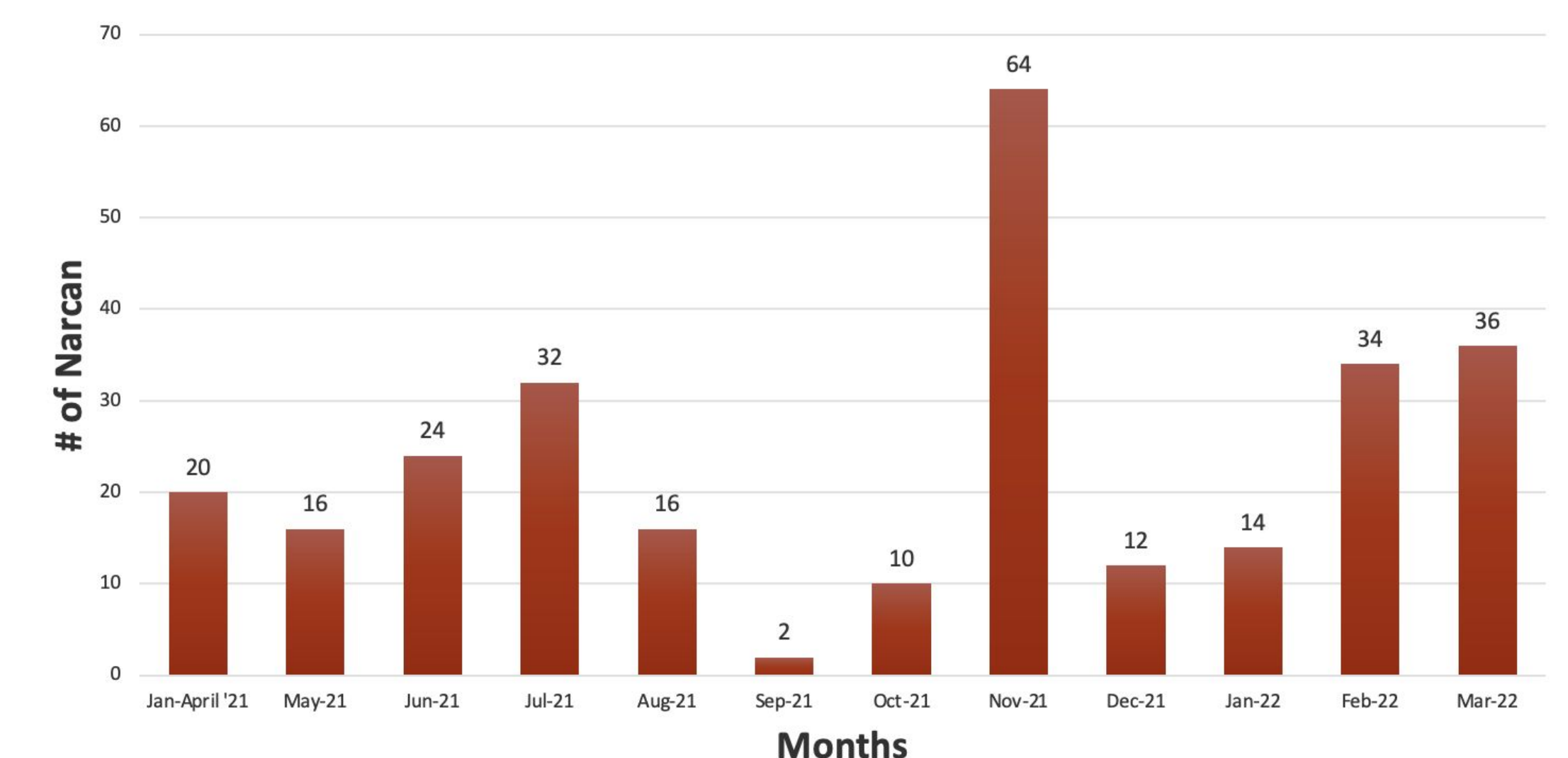
1. To distribute Narcan to people experiencing homelessness in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area
2. To provide education on the proper use of Narcan and to empower individuals to take action and save lives
3. To emphasize the importance of Narcan and opioid-related deaths as a significant public health issue in this population



## Outcomes

Street Runs: **280 Narcan** + Maricopa County Public Health Events: **552 Narcan** = **Total Distributed: 832 Narcan**

Narcan Distributed on Street Runs Jan 2021 - Mar 2022



## Discussion

Through this initiative, SMP is bringing awareness to opioid-related deaths in the homeless population as a public health issue and educating individuals about the utility of Narcan. Individuals we serve have told us they used Narcan from SMP to save a life, and we have utilized Narcan ourselves to treat patients. We have also learned the importance of training volunteers to use proper language and establish rapport to avoid patient hesitancy. The variability in the number of Narcan distributed each month can be attributed to a different number of outreach events and focus on other initiatives.

## Conclusion & Future Plans

We demonstrate that Narcan is needed and used by individuals experiencing homelessness in Phoenix. The life-saving impact of this intervention is evident in this initiative. We recognize that Narcan education and distribution is an essential component of our outreach and aim to expand our efforts across the metro Phoenix area. Moving forward, we plan to implement a study to assess Narcan awareness and knowledge before and after our engagement with individuals. This will allow us to better understand the impact of our efforts and identify areas for improvement.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the AZ Department of Health Services, End Overdose, and Molina Complete Care for supporting this initiative. We would also like to thank our preceptors, especially Dr. Robert Fauer and Dr. Kareem Raad, and our leaders for supporting SMP.

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## Contact Information

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## Activities & Methods

SMP began distributing Narcan in early 2021. We obtain Narcan primarily through a partnership with the Arizona Department of Health Services in addition to End Overdose, a nonprofit committed to preventing drug-related death through opioid overdose response training and expanding naloxone access. All students distributing Narcan must be instructed in indications and clinical use. Our SMP orientation provides further training about how to initiate the encounter, approach the topic of Narcan use, and provide patient education in the street medicine setting.

### Initiate

- Student offers supplies/donation items
- Student offers health services
- Student and preceptor address the patient's health needs, establishing rapport

### Assess

- Student asks: "Are you familiar with Narcan?"  
If the patient is unfamiliar, student explains its purpose
- Student assesses patient's need for Narcan: "Would you or anyone that you know potentially need Narcan?"
- Student determines patient's knowledge of Narcan: "Do you know how to use Narcan?" "Have you used Narcan before?"

### Provide

- Student provides education:
  - Signs and symptoms of opioid overdose
  - How to administer Narcan
  - What to expect
  - Call 911!
- Student gives Narcan to the patient and closes encounter