

Background

The U.S. has the highest overdose mortality among high-income countries. In the state of Georgia, political and cultural resistance continues to hinder harm reduction effort. However, university campuses offer unique opportunities for grassroots mobilization and engagement in public health initiatives.



Objective

To describe the impact of Harm Reduction Education, and Risk Reduction Organization (H.E.R.O.), a student-led harm reduction initiative, on overdose prevention and education at Emory University and in the Atlanta community.

Outcome

H.E.R.O. successfully expanded harm reduction awareness and practices across both campus and community settings. Regular trainings increased access to lifesaving tools, empowered students as peer educators, and strengthened Emory’s harm reduction infrastructure.



Method

- Founded in 2023 at Emory University
- Collaborated with Georgia Overdose Prevention and policy shareholders
- Distributed naloxone and fentanyl test strips at events
- Hosted both campus and community overdose prevention trainings
- Built strategic partnerships with nightlife venues and student organizations
- Prioritized outreach to young adults



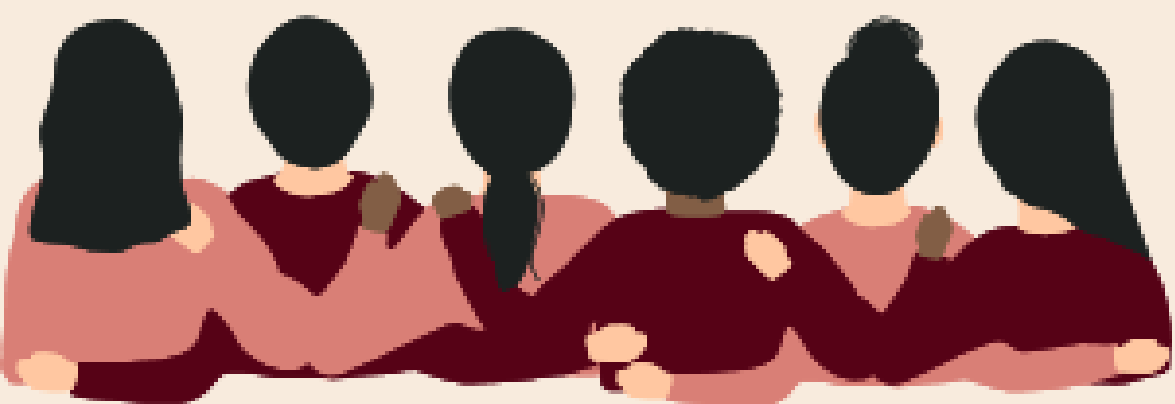
Conclusion

H.E.R.O. demonstrates the power of youth-led public health action. Through education, partnerships, and outreach, it filled harm reduction gaps in campus and community settings. This scalable model could inform overdose prevention efforts across the South.

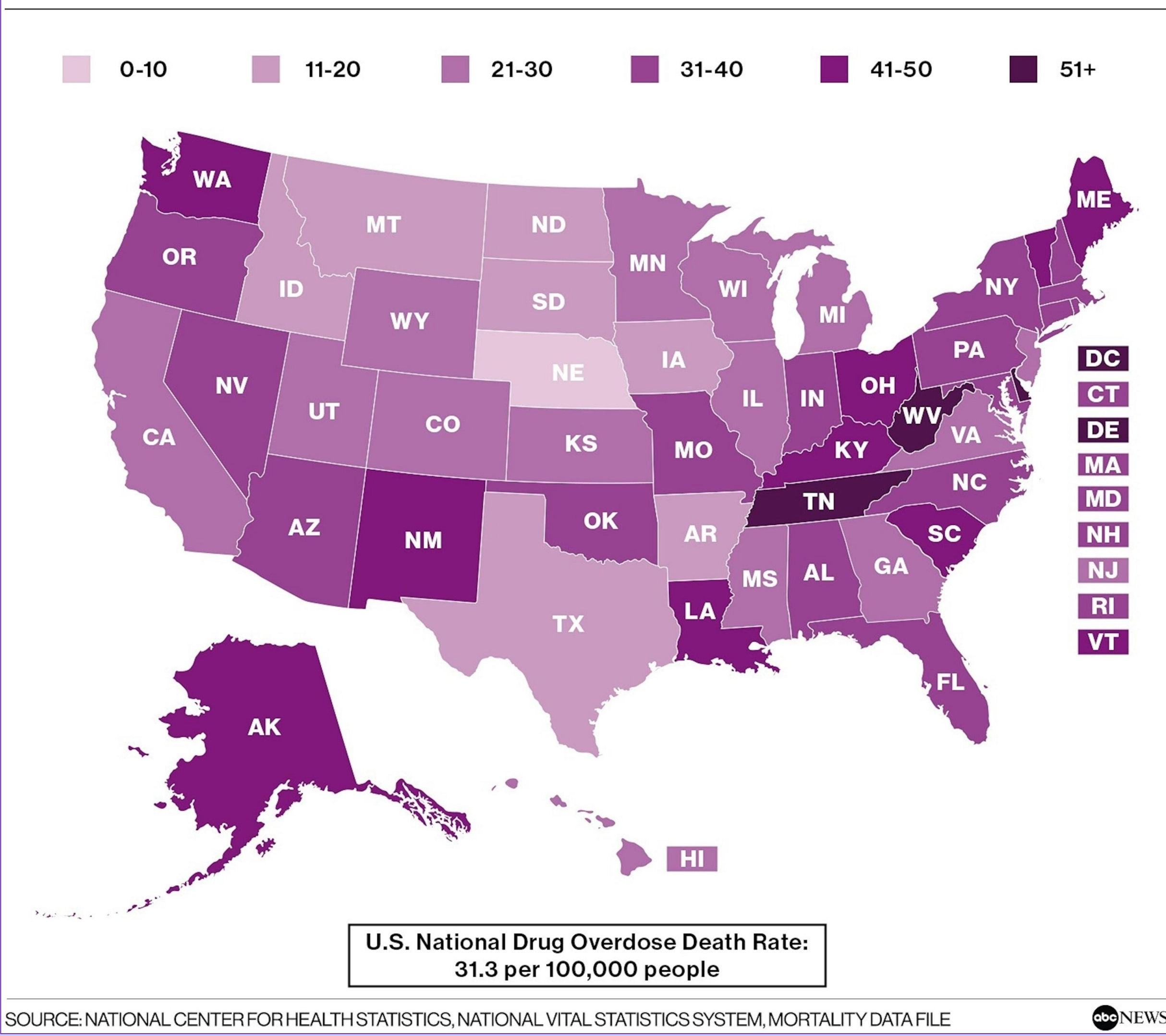


Our Mission:

"Our mission is to empower and educate the community within Rollins School of Public Health, fostering a culture of informed decision-making and responsible behavior. Through evidence-based practices and inclusive education, we strive to promote harm reduction strategies, advocating for the well-being and safety of all individuals. By fostering a supportive and non-judgmental environment, we aim to reduce health risks and promote a comprehensive understanding of public health challenges, thereby contributing to a healthier and more resilient community."



Rate of Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. By State, 2023
RATE PER 100,000 PEOPLE



Key Achievement

- Distributed 200 naloxone kits and 100 fentanyl test strips
- Trained 100 student volunteers
- Organized 10 campus events and 5 community outreach initiatives
- Established 10 ongoing partnerships with local organizations and businesses
- Grew to over 200 active members in the first year
- Supported HB 1035 legislation



Future Directions

- Address stigma and misinformation surrounding harm reduction by leveraging social media campaigns
- Establish naloxone vending machines in the school of public health
- Integrate overdose prevention education into new student orientation and campus life initiatives
- Strengthen partnerships to ensure sustainability and broaden impact
- Expand outreach to underserved populations and nearby universities through targeted engagement