

Community-Provided Fentanyl Test Strips: A Legal, Cheap, and Easy Harm Reduction Program for Sheridan, Wyoming.



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Hypothesis

Will providing public access to fentanyl test strips (FTS) reduce unintentional use of fentanyl, opiate addiction risk, and overdose risk in Sheridan County?



Historic downtown Sheridan, picture courtesy of Sheridan College.

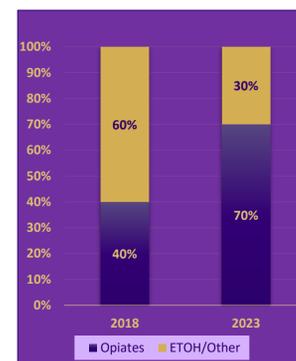
Background

- Synthetic opiate deaths in Wyoming up from 1.4/100,000 to 10.0/100,000 persons in last 7 years.
- 88% of synthetic opiate overdoses in 2022 were inadvertent/accidental.
- Needle exchanges currently illegal under state statute § 35-7-1056, FTS legalized.
- Sheridan is the major medical treatment hub for addiction in the region.
- Only suboxone/buprenorphine/naloxone prescribing providers within 100 miles.
- No SAMHSA certified methadone dispensing sites in the state.

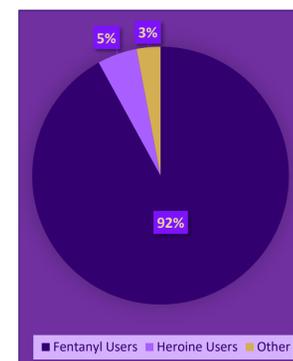
Community Profile / Assets

- **Addiction Medicine Clinic:** Run by Dr. Jason Ackerman within Sheridan Memorial Hospital. Provides internal medicine care including psychiatric care, wellness visits, medication assisted treatment, and specialty referrals.
- **Volunteers of America (VOA) :** Largest addiction treatment program in the state. Provides ASAM levels 1 – 3.5 treatment encompassing outpatient counseling and full residential care. Includes Native American cultural based, Christian, and secular treatment programs.
- **Sheridan Police Department:** Provides drug identification and education classes to local schools and community groups. Has prescription/illicit drug drop-off boxes.

VOA Patient Substance Use Patterns



Opiate use as instigator for residential treatment in 2018 and 2023.

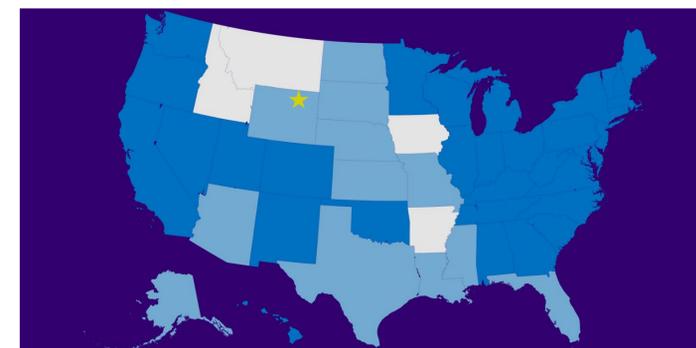


Current residential patient's (n=81) primary drug use pattern.

Integrated Review

- Harm reduction in 44/50 states often starts with needle exchange programs and then adds FTS testing.
- Free FTS distribution programs have been used successfully in both rural and metropolitan areas.

FTS Legality and Presence of Free County or State Distribution Programs



PROS: FTS access commonly associated with:

- High FTS compliance before use
- Reduced overdoses
- Less anxiety about overdose or unintentional use of fentanyl in users
- Reduced dosage of contaminated drugs when fentanyl contamination found and may contribute to abstinence

CONS: FTS are novel and only recently legalized.

- Studies have been small (n < 400 persons)
- Most literature has subjective outcomes
- High loss to follow up rates

Conclusions

FTS have high functionality and low cost for rural communities like Sheridan county.

- **Legal:** Doesn't qualify as drug paraphernalia under § 35-7-1056.
- **Cheap:** Most strips cost <\$1/Strip and qualify for federal grants under SAMHSA.
- **Easy to implement:** Not controlled, can use pre-established network with addiction treatment partners in community.

Challenges:

- Find community partner to write grants/find funding.
- Find community partner to accept and distribute strips.
- Establishing follow up system with addiction treatment partners to assess efficacy of FTS use in community.

Future Directions:

- Work towards needle exchange program legality in Wyoming.
- Integrate FTS distribution with needle exchange programs.

Acknowledgments:

1. Thank you to Dr. Jason Ackerman for the opportunity to work with addiction medicine for the first time and catalyzing my interest in this project.
2. Thank you to Jayme Ackerman, LPC for giving me perspective on how the VOA operates and for so many connections in the community.
3. Thank you to Officer Jeremy Kmett for providing insight into harm reduction, legal management, and police work involved in community addiction management in Wyoming.