

Real Time, On-Site Drug Checking in Low-Threshold Housing Communities

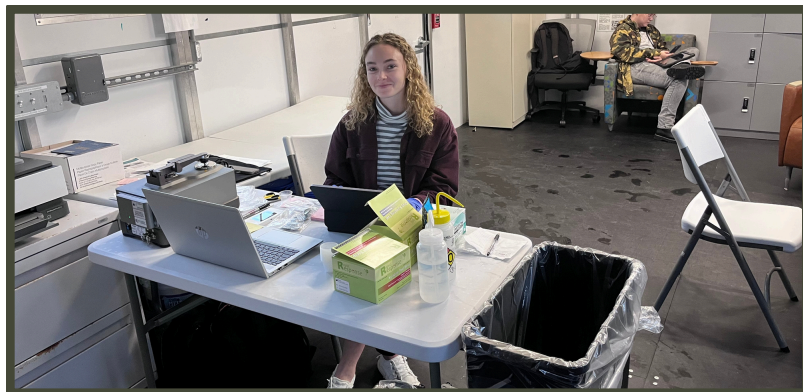
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Background

- Boston has responded to rising rates of overdose and homelessness by creating Harm Reduction Housing (HRH) sites.
- While many harm reduction services are available at these sites, drug checking services were notably absent.
- Drug checking offers a window into concerning supply shifts and helps monitor disruptions in the local supply.

Objectives

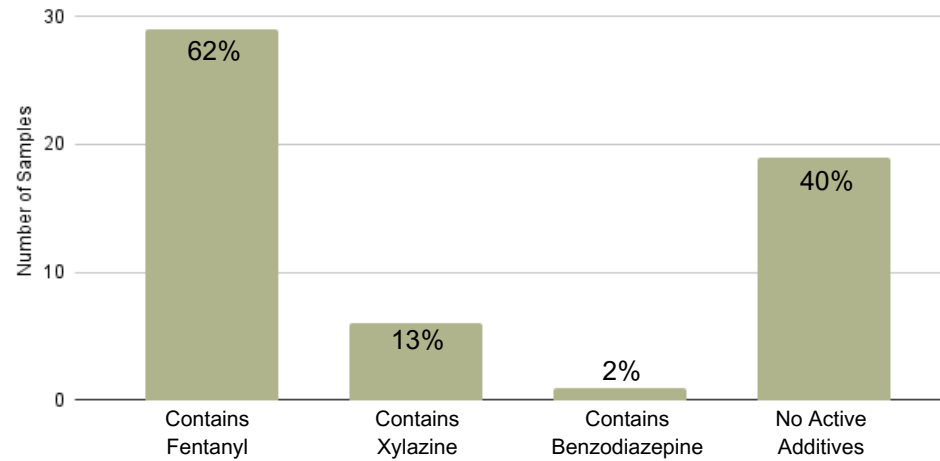
- Explore the feasibility and benefits of on-site drug checking services at HRH sites
- Assess the impact of these services among residents



Source: Abigail Edelmann

Samples Tested Containing Unexpected Active Additives

Based on preliminary test strip results for fentanyl, xylazine, and benzodiazepines



Methods

- Utilizing existing Massachusetts Drug Supply Data Stream (MADDS) resources, team members set up real-time drug checking services in the common spaces of four HRH sites.
- Residents were asked to provide ~5mg of their substance or residue from used materials.
- The samples were immediately tested for xylazine and other contaminants using Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) and immunoassay test strips, logged into the data collection platform StreetCheck, then mailed to partnering laboratories for confirmatory testing.

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Results

- Technicians scanned and analyzed **47** samples over the course of **6** visits. Some participants provided multiple samples.
- Residents whose samples appeared positive for xylazine were given educational pamphlets on wound care and engaged in discussions regarding harm reduction.
- Drug checking generated an increase in xylazine awareness and concern among residents and staff. Residents inquired about future drug checking opportunities and expressed concerns about potential xylazine related harm.

Conclusion

Real-time, on-site drug checking in low-barrier housing programs is a promising harm reduction tool for detecting acute shifts in the drug supply and providing information to PWUD about the contents of their supply. It can also be a mechanism for education and brief intervention.



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