

“Opioids in Carceral Settings”

Study Overview

These studies highlight the pervasive challenges faced by individuals within the corrections system, including heightened overdose risks during and after incarceration. They emphasize the critical need for integrated approaches that encompass medication-assisted treatment (MAT), comprehensive reentry programs, and structural reforms to mitigate these risks and promote successful rehabilitation and community safety.



Opioid use disorders are prevalent in prisons due to factors like stress, overcrowding, and limited meaningful activities. Access to opioids in prison contributes to a cycle of dependence among inmates.

TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Individuals previously incarcerated within two years accounted for a significant proportion (21%) of overdose deaths in one county, emphasizing the lasting health impacts of incarceration.
- ✓ Individuals leaving prison face an increased risk of overdose due to reduced tolerance to opioids developed during incarceration. This phenomenon, known as post-incarceration overdose, underscores the need for robust support systems during reentry.
- ✓ MAT (including methadone and buprenorphine), administered in correctional facilities, stabilizes health and reduces opioid use among inmates. Expanding MAT availability improves reentry outcomes.
- ✓ Structural factors such as lack of access to healthcare, housing instability, and unemployment significantly amplify overdose risks among individuals transitioning from incarceration to community life. Policy reforms and community-based interventions address these barriers.