

ARLINGTON ADDICTION **AARI** RECOVERY INITIATIVE

2017-2023

IMPACT REPORT

Reflecting on the impact of AARI's first 6 years
Paving the way to create a lasting
impact within the community.



Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI) 2017 - 2023 Impact Report

Background

Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI), is Arlington’s opioid and other addictions taskforce, comprised of stakeholders from across the county, including treatment providers, first responders, schools, the justice system, the hospital, and private citizens.

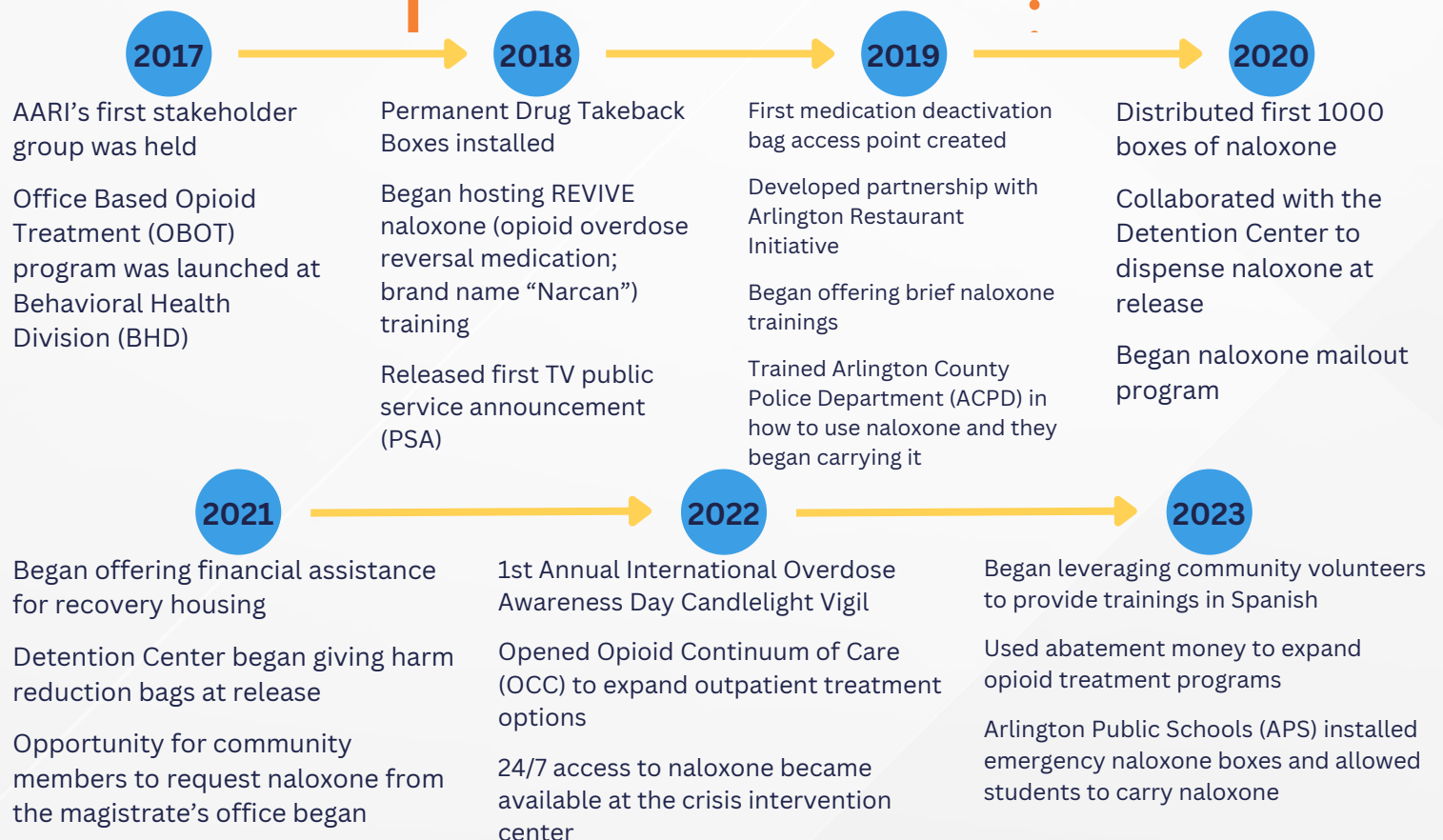
AARI was founded in January 2017 in response to the rising concerns regarding opioids in our community. Our primary goals are to prevent individuals from developing a substance use disorder, increase access and awareness of available treatment resources in our community, and decrease access to opioids through diversion.

AARI works off a Strategic Plan with three primary focus areas: Prevention, Treatment, and Supply Reduction. The full Strategic Plan can be accessed on our [website](#).

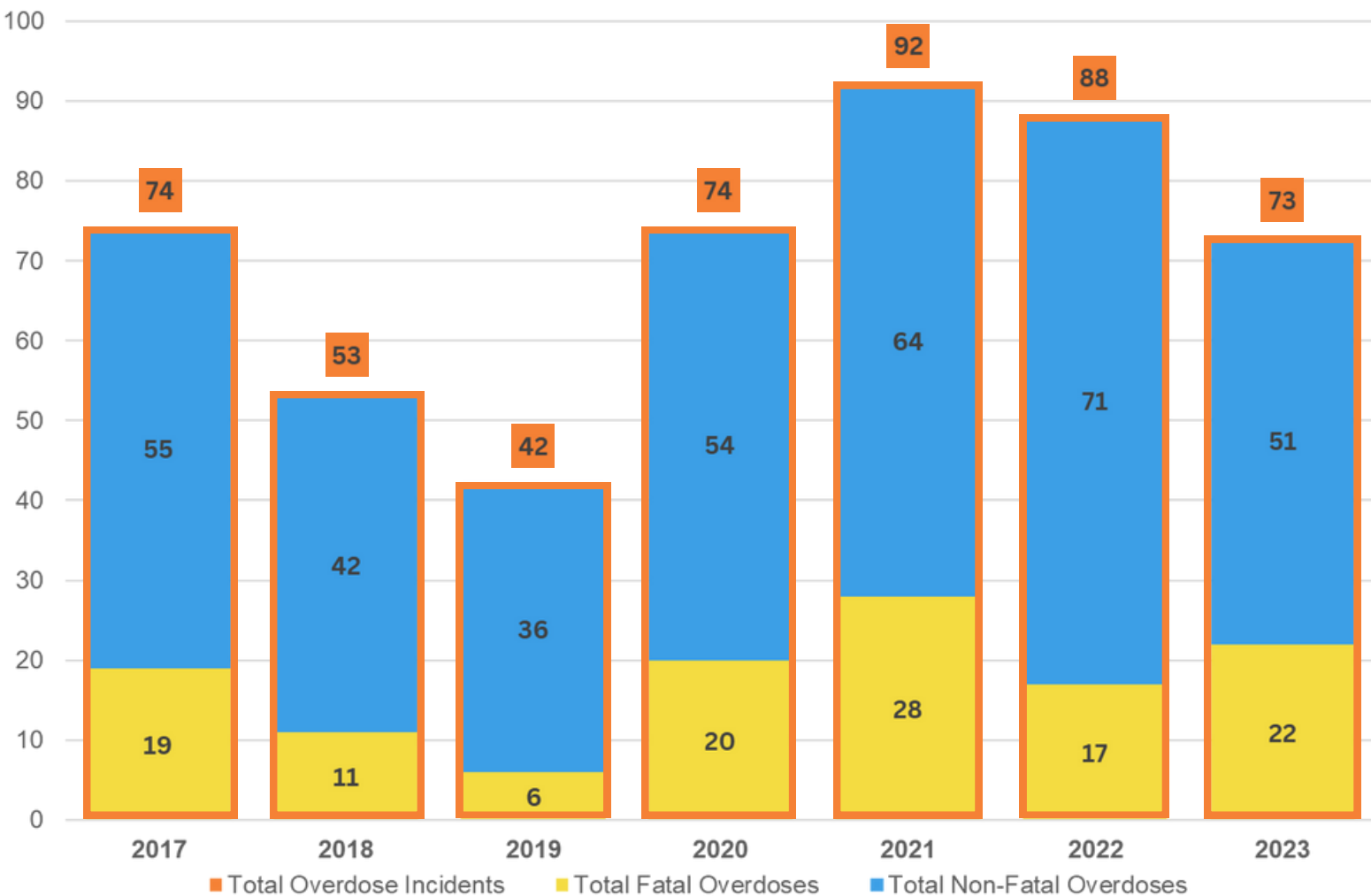
MISSION STATEMENT

To reduce the incidence of substance use, dependency and overdose by improving the community understanding of the dangers of substance use, utilizing an integrated system of community members and professionals to provide support, resources, and education.

AARI THROUGH THE YEARS



Overdose Incidents Arlington (2017 - 2023)



Funding

AARI's work has been made possible through the pursuit of funding from various sources along with support from local dollars.

AARI regularly seeks grant funding to enhance programing. Noted are some of the funds that have contributed to AARI's sustainability.

Washington / Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (WB HIDTA) - Drug trend program- one time discretionary funds 2023

Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA)

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) - Medication Assisted Treatment Grant - ongoing

Bureau of Justice Administration's (BJA) Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Use Program (COSSUP)- expires September 2024

CareFirst - Opioid response expansion - one time funding October 2018 - October 2020

State Opioid Response Grant (SOR) - Prevention, treatment, recovery - Renewed annually since 2018

Local Funding

Focus Area 1: Prevention

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) & Campaigns

AARI began utilizing SOR prevention funds in 2019 to engage the public with prevention campaigns through PSAs on television and electronic advertising through geofencing and social media. Additionally, we have utilized print media through bus advertisements, posters in our community and schools, banners in our parks and recreation fields, and giveaways like magnets and stickers.

These campaigns were guided by community-level data and community voices. Campaigns have focused on medication safety, naloxone, harm reduction, counterfeit pills, and stigma reduction.

AARI and APS have a strong partnership and have worked closely on several prevention campaigns including an over-the-counter medication safety curriculum for K-12 students, which was launched during the 2022 - 2023 school year. The importance of medication safety was further highlighted through a TV PSA developed by the youth-led Substance Use Committee at Williamsburg Middle School. APS substance use counselors have played active roles in AARI since its inception, a few examples include inviting AARI to speak to students, developing resource folders, hanging posters, and disseminating medication deactivation bags. School athletic departments have partnered with AARI to train and dispense prevention related magnets to student athletes.



AARI In The News!

AARI has had over 20 local, national, and international print and broadcast appearances in outlets such as BBC, CBS, NPR, and Arlington Magazine!



Events – Presentations & Tabling

64
AARI presentations given

7000+
community members engaged with AARI at events

92
events tabled

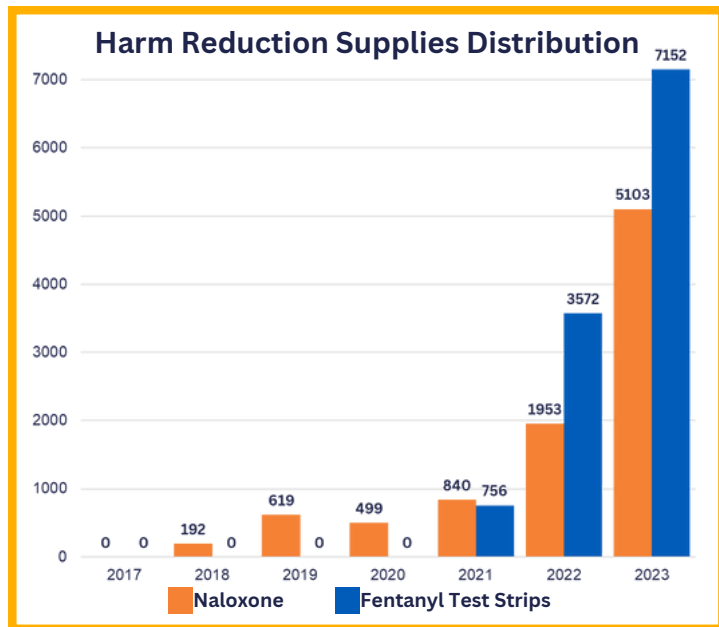
Since the inception of AARI, community presentations have been provided by request and tailored to the specific groups. Presentations have included general substance use education, drug trends, and prevention presentations for youth and families. They have taken place in community settings, schools, churches, and private businesses/offices. AARI also engages with the community through tabling events at already established gatherings. Included at AARI tables are information on who AARI is, prevention and treatment resources, and harm reduction tools and education. Beginning in 2019, we began tracking the number of people we interact with at tabling events using a tally tracker.

Overdose Prevention

Overdose prevention and harm reduction efforts are considered tertiary prevention, in that, these efforts prevent fatal consequences due to the disease of addiction. AARI offers naloxone education to the community through abridged trainings at community events and 1-hour naloxone trainings adapted from REVIVE!. AARI has provided trainings by request for specific groups and general trainings open to the community at large. Categories trained include faith based groups, civic associations and other community groups, restaurants and bars, County employees, area non-profits, local business and offices, college and high school students, and school communities. In 2020, AARI assisted APS with the process of training and designating particular school staff to carry naloxone, and in 2022, this partnership was expanded to include all APS staff.

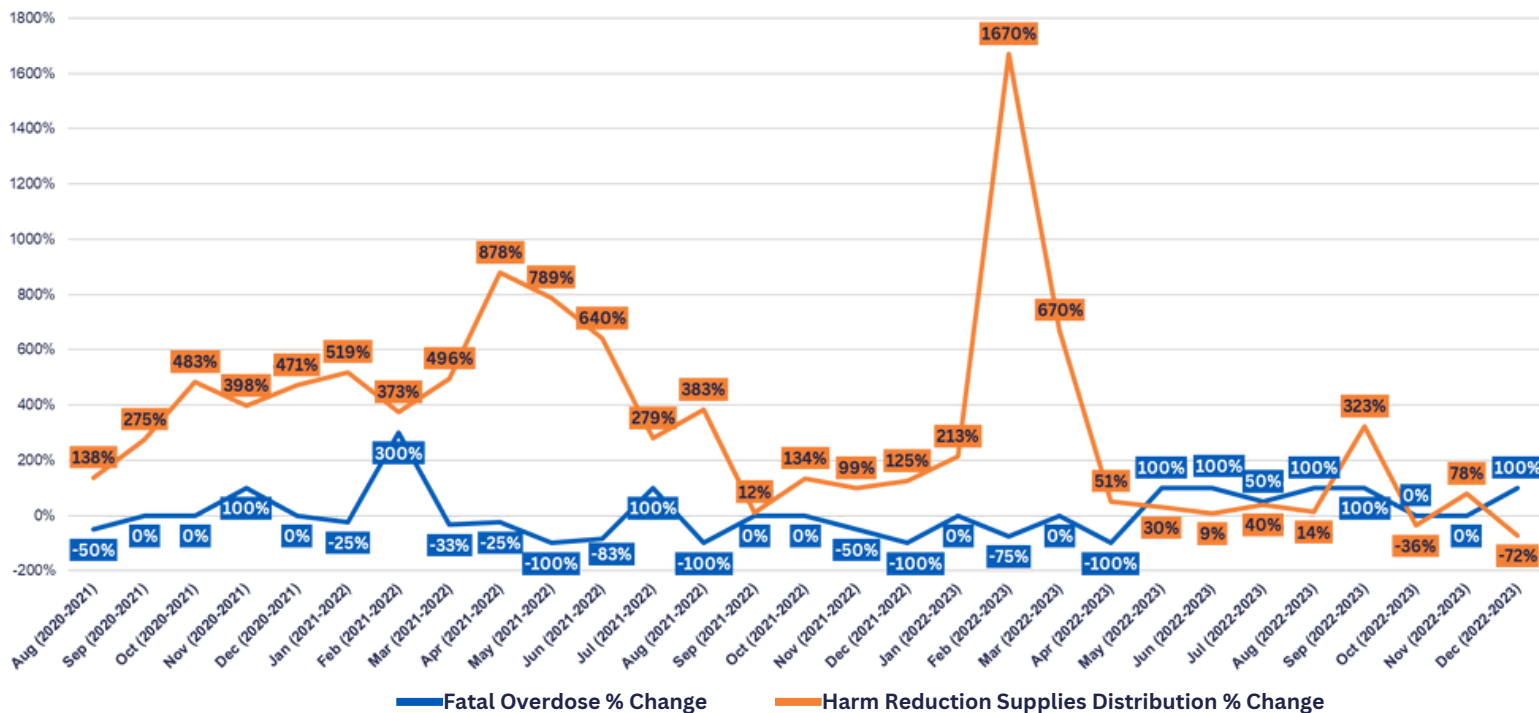
In addition to providing naloxone, AARI has increased access to naloxone by assisting partners in obtaining no-cost naloxone from Virginia Department of Health (VDH). AARI has provided technical assistance to Path Forward, the ACPD, ACFD, APS, and Court Services.

Finally, AARI has focused on ensuring naloxone is available in the event of an overdose emergency. AARI has partnered with libraries, parks and recreation, Marymount University, Animal Welfare League, the local shelters, and many more to install 126 opioid overdose emergency kits in public access, so that anyone can respond in the event of a suspected overdose. In 2023 AARI provided APS with their first set of emergency boxes to install in middle and high schools.



“Harm reduction is a proactive and evidence-based approach to reduce the negative personal and public health impacts of behavior associated with substance use at both the individual and community levels.”
 - Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Month-by-Month Percent Change: Fatal Overdose Incidents & All Harm Reduction Supplies Distributed (2021 – 2023)



Focus Area 2: Treatment

Treatment Expansion

AARI has advocated for expanded treatment and diversion programs from its inception. Since AARI started, the county has seen an expansion in treatment through the development of OBOT, which pairs therapy and medication to treat opioid use disorders (MOUD), and later AARI turned its attention towards reducing barriers to access MOUD through the development of the OCC program. AARI has assisted in advocating for an increase in diversion programs, MOUD in the jail, and funding for individuals to access recovery housing.

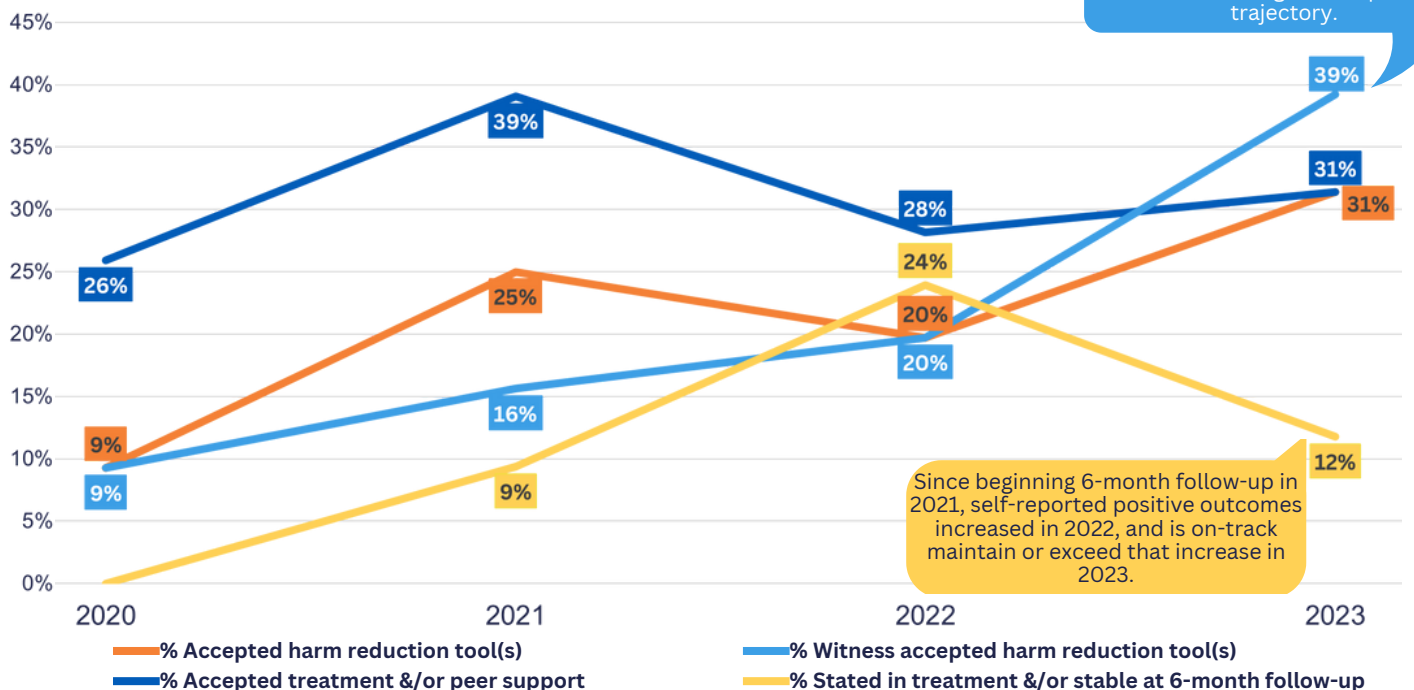
Treatment Expansion Milestones



Overdose Outreach

AARI's overdose outreach program began in 2018 and over the years, has obtained funding for a full-time peer recovery specialist (PRS) to provide outreach and engagement services to individuals experiencing addiction. Through AARI partnerships, the Arlington County Police Department notifies the Department of Human Services of overdoses. The PRS contacts individuals to provide a connection to treatment, peer support, and harm reduction tools. The PRS also contacts witnesses to provide education on overdose and harm reduction tools. Grief support is provided to family and friends who have lost loved ones to overdose. In September 2023, the Fire Department, in partnership with AARI, began a naloxone leave behind program, leaving naloxone at the scene of overdoses and other substance use-related emergencies.

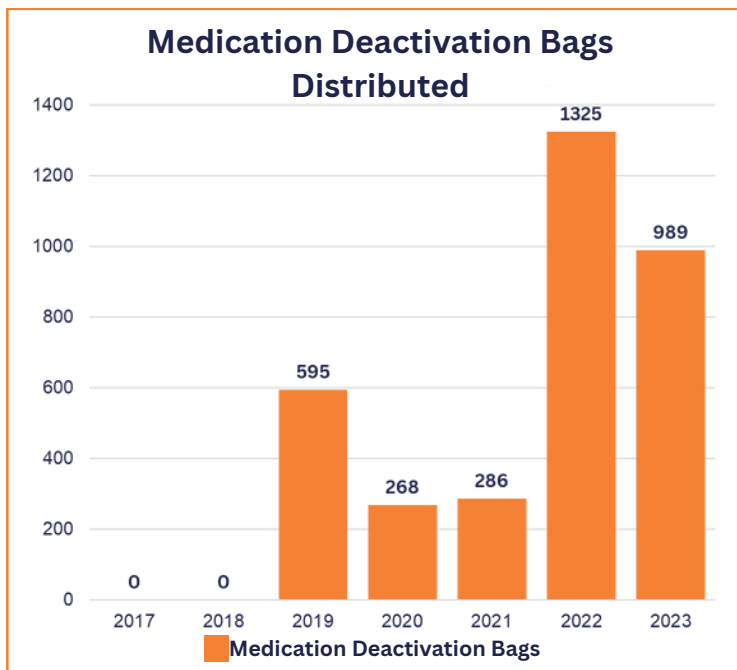
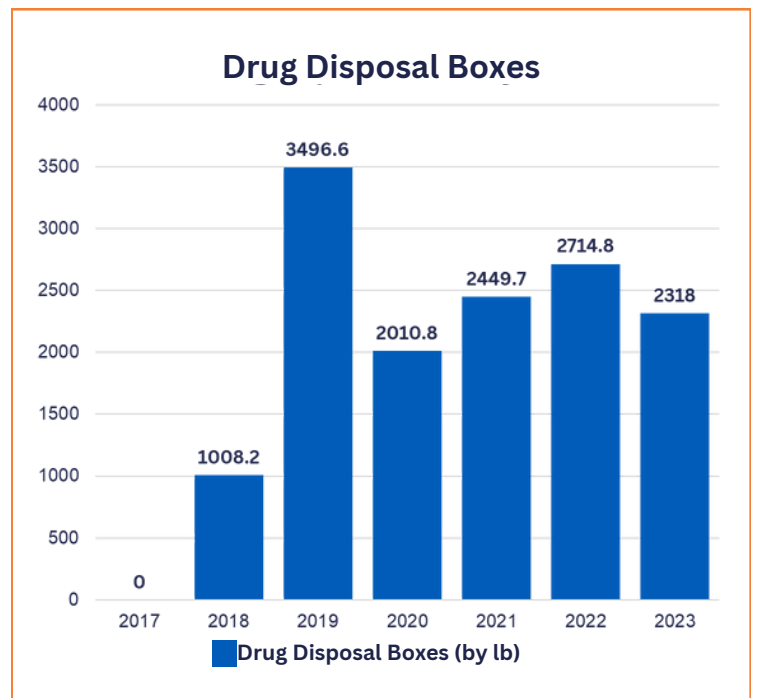
Post Overdose Outreach Outcomes



* At time of publication, 6-month follow-up is limited to overdoses occurring between January – June 2023; 6-month follow-up calls began in 2021. An additional consideration is changing contact information can limit 6-month follow-up calls.

Focus Area 3: Supply Reduction

in 2018, AARI completed its first project, installing four permanent drug takeback boxes throughout the community. The police department utilized drug seizure funds to purchase them. These boxes have remained consistently used to dispose of medications and reduce access to drugs that may otherwise lead to addiction. In addition, AARI has purchased medication deactivation bags and medication lockboxes to provide to community members as an alternative supply reduction strategy. AARI partners with Meals on Wheels annually to provide medication deactivation bags to our homebound community members and in 2021, AARI began setting up medication deactivation bag “access points.” These access points act as locations where community members can quickly pick up medication deactivation bags for at home disposal. Some of AARI’s access point partners include the food bank, a local senior apartment, the animal shelter, and APS.



Summary

The work of AARI is a true community effort and without the strong support from county leadership, partnerships with community organizations, county departments, and invested community members, this work would not be accomplished. AARI is a collaborative approach to tackling the opioid and other addictions epidemic while ensuring partners are not duplicating one another's efforts and rather co-creating solutions and supporting one another in their initiatives. Through the work of strong partnerships and dedicated AARI leadership within DHS, AARI can take a birds' eye view of the epidemic and the work being done to solve it.

AARI's Work Saves Lives

The success of this work is reflected in Arlington overdose rates. The number of fatal overdoses peaked in Arlington, as well as Virginia in 2021. From 2021 - 2022 Arlington overdoses decreased by nearly 40%, compared to the approximately 2% decrease seen for all of Virginia. In 2023, the illicit drug supply became more toxic than ever, contributing to an increase in fatal overdoses in the United States. Statewide it is predicted that there will be a slight increase in fatal overdoses, bringing the total back up to 2021 levels. Arlington has not been spared the toxicity of the current drug supply and while fatal overdoses have increased from 2022 - 2023, the total remains approximately 20% below the aforementioned peak in 2021.

Future Recommendations/Goals

AARI will release the next Impact Report in 2027, upon AARI's ten-year anniversary. In the interim, AARI will continue to work off of the existing strategic plan, which is reviewed and updated every three years, to make progress toward predetermined goals. The below recommendations will be considered for addition to the strategic plan during its 2025 review.

Prevention

- Impact overdose rates by utilizing data and equity analyses to identify a goal for a monthly number of harm reduction tools to be dispensed and to guide targeted outreach.
- Increase access to naloxone through vending machines and emergency boxes.
- Increase early prevention programming through partnerships with APS and the Child and Family Services Division

Treatment

- Expand adolescent substance use treatment to include residential treatment options.
- Increase Spanish speaking providers and resources.
- Increase capacity at Arlington's low intensity substance use residential services program.

Supply Reduction

- Utilize HIDTA grant to purchase drug detection device to track drug trends and educate police, treatment providers, and people who use drugs of detected threats.
- Increase medication deactivation access points.

Staffing

- Hire a full-time **public health analyst** to analyze local, regional, and national data to ensure evidence-based practices are implemented in an equitable, data-informed manner. Through cross-sector partnerships, public health analyst will review emerging drug trends and inform the community about the safety concerns these trends pose.
- Hire a full-time **community outreach and engagement specialist** to coordinate the growing volunteer program, increase community engagement and understanding on the topic of addiction and the opioid epidemic, and plan outreach events.

**Thank you AARI Partners
for being engaged in this important work since 2017**

Arlington Community Corrections Unit
Arlington Community Services Board
Arlington County Commonwealth Attorney's Office
Arlington County Fire Department
Arlington County Office of Public Defenders
Arlington County Police Department
Arlington County Public Schools
Arlington County Sheriff's Office
Arlington Department of Human Services
Arlington Parks and Recreation Department
Arlington Public Libraries
Alcohol Safety Action Program
Chris Atwood Foundation
District 10 Probation and Parole
Encore Recovery
Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court
National Capital Treatment and Recovery
Overdose Response Strategy - Virginia
Recovery Centers of America
SAFE Project
Second Chance Program
Virginia Hospital Center
Marymount University

Washington / Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (WB HIDTA)

