

# SAMHSA OTP Treatment Flexibilities Show Strong Results

In April  
of 2024



the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) enacted regulatory flexibilities for Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) in order to expand access to highly-effective, evidence-based services, especially in rural areas, and allow treatment to be more patient-centered.

The SAMHSA flexibilities give more authority to OTP clinical experts to individualize treatment in a highly structured context. The implementation of these flexibilities correlate with a dramatic decrease in overdose deaths across the country. For the 12 months ending in November 2024, 6 months after the SAMHSA flexibilities were made permanent, **CDC estimated overdose deaths declined over 26%, compared to the previous year.<sup>1</sup>**

## KEY SAMHSA TREATMENT FLEXIBILITIES

### METHADONE TAKE-HOME DOSES

OTPs can provide up to 28 methadone take-home doses to patients deemed stable based on clinical assessment.

### TELEHEALTH FOR INITIATION

Permit methadone initiation via audio-visual telehealth admission, if deemed appropriate by a licensed OTP practitioner.

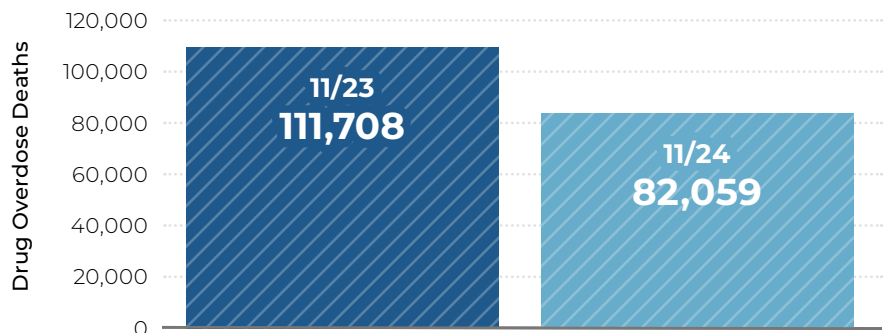
### INCREASED FIRST DOSE GUIDELINES

Initial dose of methadone is individually determined by an OTP clinician and can be up to 50 mg, unless medically justified and documented.

### INTRODUCTION OF MOBILE MEDICATION UNITS

Any certified OTP can add a mobile or brick-and-mortar medication unit under its existing registration to reach remote areas.

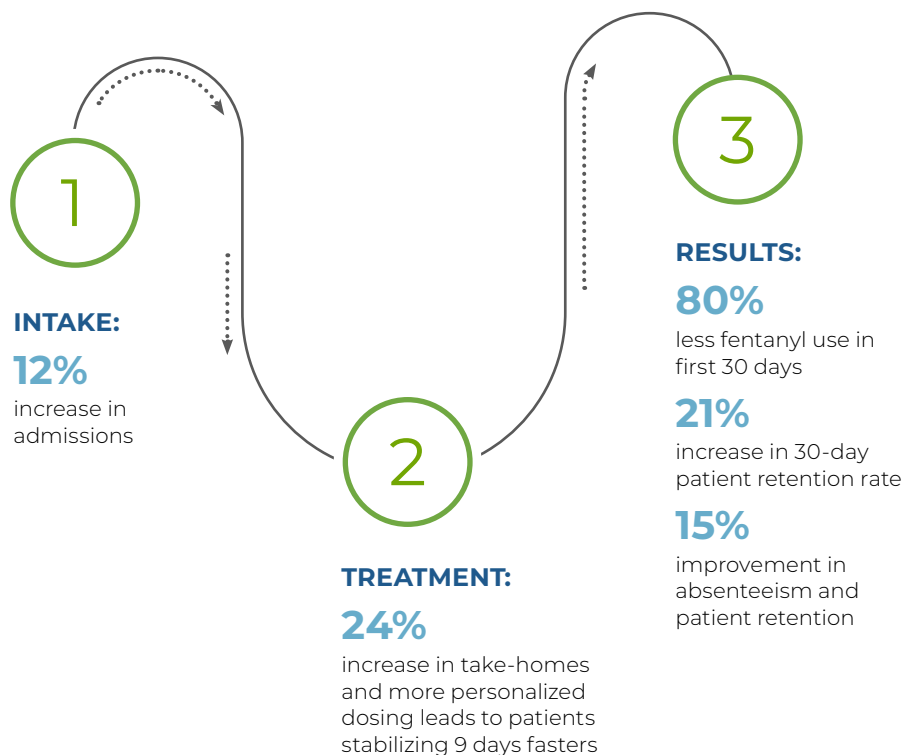
## CDC ESTIMATED DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS FOR PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS



# The first 30 days

of medication-assisted treatment are critical.

New Season, a network of 87 OTPs across 20 states, has seen dramatic increase in intake and retention and decreases in fentanyl use in 2024. These changes are largely attributed to the more accessible and individualized care OTPs can deliver using the SAMHSA flexibilities—telehealth admissions, take-home medication and accelerated dosing protocols.



## STATE ADOPTION

Most states showed declines in overdose deaths in 2024, however 5 states—Alaska, Montana, Nevada, South Dakota, and Utah—still show increases.<sup>2</sup> Although some states have yet to adopt these flexibilities and continue to restrict OTPs from fully unlocking the opportunity to increase access and modernize patient care delivery, many states have adopted the changes.

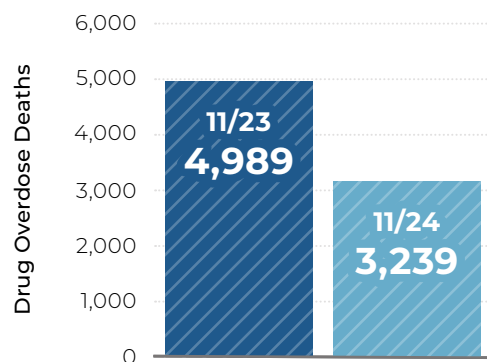
## Ohio is leading the way.

Ohio implemented SAMHSA's permanent flexibility exemptions quickly and successfully and has already seen improvements.

The CDC projects that Ohio's overdose death rate decreased by 35%, nearly 10% better than the national average. New Season's 5 OTPs in Ohio have been utilizing these flexibilities and seeing impressive results. When comparing 2023 data to 2024, they have seen:

↑	<b>6.6%</b>	increase in admissions
↑	<b>28%</b>	increase in patient take-homes
↑	<b>27%</b>	decrease in fentanyl use in first 30 days
↑	<b>5%</b>	increase in retention rates

**OHIO: CDC ESTIMATED DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS FOR PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS**



The success of Ohio in adopting SAMHSA's permanent flexibilities highlights the life-saving potential of empowering OTPs with greater clinical flexibility given the highly structured setting—and underscores **the urgent need for all states to embrace these proven strategies to combat the opioid crisis.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2025/2025-cdc-reports-decline-in-us-drug-overdose-deaths.html>