

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

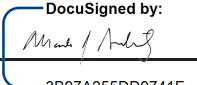
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Arlington County
Program Title: Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI)
Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Submission

Arlington County – Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI)

Problem/Challenge Being Addressed

This nomination is for Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI) for its efforts to improve community safety and health in the face of a pandemic-related surge in opioid use, and the threats that accompany the increasing presence of fentanyl in the region.

Awards Criteria

(Innovation, Partnering or Collaboration, and a Model for Other Localities)

AARI’s efforts meet awards criteria in several ways. Foremost among those is the way the program has formed and grown strong partnerships in the community. Collaboration has been part of AARI’s DNA since its founding in 2017. AARI is composed of stakeholders from across the county, including treatment providers, first responders, the justice system, the school system, the hospital, and private citizens. The group meets monthly to review trends, share information and resources, and develop plans and strategies to meet community needs. With this comprehensive stakeholder group at its core, AARI has created a strategic plan that is reviewed and updated every three years. This process ensures that efforts continue to address the most pressing community needs, incorporate evolving best practices, and provide opportunity for community input on a regular basis.

This broad-based collaboration made a prompt and effective response possible when, in 2022, a crisis was brewing: reports of pandemic-related anxiety and depression surged, substance use

was on the rise, and the prevalence of opioids and fentanyl in the community added new, life-threatening risks.

As a direct result of AARI's well-established collaborative network of stakeholders, Arlington was able to respond to the growing opioid crisis in our community swiftly and effectively. Now, Arlington residents are better informed of the risks of opioids and fentanyl, how to intervene in the event of an overdose, and how to seek treatment and resources for themselves and loved ones.

How the Program was Carried Out

(Including Financing and Staffing)

Overview

AARI, the Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative, is Arlington's opioid and other addictions taskforce, composed of stakeholders from across the county, including treatment providers, first responders, the justice system, the school system, the hospital, and private citizens.

AARI was founded in January 2017 in response to the rising concerns regarding opioids in our community. AARI brings life to Arlington County's commitment to:

- Reducing the incidents 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, in collaboration with community partners, has created a strategic plan that is reviewed and updated every three years. The plan includes three primary focus areas: Prevention, Treatment, and Supply Reduction.

1. Prevention

- Community education & awareness, data sharing with the community, educational trainings on prevention, harm reduction, and supply reduction, and naloxone training and distribution.

2. Treatment

- Increase access to substance use treatment, expand availability of treatment, develop diversion programs, enhance recovery supports, and maintain a strong overdose response

3. Supply Reduction

- Drug take back, education on the benefits of safe medication storage and disposal and free resources, decrease access to opioids through prescriptions and engagement with the medical community

Staffing

AARI utilizes 1 total FTE within the Department of Human Services (DHS). Staffing is comprised of a 0.5 FTE AARI coordinator and a 0.5 FTE outreach and engagement specialist. AARI relies

heavily on community partners and volunteers to assist in the work via community presentations and trainings, tabling at community events, and naloxone distribution. The DHS staff coordinator facilitates three workgroups made up of community partners and volunteers, to ensure the strategic plan is being implemented.

Funding

AARI projects are largely supported through State Opioid Response prevention, treatment and recovery grants, totaling approximately \$250,000 a year. Additional funding support comes from local dollars, substance use block grants, DOJ grants, and medication assisted treatment grants.

AARI in Action

AARI's work under the three core areas has been carried out by AARI members, Department of Human Services staff, partner agencies, and community members. In late 2022 and early 2023, Arlington and other communities throughout the region and across the nation were again being rocked by a wave of opioid and fentanyl related overdoses and deaths. On February 2, 2023, an Arlington teenager became the latest victim of this crisis, passing away from the effects of an opioid overdose that took place two days earlier in a school bathroom.

AARI immediately jumped into action. Using its already established partnerships and strategies, the group embarked on a campaign to ensure that every community member knew the risks of opioids, knew how to get help, and were equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to

intervene in the event of an opioid overdose. In the first quarter of 2023, AARI led a community effort that included:

- Taking part in 15 community events or presentations, with interaction with more than 1,000 community members.
- Training more than 2,800 people on how to administer Narcan and dispensing more than 2,800 boxes of Narcan.
 - This effort was carried out by AARI members as well as a cadre of community volunteers who were specially trained on teaching Narcan administration.
- Airing an over-the-counter medication safety PSA written by Williamsburg Middle Schools Students and recorded in English by Williamsburg students and in Spanish by members of the Buckingham Youth Brigade.
 - These ads had over 100,000 impressions
 - The Spanish language one aired during Super Bowl!
- Giving out 3,708 fentanyl test strips
- Giving out 491 medication deactivation bags
- To celebrate Drug Facts Week AARI went to Arlington Food Assistance Center for the week and handed out information on substance use and dispensed naloxone to 148 people.
- Collaborated with Arlington Public Schools and provided them with 28 opioid overdose emergency boxes that were installed in all the High Schools.

- AARI has also advocated for expanded access to substance use treatment for youth, which culminated in the launch of a new program offering Outpatient and Intensive Outpatient Treatment for adolescents through a local non-profit provider.

Program Results

2023 Highlights

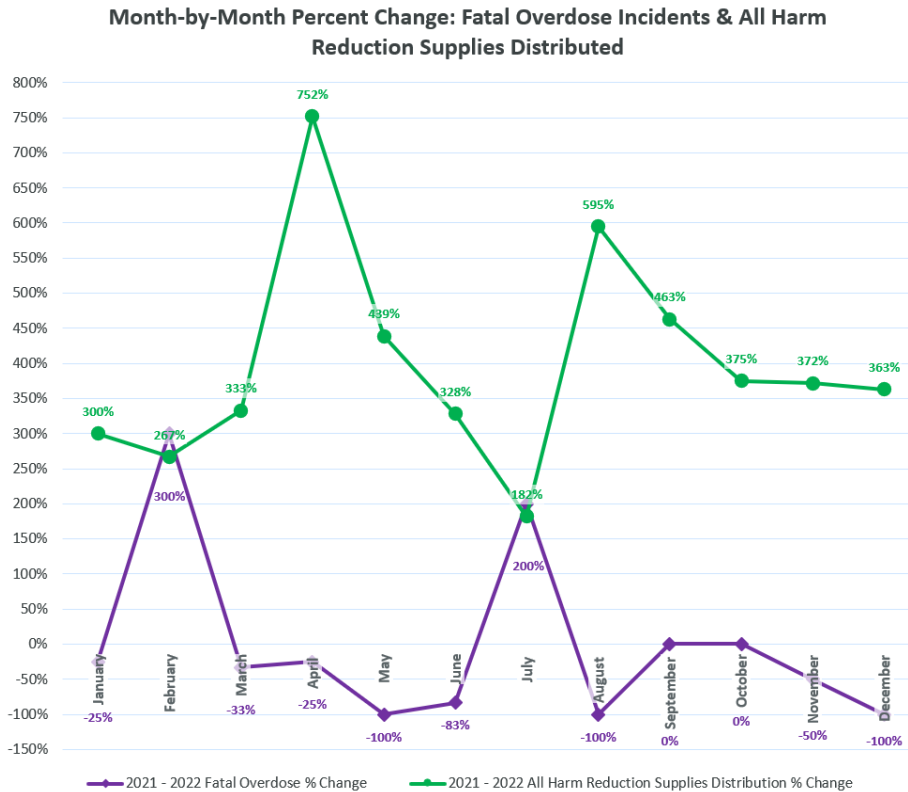
In addition to the items listed above for 2023, AARI has teamed with the local school system to greatly strengthen the school system's ability to address substance use challenges. Specific items include:

- A K-12 over-the-counter medication safety curriculum has been added this year, which includes information about counterfeit pills and the overdose reversal medication naloxone.
- An AARI member who is an Arlington Public Schools (APS) substance use counselor trained more than 100 school staff on how to reverse an opioid overdose and AARI provided 65+ boxes of overdose reversal drug naloxone throughout the schools.
- The school system has committed to training all APS staff in how to recognize signs of overdose and respond using naloxone. AARI will partner with the schools to provide any interested APS staff with their own box of naloxone.
- School substance use counselors are working with AARI to put together resource folders for parents and to dispense medication deactivation bags to the school community.

- AARI has worked with APS athletic department staff to put out magnets related to injury and prevention of opioid misuse.
- School system substance use counselors and AARI partner to provide community education via PTA presentations, tabling events, and online community presentations.
- Installation of opioid overdose emergency kits in every Arlington County Parks and Recreation building's AED, with a total of 45 kits installed.

2022 Highlights

The below chart shows the extent of AARI harm reduction events throughout 2022 as compared to 2021, as well as the percent change in fatal overdose incidents in the community.



Listing of Key AARI Activities in 2022

- Narcan Distribution and Revive Training
 - 1,323 boxes distributed
 - 22 virtual and 22 in person REVIVE trainings
- Drug take back boxes: over 11,000 pounds collected since the program began
- National Recovery Month activity/memorial “this is recovery” – shared on social media and display in Behavioral Health Department lobby where people were invited to share what recovery means to them.
- International Overdose Awareness Day Candlelight Vigil
 - 65 attendees, 24 boxes of NARCAN dispensed, 10 fentanyl test strip kits dispensed
- Harm reduction efforts: 2,232 fentanyl test strips distributed to the community; 609 medication deactivation bags dispensed; 40 medication lockboxes provided
- Installation of opioid overdose emergency boxes across Department of Human Services campus & all library branches. Also installed across Marymount University campus.
- 22 community outreach events (tabling and educational presentations), reaching 919 individuals
- 2 PSAs (TV, online geofencing, social media, print media) – anti stigma & harm reduction resources

- Ongoing overdose outreach following a non-fatal overdose that takes place in Arlington.
 - 26% of individuals accepted NARCAN following overdose, 30% accepted fentanyl test strips, and 26% accepted treatment.
 - Outreach is also provided to individuals who have lost someone to a fatal overdose – peer support and grief resources are provided.
- Partnership with Meals on Wheels to distribute medication deactivation bags to home bound community members (184 distributed)
- Partnership with Arlington Food Assistance Center, APS, Freddie’s Bar & Grill, and Culpeper Gardens to become medication deactivation bag access points
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) launched in jail
- Expansion of Office Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) enrollment
 - 12.5% increase in enrollment and 6.5% increase in engagement
 - 14.75% increase in client improvement
- Approval for use of SUBLOCADE® for opioid addiction treatment

Executive Summary of Program (One Page)

AARI, the Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative, is Arlington's opioid and other addictions taskforce, composed of stakeholders from across the county, including treatment providers, first responders, the justice system, the school system, the hospital, and private citizens.

AARI started in January 2017 in response to rising concerns with opioids in our community.

AARI efforts are coordinated by the Arlington County Department of Human Services.

AARI carries out the County's commitment to:

- Reducing the incidents 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.

Arlington County, through AARI and in collaboration with community partners, has a strategic plan that is reviewed and updated every three years. The plan includes three primary focus areas: Prevention, Treatment, and Supply Reduction. Read the full plan [here](#).

Prevention includes community education and awareness, data sharing, trainings, and naloxone distribution. Treatment increases expanded access and availability, enhanced recovery supports, diversion programs, and overdose response. Supply reduction includes programs for drug take back, medication disposal and storage resources, and decreasing prescription access through engagement with the medical community.

Brief Overview for Press Releases

The Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI), managed by the Arlington Department of Human Services, has played a major role in improving community safety and health in the face of a pandemic-related surge in opioid use, and the threats that accompany the increasing presence of fentanyl in the region.

AARI was formed in 2017 and has implemented a well-established Prevention, Treatment, and Supply Reduction plan. This plan has helped thousands of residents throughout the opioid crisis that has hit many communities. The group's response to a surge in opioid overdoses among youth in 2023 has been truly remarkable. This response has included educational events, community town halls, coordination with schools, and widespread training and distribution of Narcan. AARI's efforts have greatly helped Arlington come to grips with this threat to community health and safety.