



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Prosecutors Taking the Lead in Forging New Responses to the Opioid Crisis**

### *Elected Prosecutors Tour Overdose Prevention Sites in Vancouver and Visit Seattle to Learn About Innovative Solutions to Substance Use Disorder*

**SEATTLE** - This week, elected prosecutors and senior staff traveled to Vancouver and Seattle to learn about innovative and compassionate approaches to address the opioid epidemic and improve both public safety and community well-being. Over the three-day visit, attendees toured overdose prevention sites in Vancouver – sites where individuals can legally consume controlled substances under the supervision of trained harm reduction professionals – and learned about Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) in Seattle.

“For 50 years we’ve been treating a public health crisis as a criminal justice problem, but we can’t presume we can arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic,” said **Miriam Krinsky**, Executive Director of [Fair and Just Prosecution](#) (FJP), a national network of elected prosecutors working to promote a smarter, more compassionate justice system and the organizer of the trip. “Nearly 200 people die every day in the United States from overdoses. It’s time to consider new approaches and learn from other countries who are saving lives through overdose prevention and other public health-based strategies.”

In [Seattle](#), [Philadelphia](#), and [San Francisco](#) elected prosecutors are acknowledging the breadth of the opioid epidemic. In response, they are embracing new evidenced-based approaches including overdose prevention sites, which have been shown to save lives while connecting substance users with medical care, counseling and resources to treat addiction. Vancouver has been home to several successful overdose prevention sites, including [Insite](#), for over a decade.

“This trip has shown that we have a broken system, but one that can be fixed.” said **Larry Krasner**, Philadelphia District Attorney and one of the elected leaders who joined the site visit. “Prosecutors across the country are in a position to drive real change. It’s up to us to push for access to every available tool to address the opioid epidemic, and overdose prevention sites are part of that mix.”

“Vermont had an unprecedented number of overdose fatalities in the last year, and an overwhelming body of research indicates that overdose prevention sites are an effective intervention that can move us beyond this disheartening status quo,” said **Sarah George**, Chittenden County State’s Attorney, another participant in the site visit.

Key takeaways from the trip include:

- **Overdose prevention sites save lives.** Attendees heard from law enforcement, harm reduction workers, medical professionals, public health officials, advocates and users themselves, all of whom underscored the life-saving benefits of such sites. Furthermore, every site noted that of the thousands of injections they supervise every year, as well as hundreds of overdose interventions, there have been zero deaths in their facilities.
- **A public health crisis cannot be solved with criminal justice responses.** Criminalization of drug users does not work, while taking a harm reduction approach – including overdose prevention sites – has significant benefits, including saving taxpayer dollars by reducing lifetime health care costs and preventing the spread of infectious disease associated with unsafe consumption and needle sharing.
- **Overdose prevention sites must be part of a larger solution.** Overdose prevention sites do not solve every problem and should be integrated into a broader strategy that includes syringe exchanges, prompt and low-barrier access to medically-assisted treatment such as methadone and suboxone and culturally-competent treatment services.
- **The voices of those with lived experience should be integral to system design.** People who use drugs should have a prominent seat at the table to help define effective solutions. Additionally, they should be placed in harm reduction roles as they deeply understand the client and how to meet them where they are.

“We cannot continue to approach substance use with dehumanizing policies grounded in fear,” said **Dan Satterberg**, King County Prosecuting Attorney. “We must treat substance use disorder as the disease it is – through public health programs like LEAD and overdose prevention sites that reduce harm and connect individuals struggling with these issues to services.”

[Fair and Just Prosecution](#) has taken a leadership role in the movement to end overincarceration by helping newly elected District and State Attorneys committed to new thinking and innovation translate their goals into concrete policies and reforms. These efforts have included promoting new learning around harm reduction strategies that have met with success in Canada and elsewhere.

*For additional questions about the trip or to speak to any of the elected leaders who participated, please contact Miriam Krinsky at [krinskym@krinsky.la](mailto:krinskym@krinsky.la) or 818-416-5218.*

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*Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit [www.fairandjustprosecution.org](http://www.fairandjustprosecution.org) or follow us on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](https://www.facebook.com/FairAndJustProsecution).*