

Your Voice Matters: Polk County Substance Use and Overdose Prevention Community Survey Project

**Polk County Opioid Settlement Advisory
Committee**

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Public Health
Prevent, Promote, Protect.
Polk County

Presentation Overview



Setting the Stage: Background, Purpose

Methodology

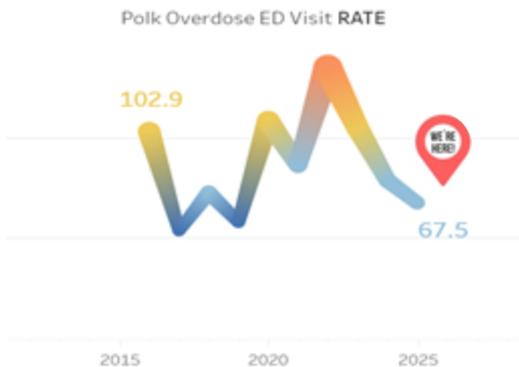
Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings,
Challenges

Next Steps

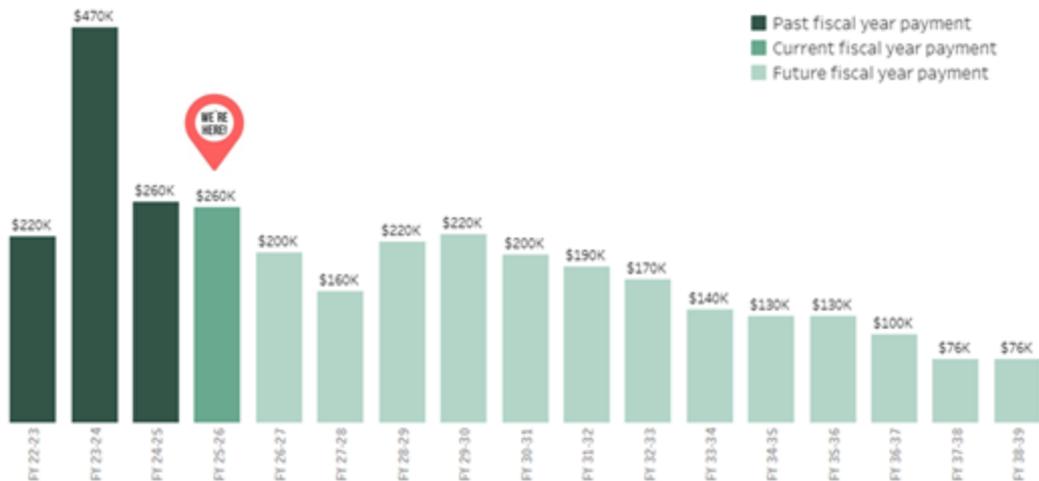


Polk County, North Carolina

Setting the Stage: Background



Polk County is receiving \$3,213,471 in opioid settlement funds from 2022 through 2038.



Aim: Engage in strategic planning to unlock Option B strategies
– introduce community input, unlock more Opioid Settlement spending options → greater opportunities for improving health outcomes

Setting the Stage: Background – *Early Efforts*

Community Listening Sessions: Summer 2024 - 5 sessions, 5 communities, 76 participants

What were community members saying?

Residents identified barriers and challenges (to resource access, and generally):

- **Transportation** (availability, affordability)
- **Employment** (incl. Recovery-friendly workplaces)
- **Housing** (availability, affordability)
- **Displacement of children**
- **Stigma**
- **Community engagement**
- **Education and availability of resources**



Setting the Stage: Background – *Early Efforts*

Community Listening Sessions: Summer 2024 - 5 sessions, 5 communities, 76 participants

Challenges with the Listening Session Model

- **Limited participation** (76 participants total over 5 sessions)
- **Underrepresentation** of certain groups (E.g., Hispanic populations, including English-speaking Hispanics; young adults)
- **Session promotion and awareness**
- **Potential accessibility issue** (non-weekend meetings)



Setting the Stage: Purpose

The Challenge:

Engagement in a **collaborative** strategic planning process involving **community input** to craft a formal Report and Recommendations for presentation to local government (Board of County Commissioners)



What resources do we **have**?
What resources do we **utilize**?
What resources do we **need**?

The Community Survey Project:

Goals:

1. To **describe** community members' **knowledge** of available resources to prevent and reduce drug overdose and opioid use disorders.
2. To **assess** the community's **needs** to prevent and reduce drug overdose and opioid use disorders.

Setting the Stage: Background - *Partners*

Polk County Community Partners

Substance Use, Mental Health, Healthcare, Schools, Law Enforcement, Churches, Nonprofits, Citizens, People with lived experience



Polk County Health and Human Services Agency - Division of Public Health



PublicHealth
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Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC)

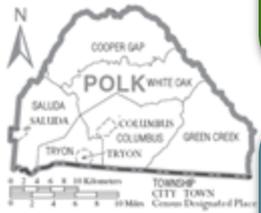


North Carolina Central University (NCCU)



North Carolina Collaboratory

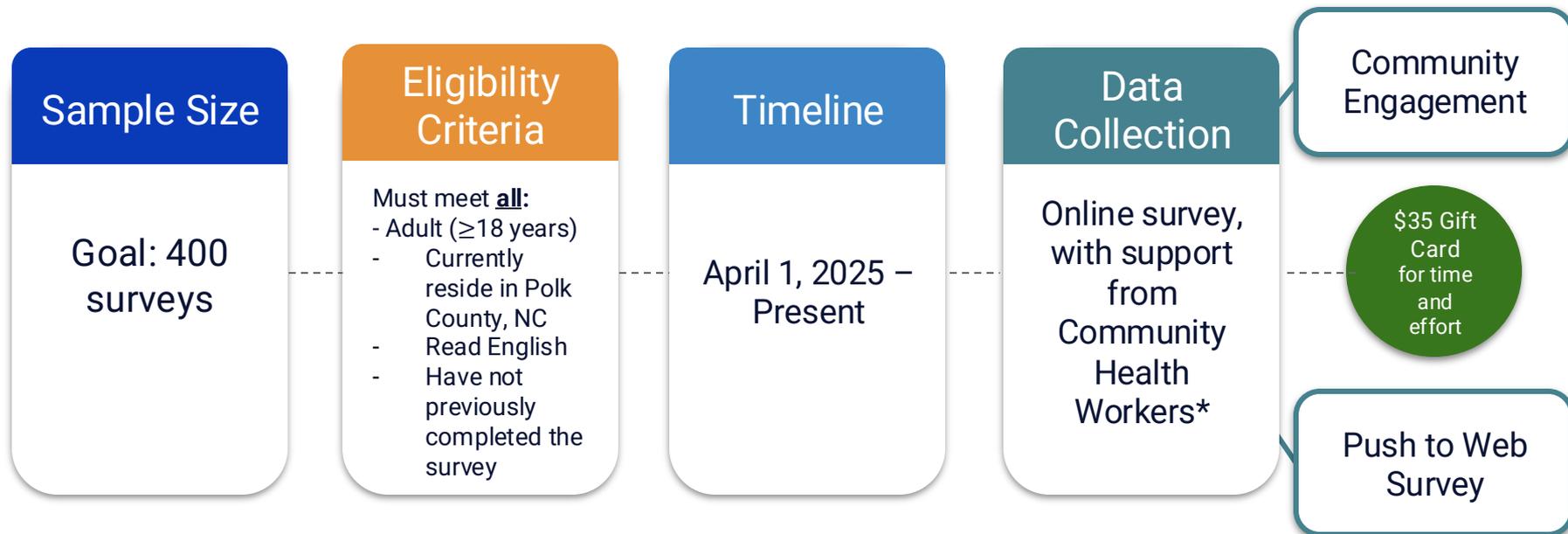
North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition



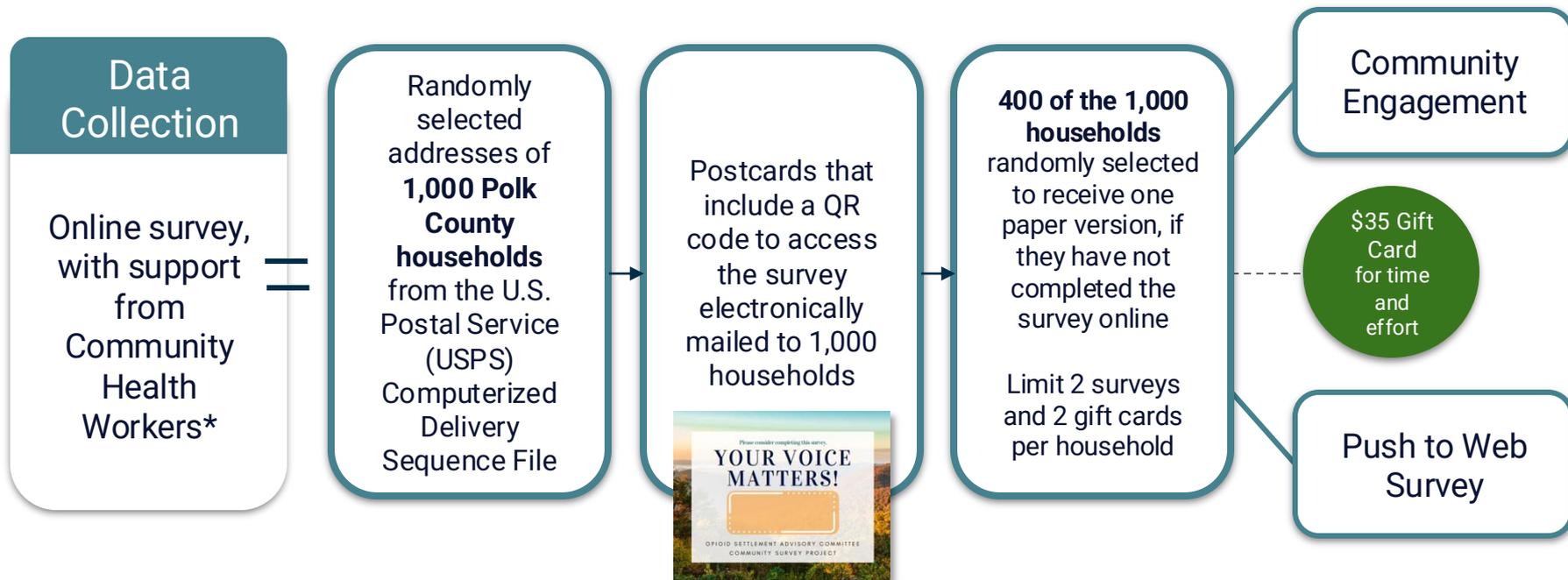
Methodology



Methodology



Methodology: Data Collection



Methodology

Data Collection

Online survey, with support from **Community liaisons***

Community Engagement

Push to Web Survey

Community Liaisons (Trusted Messengers)

Help to...

- Share information with the community
- Recruit participants
- Provide culturally sensitive explanations for results and provide recommendations

Trained in...

1. Study protocol (NCCU)
2. Human research protections (online)
3. Overdose prevention/harm reduction (NCHRC)
4. Tablet use (Polk OSAC)



OPIOID SETTLEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
COMMUNITY SURVEY PROJECT

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Help us understand substance misuse in Polk County. Your answers will help guide our planning on how to best use Opioid Settlement funds to address substance use in our community.

POLK COUNTY ADULTS, AGES 18 + ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE.

3 Ways to complete the survey:

- ONLINE BY VISITING:
[HTTPS://NCCU.COL.QUALTRICS.COM/3fE/FORM/SV.EPOXXXWGZPHUU](https://nccu.col.qualtrics.com/3fE/FORM/SV.EPOXXXWGZPHUU)
- SCAN THE QR CODE ON THIS FLYER
- CONTACT POLK HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY AT 828.899.0843 TO OBTAIN A PAPER SURVEY.

*The first 400 participants will receive a \$35 gift card for their time and valuable input. **Limit of 2 gift cards per household.**

SCAN HERE



QUESTIONS? ▶



828-899-0843



ycisneros@polknc.org

Methodology

A focus on informing potential strategies, with questions that emphasize...



Knowledge

Before today, have you ever heard of... ?

Do you know... ?

Do people in your community have access to programs that... ?

Needs

Do you think your community needs... ?

Would you like access to... ?

Would you like to have... in your community?

Survey in Action



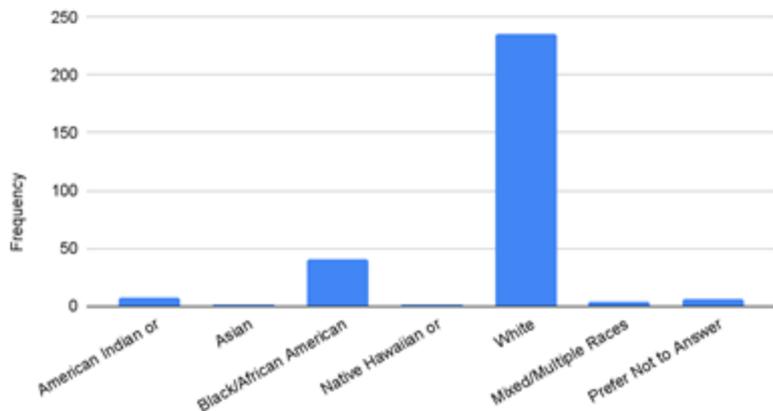
Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings *as of August, 2025*

From 295 valid surveys

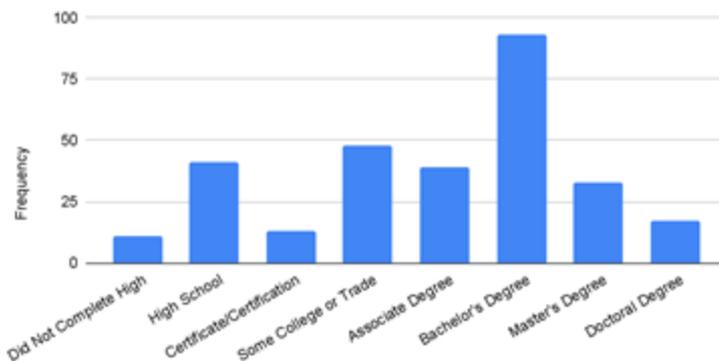
Participant Characteristics: Sex at Birth



Participant Characteristics: Race ("What is your race?")

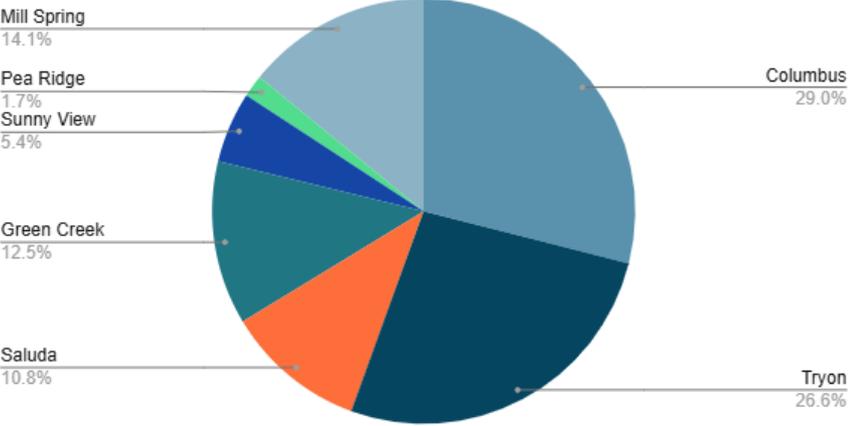


Participant Characteristics: Education ("What is your highest level of education completed?")

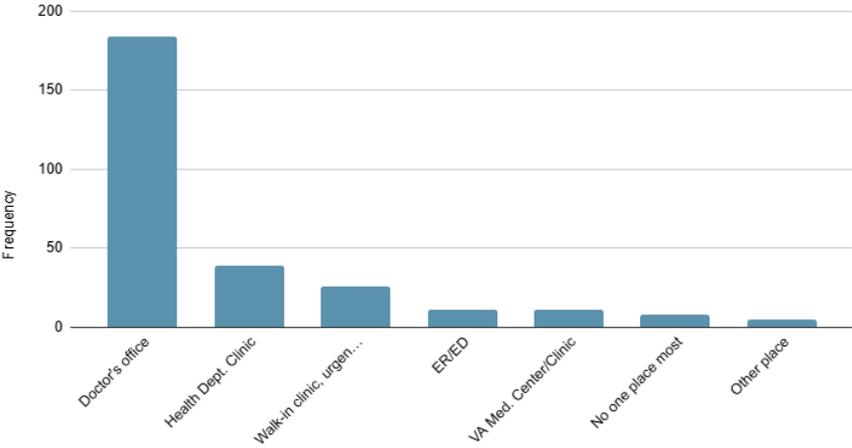


Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings *as of August, 2025*

Participant Characteristics: Township ("Which area of Polk County is closest to where you live?")

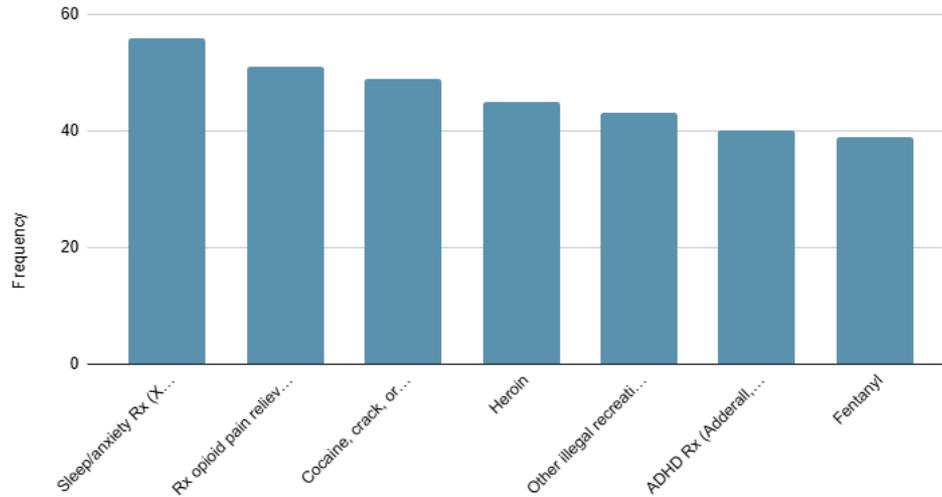


Participant Characteristics: Healthcare Location ("What kind of place do you go to most often to receive healthcare?")

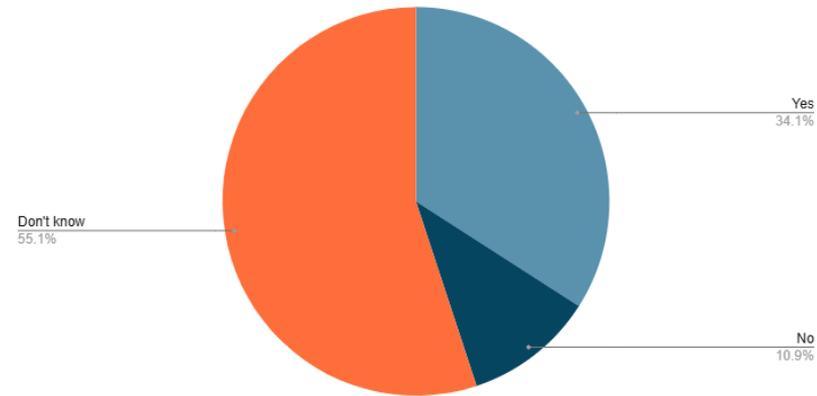


Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings *as of August, 2025*

Response Frequencies: Substance Use Past 3 Months ("In the past three months, did you use...")



Response Frequencies: Treatment - Knowledge ("Do people in your community have access to programs that will provide medications to treat opioid use disorder?")



Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings *as of August, 2025*

<i>Would you like access to...</i>	<i>Valid %</i>
Places for free naloxone	92.4
Naloxone leave-behind program	87.7
Programs to connect people with MOUD through criminal justice system/other legal settings	87.5
Programs to connect people with MOUD through emergency departments and urgent care centers	86.9
Peer support specialists or case managers to connect with medical services/support treatment	83.6
MOUD available through telemedicine	79.1
Programs that encourage/help people to keep taking MOUD	71.2
Programs that will provide MOUD	61.7

Survey in Action: Preliminary Findings – *Emerging Themes*

Harm Reduction



We have it, but we need more of it!



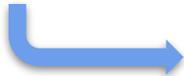
The majority of community members surveyed would like easy access to free naloxone (92%) and 63% of individuals surveyed would like to learn how to use naloxone/Narcan.

Potential Recommendation: *Invest in naloxone distribution programs (new and existing).*

Treatment



We need it in different forms!



Approximately 3 out of 4 individuals surveyed would like to have medications for opioid use disorder available through telemedicine.

Potential Recommendation: *Provide funding to local health departments to support telehealth (E.g., funds to hire remote medical professionals capable of prescribing medicine).*

Next Steps



Next Steps

Near Future - To Complete the Survey:

- Circulate paper surveys
- Continue to attend community events and visit community spaces



Later - To Utilize Our Data:

- Compare survey data with community listening session data to identify common themes
- Continue researching evidence-based strategies that align with common themes, and look to other counties for lessons in implementation
- Reference stakeholders in Substance Use, Mental Health, and Healthcare for input
- Collaborate with partners to draft Report and Recommendations



Thank you.

The representatives of Polk County OSAC and HHSA would like to thank NCCU, the NC Collaboratory, the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, our Community Health Workers, OSAC and local partners, and our Polk County community for their continued support for our county's health and well-being.

With this survey, we are turning voices into action—and action into *lasting change*.

Questions? Please Contact:

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