More than 25 years ago, one of the Chicago Recovery Alliance’s (CRA) 13 founders, John Szylor, suggested the core of our mission statement: “Any Positive Change.” Shortly thereafter, the statement was expanded to reflect CRA’s affirmation of agency among people who use drugs: “Any Positive Change as a person defines it for themself.” That has been CRA’s guiding principle since 1991, when we started delivering harm reduction outreach with syringe distribution services on a folding card table in the Englewood and Uptown neighborhoods of Chicago.

Today, we still embrace and actualize our mission as we serve the entire City of Chicago via three mobile outreach vans, a South Side office and drop-in center, a West Side office and drop-in center, collaborative service delivery through more than a dozen agencies citywide, and on-demand cell phone/delivery seven days and nights a week for 355 days a year.

We are the nation’s largest overdose education and naloxone distribution program, distribute several million syringes for HIV/HCV prevention annually, provide HIV/HCV testing and linkage to care, offer vaccinations, provide respectful safer substance use counseling and materials, and deliver training and technical assistance on a wide range of innovative topics locally and nationally.
SERVICES

INJECTING EQUIPMENT
At any of our outreach locations, you can obtain all the supplies and equipment necessary for safer drug injection. These supplies include new syringes of several different types and sizes, as well as clean cookers, cotton filters, “safety squares” (cotton pads to apply on the wound after injecting), tourniquets, and sterile mix water. At any of our silver van locations, you also can safely and responsibly dispose of any used injection equipment.

NALOXONE ACCESS
All our staff and volunteers are authorized to provide you with naloxone, the opioid antagonist that reverses the effects of opioid overdose, as well as training on how to recognize and response to an opioid overdose using injectable naloxone. CRA is the first organized overdose prevention and naloxone distribution program in the country.

SAFER DRUG USE COUNSELING
All our staff are experienced and trained in providing harm reduction support and guidance on safer injection techniques, overdose prevention, HIV and hepatitis prevention, substance use management (SUM), and various methods for achieving any positive change as you define it.

HARM REDUCTION COUNSELING
CRA’S harm reduction therapists can help you deal with a range of concerns such as drug use, anxiety and depression, grief, trauma, psychosis, or difficulties adjusting to life. Our approach is to build on your strengths and to enhance your coping skills. If you would like to learn more about our counseling services or make an appointment to see a therapist, contact us!

ASSISTED REFERRALS & LINKAGE TO CARE
At any of our locations, CRA staff can help assist you in finding substance use treatment programs to meet your needs. We can also make referrals to case managers who can help with practical issues, like getting health insurance or finding housing.

SAFER SMOKING & SNORTING MATERIALS
We are committed to meeting the safer use needs of people who use drugs in different ways. In addition to the array of injection materials, we have safer smoking and safer snorting materials. Did you know that offering safer smoking materials reduces HIV and viral
hepatitis risk? Our safer smoking kits include a glass pipe, a rubber mouthpiece (for preventing burned lips), and a steel mesh filter. Safer snorting kits include three different color straws, a plastic card, and a plastic razor. You also have access to additional safer use supplies on an as needed basis which include items such as wound creams, vitamin c, alcohol pads, and sterile water to name a few.

ALLIANCE FOR COLLABORATIVE DRUG CHECKING — REAL TIME (ACDC-RT)
CRA provides real-time drug checking using spectrometer machines and fentanyl test strips. This helps identify if heroin, pills, methamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA or other drugs have been adulterated with fentanyl. Combined with substance use management counseling, drug checking can prevent overdoses. We can test packaging and cookers that have only been used once. Spectrometry testing is currently available during 6 outreach locations; fentanyl test strips are available at all our locations.

HIV AND HCV COUNSELING, TESTING & LINKAGE TO CARE
We offer on-site free HIV and HCV rapid tests to all participants and all staff are trained in phlebotomy to do blood draws for confirmatory testing at the same time. We can schedule a free testing event with CRA in the city or surrounding suburbs.

SAFER SEX SUPPLIES
We provide a variety of different condom (receptive and insertive) and barrier options for sex activities plus silicone and water-based lubricants for maximum enjoyment.

VACCINATIONS
We provide free and on-the-spot hepatitis A and B vaccinations and the flu vaccine during flu season (and we probably have some hats, too!).
LOCATIONS SERVED

CRA provides services across Chicago, its suburbs, and the collar counties. We have a South Side office in Englewood (1114 West 63rd) and a West Side office in North Lawndale (3110 W Taylor). We travel to provide services to people who use drugs in Chicagoland and technical assistance just about anywhere!

**Monday**
South Austin- On Chicago Ave near Menard  
W. Garfield Park- Madison & Keeler  
Western Suburbs by delivery

**Tuesday**
South Chicago- 79th & South Chicago  
Woodlawn- 61st & Calumet  
Humboldt Park- California south of North Ave  
Western Suburbs by delivery

**Wednesday**
Ellis- On Ellis near 131st  
Back of the Yards- On W47th & Ashland  
North Lawndale- 3110 West Taylor  
Englewood- 1114 West 63rd  
Cicero- On 16th Street, east of Cicero Ave

**Thursday**
Grand Boulevard- 47th & Vincennes  
Little Village- Cermak & Washtenaw  
Humboldt Park- On California north of Division  
Western Suburbs by delivery

**Friday**
Lawndale- Roosevelt & Whipple  
K-Town- 5th Ave & Kilpatrick Ave  
South Chicago- 79th & South Chicago  
Western Suburbs by delivery  
West and South Sides- Puerto Rico Project

**Saturday**
North Lawndale- 3110 West Taylor  
Englewood- 68th Street west of Halsted

**Sunday**
Northwest Side- Diversey & Kilpatrick 2 blocks east of Cicero
CRA TEAM

Geoff Bathje- Director of Counseling Services
Dan Bigg- Founding Executive Director & Permanent Guide for Any Positive Change
Suzanne Carlberg-Racich- Director of Research
Nikki Carter- Special Projects Assistant
Maya Doe-Simkins- Director of Communications & Media
Erica C. Ernst- Outreach & Mental Health Volunteer, Board President
Iliana Espinosa-Ravi- Outreach Specialist & Community Overdose Prevention Program Manager
Susie Gualtieri- Senior Outreach Specialist
John Gutenson- Senior Outreach Specialist, Toilet Paper Changer
Sara Gutenson- Outreach Specialist, Phlebotomist
Melissa Hernandez- Outreach Specialist, Director of The Puerto Rico Project
Lexi Hinkle- Bookkeeping
Cheryl Hull- Senior Outreach Specialist, Deputy Director
Stephan Kamenicky- Community Health Educator
Felicia Kristanto- Financial Administrator
Cliff Sanchez- HIV Testing Coordinator
Esther Sanchez- Outreach Specialist
Greg Scott- Interim Executive Director
Karen Stanczykiewicz- Associate Director for Program Development

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Erica Ernst- President
Amy Jo Brown- Secretary-Treasurer
Maggie Acosta- Member
Monica Castiglione- Member
Matteo Cejtin Rosen- Member
Romie Kyles- Past President (retired)
Antonio Williams- Member

TEAM TRIVIA

Cheryl Hull is the longest running member of the CRA team- she’s been with us for 25 years!

Felicia Kristanto is our newest member. As the financial administrator, her position is the only one at CRA that *requires* a college degree.
IN MEMORIAM

Dan Bigg—Founding Director & CRA’s Permanent Guide for Any Positive Change

Dan was one of the founders of Chicago Recovery Alliance (CRA) and, for the last 28 years, Dan has been the Director of the CRA. Under his leadership we have been guided by CRA participants to develop programming to prevent opioid-related overdose deaths with naloxone distribution; avoid viral hepatitis with safer injection and hepatitis A/B vaccination, and pilot test mobile opioid substitution therapies. Dan also helped start the US Harm Reduction Coalition and was a Project Developer for the International Harm Reduction Institute of the Open Society. Dan left this world in August 2018, but his legacy lives on in the work we do and the lives he saved.

In his spirit and to continue his legacy, the Harm Reduction Coalition, in partnership with an incredibly generous donor, created the Dan Bigg Any Positive Change Award for bold, radical harm reductionists who are creating positive change despite the odds—working in difficult environments, finding innovative and creative ways to get people the services they need, and advancing programs that center the voices and needs of people who use drugs.
SERVICE NUMBERS: 2018 SNAPSHOT

13,777 PARTICIPANTS

**Gender**
- Men: 63%
- Women: 34%
- Trans, Nonbinary, Gender non-conforming: 3%

**Race & ethnicity**
- African-American & Black: 46%
- White: 31%
- Puerto Rican: 11%
- Mexican: 7%
- Asian: 0%
- Other Latinx/Hispanic: 3%
- Native American: 0%
- Multiple: 2%

**Age**
- 45-54: 25%
- 35-44: 30%
- 25-34: 20%
- 55-64: 18%
- 65-74: 5%
- 75+: 0%
- Unknown: 0%
- <25: 2%
Engagement topics

- Safer injection assistance: 9111
- Overdose prevention/nlx: 8949
- Safer smoking assistance: 5887
- Safer snorting assistance: 5124
- Safer sex assistance: 2610
- Hepatitis C testing/linkage to care: 1216
- Basic needs assistance: 627
- HIV testing/linkage to care: 457
- Hepatitis A vaccination: 390
- Hepatitis B vaccination: 289
- Medical care: 188
- ID services: 173
- Other vaccination: 171
- Mental health counseling: 66
- Housing assessment: 35

Most common substance consumption method

- Inject: 71%
- Snort: 21%
- Smoke: 8%
### A FEW INTERESTING NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New syringes distributed</td>
<td>4,152,227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naloxone kits distributed</td>
<td>25,569</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encounters via regularly scheduled services</td>
<td>13,777</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community events</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdoses reversed by people who use drugs</td>
<td>1,987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6

Times vans broke down (they are better now!)

Estimated people that participants help with syringes (secondary exchange) 28,984

#not enough# Furry friends

2

Press releases hosted
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Types of Financial Support- $1,778,476 Total

- Grant - Government: 78%
- Grant - Foundation/Orgs/Corps: 19%
- General Contributions: 3%

Expense Allocations

- Staff: 59%
- Harm reduction materials & supplies: 32%
- Admin/overhead: 9%
COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATORS

CRA, in partnership with Men and Women in Prison Ministries (PWIPM) and Heartland Human Care Services (HHCS) received CDPH’s Community Education on Opioid Overdose Prevention award. We used a community health worker model to expand opioid overdose prevention reach. We focused on communities of color in the South and West Sides who are still most severely impacted by fatal opioid overdoses, by recruiting active PWUDs and other community gatekeepers to receive intensive overdose prevention training, widely distribute naloxone, discuss OD prevention and provide referrals to evidence-based drug treatment programs, when appropriate.

This initiative trained more than 20 community health educators across the 3 organizations who collectively nearly doubled CRA’s naloxone distribution in communities where there has been insufficient overdose prevention effort.

SAFER SNORTING & SMOKING

CRA relaunched safer snorting and smoking materials to tackle the racial and ethnic disparity in fatal overdose rates in Chicago. Structural violence (e.g. disproportionate arrest among Black people who use drugs, higher experiences of surveillance upon visiting a needle exchange program) plus lack of programming for people who use drugs by routes other than injection are responsible for this disproportionate rate of fatal opioid overdoses. Essentially, Black and Latinx people who use heroin are less likely than white heroin using counterparts to use by injection. This has traditionally been protective (snorting and smoking is generally safer than injecting), but the emergence of fentanyl in the illicit...
opioid supply has considerably reduced the protectiveness. Further, people who mainly snort or smoke drugs rarely come to a program that is considered a “needle exchange”. This results in missed opportunities for overdose prevention education and naloxone.

**WOUND CARE**

Skin and soft tissue infections are among the most common injection-related harm that CRA participants experience. The risk is higher for people who are not housed and includes ulcerations and infections not related to injecting, too. CRA has always offered some materials for people to take care of their skin and wounds. However, this year, we capitalized on the wonderful work of our long-term volunteer and nurse, Nicole Pallas to offer staff a deeper dive into supporting our participants who have wounds.

**OVERDOSE PREVENTION AS VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

The way fatal overdoses disproportionately affect different racial and ethnic groups in different geographical areas of the city is an effect of ongoing structural violence toward people of color, poor people, and LGBTQ people. That these groups experience higher rates of PREVENTABLE opioid overdose is traumatic and unnecessary at both individual and community levels. This initiative aimed to highlight the existing ways that drug using communities on the South & West Sides are creative, resilient, and regularly literally save lives. Increasing knowledge and awareness of services and materials can buttress the resilience and capacity for healing from preventable trauma that is woven into the fabric of our communities. CDPH’s ReCAST initiative was a key supporting partner.
ALLIANCE FOR COLLABORATIVE DRUG CHECKING- REAL TIME (ACDC-RT)

To our knowledge, ACDC-RT is one of the first real-time, triangulated spectrometer drug checking projects in the country! Normally, CRA participants and the general public only receive information on street drug composition from the medical examiner’s overdose death reports, or occasionally when law enforcement agencies release information about drug seizures. Real-time, accurate information on street-level drug composition (rather than inferring from post-mortem toxicology or large-scale seizures well up the supply chain) allows people who use drugs to better understand the composition of the substances they consume. It also allows public health officials to provide reliable information on the current drug landscape.

We are using 4 technologies – Fourier- transform infrared spectroscopy, high pressure mass spectrometry, fluorescent microscopes, and fentanyl test strips.

Knowing what is in the drug supply is an act of resistance against the war on drugs which robs people of bodily autonomy and control over your own survival. Protect each other. Knowing is power. (Eliza Wheeler)
In early December, an incredible cohort of Executive Directors of Harm Reduction programs convened in Chicago to support our Interim Leadership Team. It was initially conceived as an executive level technical assistance gathering. However, each established ED was asked to invite a mentee or someone who is up-and-coming Harm Reduction Leadership. To our knowledge, it was the first convening of its type. We thank all the incredible attendees and Catherine Swanson for facilitating, Comer Foundation & AIDS United for supporting the vision, Debby Thompson for stenography, and Linda Levendusky for her logistical master mind.
NEW WEBSITE

For at least the past 5 years, the CRA website was generally considered one of the least attractive harm reduction websites in the world! Whenever anyone brought it up to Dan, he’d say “what’s the problem- it’s got everything you need”. It’s unclear what the tipping point was, but when he was finally ready for a website makeover, there was no skimping on the talent. This year, Nigel Brunsdon launched CRA’s new website (at the same domain: anypositivechange.org). Nigel’s photography is also featured in this report. Thank you for capturing the essence of CRA so beautifully.

SB1828

Syringe access programs have been unsanctioned in Illinois since CRA’s inception. Perhaps because we operated so easily under a research exemption for being a bona fide HIV prevention research study, everyone seemed to have forgotten! The introduction of SB1828 is the first time we’ve had a very likely chance of getting syringe access programs that save lives out of the shadows and into the public health limelight they deserve. We are so appreciative of all the groundwork and strategy that went into bringing this bill as far along as it’s gotten! Karen and Susie took the long drive to Springfield to show appreciation and advocate.
VOLUNTEERS, SUPPORTERS & FAMILY

We have always relied on the incredible generosity and passion for Any Positive Change of our local and global community. Every single week people gather for community and to tackle the unending harm reduction task: packing kits. Because of volunteers’ dedication to this unglamorous task, tens of thousands of kits are in the hands of people who use drugs. Volunteers, supporters and family also help shovel snow, provide legal advice, strategize new programs, call us on our shit, give rides, fill in shifts, help import shipping containers of Safety Squares, send love notes, have our backs, feed the animals, give us money, sign for mail packages, and have endless shoulders to cry on.

Quite simply, we would be lost without you!

We are grateful for your hard work and dedication! You are an integral part of our community.
Annual Report 2018

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