

## for-kindness

Criminal Justice Reform, Harm Reduction ,Grief, Loss, Bereaved parent, Mental Health, Substance Use

# Overdose Prevention Sites

February 2024

February 22, 2024

Dear Legislator:

I appreciate having the opportunity to speak up in support of overdose prevention sites. In 2017 our eldest son Sean, died of an overdose of fentanyl, at age 27. At the time of his overdose, he was at a party celebrating his paycheck, he went to the restroom, and it wasn't until he had been gone for about 15-20 minutes that his friends noticed that he wasn't responsive. His friends thought he was showering, he was due to meet us (his parents) for dinner. Sean was revived but suffered brain death. He was removed from life support and donated his heart liver and kidneys. Sean overdosed in downtown Burlington, 2 blocks from where a proposed overdose prevention site is planned. He would have used a site if it was available. Our son was a sporadic user of opiates and stimulants, he was always employed and a contributing member of society.

Sean's substance accelerated while he was in the US Navy, beginning in 2011, he was stationed in Groton, CT at the submarine base. This was the first time I realized he was using opiates, to cope with the stress of military life. He use continued to worsen, eventually leading to a lifetime of use, recovery, frequent hospitalizations and even misdemeanor charges.

I have seen how our government responded so favorably to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of my our son's death fentanyl had been widespread for over 2 years. I only wish the opiate crisis had received half the attention that the COVID-19 pandemic has received. We are losing so many young people and no one can recover from substance use if they die of an overdose.

I work as a physician in OBGYN and in the substance use field. In addition, I work with newly bereaved parents with a group called Team Sharing Vermont. I've witnessed so much loss over the last several years it's hard to even quantify it in words. I organize an overdose awareness day event yearly to commemorate those lost. I sincerely hate to think of the numbers that we have lost this past year.

The science tells us that overdose prevention sites save lives, reduce syringe and paraphernalia litter, and connect people to treatment. I have visited such sites in Canada and found that they are clean, clinic-like atmospheres with warmth and caring staff.

I know Vermonters are very compassionate and I hope we can expand this compassion to those who use substances.

Kimberly D. Blake MD

### **Author: for-kindness**

Sean Blake, our son was 27 when he died from an accidental overdose. Sean was for kindness. Writings, poems, and posts to keep his spirit alive. We share posts to remember Sean, advocate for better treatment for mental health. We share our journey through life after his death for parents of loss.

[View all posts by for-kindness](#)

---

for-kindness / February 26, 2024 / Mental Illness

for-kindness / Blog at WordPress.com.