

OPERATION ENGAGE

REACH AND IMPACT REPORT

2022

OPERATION
ENGAGE 



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The opioid epidemic in the United States has emerged as a multifaceted public health crisis with devastating consequences. As prescription opioids became harder to obtain, many individuals turned to cheaper and more readily available alternatives such as synthetic opioids like fentanyl, exacerbating the crisis. The epidemic has affected all communities, strained healthcare systems, overwhelmed law enforcement agencies, and left a trail of shattered families in its wake. The complex nature of addiction and the persistence of underlying societal issues continue to pose significant challenges.

In February of 2021, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration initiated a sweeping effort aimed at curbing drug abuse and drug misuse. Called Operation Engage, this initiative empowers DEA field divisions to prioritize combating the most pressing drug-related threats within their respective territories. Operation Engage requires the field divisions to collaborate across multiple sectors for a universal approach. Building upon the foundation laid by DEA's prior 360 Strategy, Operation Engage entered its second year in 2022, representing a continued commitment to addressing the nation's top drug challenges.



Community Outreach Specialist Gretchen Rovira (Miami Field Division).

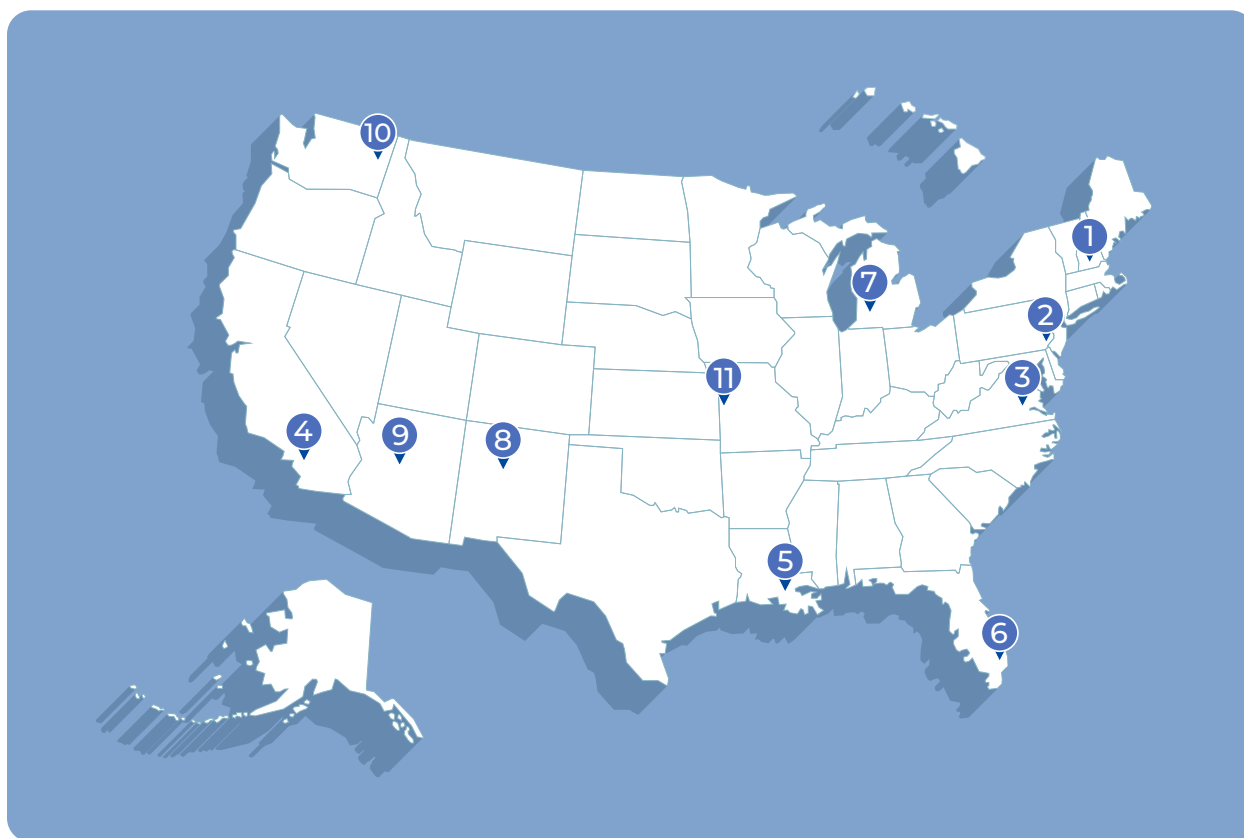
Operation Engage



Operation Engage embodies a comprehensive approach that bridges public health and public safety efforts. It focuses on the primary drug threat identified by each DEA field division while steadfastly increasing drug education and awareness. Each field division identifies its most challenging area within its region based on drug threat data and focuses evidence-informed drug misuse prevention and community outreach efforts to make a measurable difference. The deliverables required are based on evidence-based prevention principles aimed at preventing drug use among children and adolescents.

2022 Operation Engage Locations

The DEA field divisions assessed during 2022 are as follows:



1 New England Field Division:
Manchester, New Hampshire

6 Miami Field Division:
Ft. Lauderdale/Broward County, Florida

2 Philadelphia Field Division:
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

7 Detroit Field Division:
Kalamazoo, Michigan

3 Washington, D.C. Field Division:
Richmond, Virginia

8 El Paso Field Division:
Albuquerque, New Mexico

4 Los Angeles Field Division:
Southern California

9 Phoenix Field Division:
Yavapai County, Arizona

5 New Orleans Field Division:
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

10 Seattle Field Division:
Spokane, Washington

11 St. Louis Field Division:
Kansas City, Missouri

Disclaimer

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2022 Operation Engage Summary

In the second year of Operation Engage, the focus remained on engaging with communities. DEA field divisions organized various initiatives to inform the public about local drug threats. They collaborated with local groups and national facilitators to spread crucial information through prevention and education events like conferences, training sessions, and town hall events, along with efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, DEA continued to support national campaigns such as National Prescription Drug Take Back Day and Family Summits on Fentanyl to combat rising drug-related deaths.

Empowering young people to drive change is crucial in tackling the national drug crisis. Outreach efforts targeted youth of all ages, educating them about drug misuse, addiction dangers, and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Field divisions actively engaged youth through initiatives focusing on leadership, drug awareness, and accessing local support services, empowering them to make positive effects in their communities. These endeavors reached thousands of young individuals across Operation Engage sites.

While paid media wasn't included in the Operation Engage strategy in 2022, some divisions leveraged existing media connections to inform the public about initiatives like National Prescription Drug Take Back Day and the One Pill Can Kill campaign. Additionally, other divisions crafted press releases, used free print media in local newspapers, and collaborated with radio stations to broadcast public service announcements regarding DEA activities and resources.

Despite achieving overall success in reaching schools, the engagement efforts encountered several challenges throughout the year. Lingering effects of COVID-19 and negative perceptions of DEA in schools presented obstacles. However, DEA learned from past experiences and leveraged its relationships with community partners and advocates to navigate these challenges. Through innovative approaches, DEA effectively addressed hurdles in school engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected business operations, productivity, and profitability in the workplace. DEA field divisions worked with the Milken Institute to provide some engagement avenues with local

business communities, but economic constraints hindered additional opportunities. Despite not reaching significant outreach numbers, workplace engagement efforts were fruitful, creating dialogue within the community. Efforts are underway to strengthen connections and expand outreach as Operation Engage progresses. DEA's Citizen Academy welcomed the return to face-to-face instruction, and the field divisions grew their pool of qualified stakeholders.

DEA field divisions continued to face issues such as budget constraints. Several divisions noted challenges including vendors withdrawing, declining invitations, and canceling scheduled events due to budget limitations. Despite these challenges, the field divisions increased the number of people reached in Stakeholder Engagement, Workplace Engagement, and Citizens Academy deliverable categories when compared to the same categories in 2021. Likewise, traffic to the divisions' community outreach websites significantly increased when compared to 2021.

NOT ALL PILLS ARE REAL



Hidden fentanyl
turns this pill deadly

ONE PILL CAN KILL

Taking a pill **NOT** purchased from a
licensed pharmacy can be a deadly decision.



Get a closer look at the dangers of
fake pills at [DEA.gov/OnePill](https://www.dea.gov/OnePill).

INTRODUCTION

Drug Climate in the United States

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration released findings from the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The NSDUH is a survey that studies how people report their mental health, substance use, and treatment-related behaviors. The 2022 survey found that 70.3 million people or about 25% of the population used illicit drugs during the year. The survey indicated that 1 in every 250 people misused fentanyl, but findings indicate this number is “almost certainly a substantial underestimate of true illegally made fentanyl use.”¹



DEA Administrator Anne Milgram.

DEA Administrator Anne Milgram stated that “DEA is focused on saving American lives.” She shared that in 2022 DEA seized 58 million pills, and laboratory testing concluded that 6 out of 10 pills seized by DEA contain a lethal dose of fentanyl. Furthermore, she said DEA and its local and state partners will continue the fight against

fentanyl illegally brought into the country, and that commitment “includes providing the American people relevant and timely information.”²

Opioid misuse in 2022 continued to rise.

- Mainly synthetic opioids (other than methadone) are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Nearly 88% of opioid-involved overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids.
- Drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants such as methamphetamine are increasing with and without synthetic opioid involvement.³

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than a million people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose. There were 108,000 drug overdose deaths in 2022, and fentanyl contamination is increasing overdose risk.⁴

Operation Engage is a comprehensive approach that will target the top drug threat identified by the local DEA division while continuing to focus on drug trafficking, violence, and crime reduction. Each division will designate a city or region, identify its most challenging drug trend, and focus evidence-based drug use prevention and community outreach efforts to make a true and measurable difference in the community.

- Identify and affect local drug threat enforcement priorities and drug use trends
- Support and contribute to local drug use prevention efforts
- Bridge public safety and public health efforts

1

In a 10-state study, 57% of people who died from an overdose tested positive for fentanyl.⁴

2

Northeastern states and Missouri reported the highest percentage of opioid overdose deaths involving fentanyl, followed by Midwestern and Southern States.⁴

3

The detection of fentanyl analogs in more than 10% of opioid overdoses raises the concern that fentanyl analogs are rapidly becoming part of illicit opioid markets.⁴

Operation Engage Strategy

Throughout the first half of 2022, numerous DEA field divisions grappled with ongoing challenges stemming from COVID-19 restrictions. Despite progress, some field divisions faced drug prevention and education event cancellations as late as September 2022 due to the pandemic. Engaging with communities and bolstering DEA's outreach proved arduous, encountering obstacles ranging from size limitations for gatherings to the prohibition of in-person events. Adapting to these evolving pandemic conditions, numerous locations found themselves compelled to extensively revise their initial strategies across all engagement fronts, with some field division having to defer, cancel, or switch to a virtual format for planned events.

Acknowledging the profound influence of the country's drug crisis on communities, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration acknowledges the ongoing necessity to engage consistently with local populations, offering drug education and prevention efforts tailored to the most pressing drug threats in their respective regions. Leveraging the progress and insights gained from the inaugural year of Operation Engage, DEA broadened its strategy and shifted its emphasis toward community outreach. This involved creating targeted engagement strategies aimed at addressing the unique drug threats encountered in each Operation Engage locale, while still maintaining a comprehensive approach encompassing law enforcement and diversion control. Operation Engage compliments drug prevention efforts in local communities using comprehensive strategies for prevention and education. The activities and services selected supports the seven strategies for community change and these deliverables are required to ensure community outreach specialist implement evidence-informed strategies.

In January 2022, DEA declared the continuation of Operation Engage with press releases and inaugural stakeholder meetings held at each location. Every Operation Engage site joined forces with local community leaders, established partners, and stakeholders to initiate a range of strategies aimed at local drug prevention and education. This community-centered initiative targeted specific deliverables based on prevention and strategies for community change.

Stakeholder Engagement: Development of partnerships with faith-based institutions, businesses, local coalitions and drug prevention agencies, public health agencies, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education, as well as other agencies identified to support the goals of Operation Engage.

Adult and Community Engagement: Community engagement through regular attendance at community events, providing presentations on drug education and prevention, and working to bring targeted events to support the community's education needs for drug education.

Youth Engagement: Youth-focused activities consisting of direct outreach to youth through the DEA Educational Foundation programs, as well as participating in other organizations' efforts, such as with the local Boys & Girls Clubs.

Media Engagement: Connection to the media through various media outreach efforts—television and radio ads, interviews, social media posts, public service announcements, and location-specific websites to raise

awareness about the drug threats in the area and the available resources to address community needs.

School Engagement: Development of relationships with local schools to bring drug prevention education materials to teachers and students through the Operation Prevention curriculum. Engagement also included after school programs such as the youth dance program, basketball, martial arts, Baby Scientist, and drug education presentations.

Workplace Engagement: Partnering with local and national businesses to raise awareness about local drug threats affecting communities where they operate and equipping employers with drug misuse prevention resources that support employees with substance use disorders and provide science-based resources.

DEA's Citizens Academy: Hosting of DEA's Citizens Academy, which includes a 5–8-week training program to enable individuals from the local community to gain a better understanding of DEA's mission and work while establishing a group of community liaisons to support DEA's community outreach efforts.

■ Report Overview

This report summarizes an assessment of the reach and impact of outreach activities in and around the communities within each DEA field division. Results are based on a summary of metrics provided by the field divisions, various program facilitators, and phone interviews with community partners and stakeholders. The data is collected and evaluated based on the following core outcomes:

- Increase the number of public-private partnerships
- Increase community members' awareness
- Increase engagement by educators and parents
- Community stakeholders' development of strategic action plans

Drug Enforcement Administration

Operation Engage National Partners

- DEA Educational Foundation
- Tribal Tech, LLC
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
- A. Bright Idea, L.L.C.
- The Milken Institute Center for Public Health
- SheRay's & Associates, LLC

Community-based Organizations

- Prevention and community
- Local and state-level officials
- Public health
- Local media

Operation Engage Stakeholders

- Parents
- Business owners
- Faith-based community leaders
- Schools
- Community-based coalitions
- Other stakeholders

■ Collaborating Partners

Operation Engage was launched through partnerships with several program facilitators along with state and local stakeholders that included partnerships with community organizations and community members.



DEA Educational Foundation: The DEA Educational Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization established in 2001, whose goal is to educate the public on the many costs and consequences of illegal drugs in our society. The foundation funds multiple youth programs, such as its three national programs around dance, baseball, and martial arts, as well as art, basketball, soccer, and more. These programs offer a free after-school alternative to drugs through fun, healthy, and expressive outlets.



Tribal Tech, L.L.C.: Since 2000, Tribal Tech has provided a diverse range of services to federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector entities, including a train-the trainer model to educate communities about the dangers of substance use. The corporate culture encourages the ongoing advancement of education and community well-being by emphasizing the inherent integrity of people, performance, and partnership. Their vision includes providing better health, security, and well-being for all, by helping to build healthier communities, secure foundations, and stronger economies.



Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America: Since 1992, CADCA has been the premier membership organization representing those working to make their communities safe, healthy, and drug free. CADCA brings its expertise in building effective community coalitions and facilitating valuable dialogues to empower communities and support prevention efforts. CADCA's mission is to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions by providing technical aid and training, drug use-related public policy training for youth and adults, media strategies, marketing programs, conferences, and special events.

a. Bright idea



A. Bright Idea, L.L.C.: DEA partnered with a. Bright Idea L.L.C. to develop an Operation Engage media toolkit to help DEA field divisions develop compelling and informative media messages. This toolkit assists in the creation of digital ads, print ads, billboards, and videos. Also, the toolkit allowed DEA to customize its media messaging to local drug threats while maintaining consistency in branding.

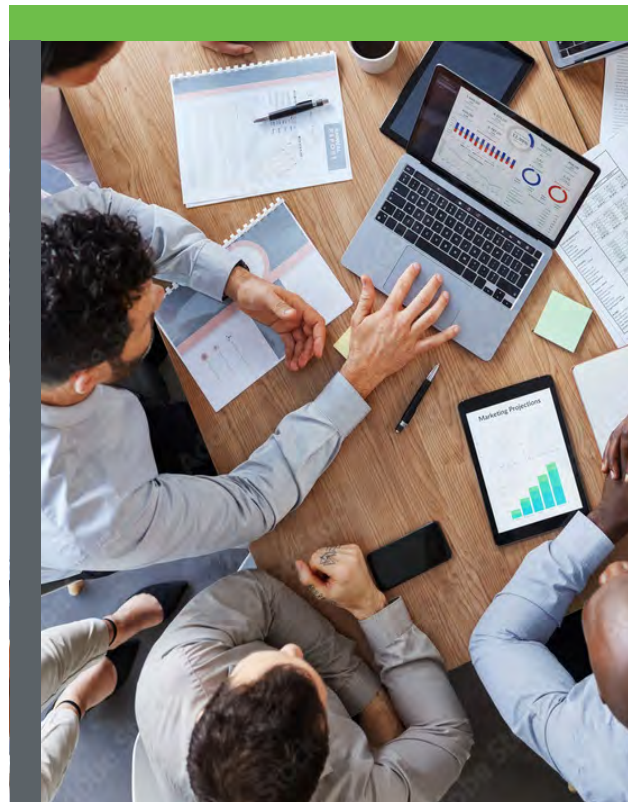
The Milken Institute Center for Public Health: The Milken Institute Center for Public Health partnered with DEA as part of the Operation Engage employer outreach work. These efforts were designed to raise awareness about local drug threats affecting communities in which employers operate and to provide organizations with drug misuse prevention, treatment and recovery support resources that can be shared with their employees.

SheRay's & Associates, L.L.C.: SheRay's & Associates, L.L.C. partnered with DEA to provide consulting services focused on evidence-based prevention and treatment/intervention strategies to engage community members to affect behavioral change. Their services consisted of strategies to build capacity, as well as strategies to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in prevention efforts through the 5 Pillars of Prevention in minority communities.

■ Reach and Impact Research Approach

For all engagement areas, the report highlights key elements that demonstrate reach and impact using the following data gathering approach.

- Obtain detailed metrics on activities conducted in every engagement area
- Conduct individual interviews with the DEA field division Community Outreach Specialist to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of Operation Engage during 2022
- Assess strategies for engagement
- Understand local challenges and successes
- Develop lessons learned
- Obtain specific metrics not captured in the monthly reports
- Obtain photos, flyers, newsletters, and presentations highlighting Operation Engage



■ Methods and Data Sources

At DEA's direction, SRCA used a mixed-method approach to assess Operation Engage in each of the 11 locations using quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, the SRCA research team collected, organized, and analyzed quantitative metrics received from DEA's Community Outreach Specialist (or program representative) in each location along with information from the national partners. SRCA also conducted and analyzed qualitative data from phone interviews with division contacts and local stakeholders.

■ Quantitative Data

DEA's national partners and field division contacts who participated in phone interviews shared relevant quantitative metrics data related to their deliverables during the year (January 2022–December 2022), although most deliverables did not begin until February/March 2022. Examples of data shared are completed deliverable activities with associated metrics, news articles and social media posts with mentions of Operation Engage, summary documents of completed activities, counts of participants (where available), and photos from Operation Engage events.

■ Qualitative Data

SRCA conducted 10 qualitative interviews with local stakeholders to gather information on their exposure to Operation Engage and their perception of the reach and impact associated with those efforts. Stakeholder contacts were recommended by each Operation Engage location and approved by DEA. During these interviews, stakeholders discussed the following areas:

- Description of relationship with the DEA field division
- Specific experiences with Operation Engage in that location
- Measurable effects of DEA activities
- Support of drug prevention efforts
- Sustainment of Operation Engage in the following year
- Lessons learned and/or recommendations

■ Research Questions

- What strategies were used to start each engagement area (stakeholder, adult/community, youth, school, workplace, Citizens Academy)?
- What were the key messages/calls to action?
- How many people were reached for each engagement activity completed in 2022?
- What were the challenges to carry out Operation Engage?
- What were the lessons learned?



Albuquerque Citizens Academy (El Paso Field Division).



LESSONS LEARNED

Several key lessons were learned from assessing Operation Engage in its various locations for 2022. Some of the lessons learned were captured from interviews with the divisions and stakeholders, while others are derived from the data.

Sustainability

The success of Operation Engage relies heavily on creating sustainable practices. Often spanning thousands of square miles, most field divisions employ only one Community Outreach Specialist. The most effective Operation Engage locations have leaned on established stakeholders to determine the most efficient allocation of resources. These stakeholders have valuable insights into the culture of an area that can improve the chance of a program becoming sustainable. Working with stakeholders, these divisions have formulated long-term strategic plans tailored to their communities. These plans empower the Community Outreach Specialist to operate strategically rather than tactically. The Lowrider Bike programs started in Kansas

City are excellent examples of sustainable programs. This program, replicated in Albuquerque, was started with Operation Engage funding, but the community and stakeholders are heavily invested in running the program. The Lowrider program offers a safe place for youth to learn how to build lowriders while learning about the cost and consequences of substance misuse. The El Paso Field Division is confident that its local partners would continue the Lowrider program even without direct DEA involvement. If programs prove self-sustaining due to stakeholder and community involvement, Operation Engage can leverage this success and experience to establish new, self-perpetuating outreach initiatives.

"If DEA were to leave and say, we are no longer going to provide financial assistance through Operation Engage, the [Lowrider Bike] program would not stop. They've taken ownership of it now, and it's going to continue to be part of the community education system there. It is now part of the DNA of that community..."

Mr. Carlos Briano, DEA Public Information Officer



Albuquerque Lowrider program (El Paso Field Division) participants choosing stencils.

Increase and Stabilize Funding

Every division encountered funding challenges, with some not receiving funds until the following year (e.g., April 2022). Delays in funding for approved proposals led to outreach event cancellations and stakeholder withdrawals. Additionally, some divisions missed valuable opportunities to participate in drug education opportunities and provide resources due to insufficient travel funds. Unfortunately, uncertainties are inherent when relying on government funding.

■ Expand The Initiative

Examination of the Operation Engage Initiative indicates that it is highly successful. However, the effort needs to be expanded to a wider breadth of operational scope to magnify its positive returns. Operation Engage has demonstrated its baseline components can be replicated while permitting sociogeographical customization for specific cities, regions, and populations. There are three major considerations that should be components to any expansion. The first is preservation of localized autonomy for geographical programming, which is key to Operation Engage's current success. Second, limit programmatic oversight to those responsible for ensuring funds are used for drug prevention outreach to avoid diluting meaningful localized results. Finally, any initiative that is expanded needs to be given time to achieve objectives. In the case of Operation Engage, a decade or more to see meaningful and long-lasting results is realistic.



Yavapai County Citizens Academy (Phoenix Field Division).

■ Leadership Support

Collaboration. Field divisions that have achieved the greatest success demonstrated extensive collaboration among key personnel, including the Special Agent in Charge, Public Information Officer, and Community Outreach Specialist, as evidenced by data and discussions. Conversely, divisions experiencing the most difficulties either barely mention or completely omit involvement from the Special Agent in Charge or Public Information Officer in their data.

Experience. The Special Agent in Charge and Public Information Officer represent invaluable sources of experience and insight for a Community Outreach Specialist, acting as crucial support systems. Their leadership, role, and deep understanding of the community significantly enhance the quality of Operation Engage initiatives in participating areas.

Communication. Keeping the Community Outreach Specialist informed about decisions affecting Operation Engage, such as changes in location, allows them to prepare stakeholders and facilitate smooth transitions. Providing timely notification and aid can help maintain important stakeholder relationships and avoid the perception of DEA's lack of commitment.

Chain of Command. It is important that the Community Outreach Specialist be directly responsive to the Special Agent in Charge. This formal relationship and direct channel of communication provides the optimal pathway to achieve Operation Engage objectives.

"Leadership support is something that's instrumental. It's needed for us to be successful in the work that we do. So, we've been blessed within the division to have that leadership support with our special agent in charge. He's always supported community outreach and demand reduction. Working together cohesively is something that makes all the difference in the world in building a sustainable and successful program."

Ms. Naomi Lane, DEA's El Paso Field Division Community Outreach Specialist

■ Overcome Negative Perceptions

The ongoing challenges faced by Operation Engage initiatives stem from persistently negative views of DEA and law enforcement. Some individuals harbor these perceptions due to past negative encounters. Additionally, certain organizations and businesses are hesitant to align themselves with DEA due to concerns about their public image. Moreover, there's a prevailing perception among some stakeholders and nonprofits of a lack of commitment from DEA. Community Outreach Specialists frequently encounter and must address these perceptions, particularly when faced with sudden changes in location or turnover. Operation Engage found it most effective to counter negative impressions through in-person community events, where individuals could experience the quality of education and training firsthand. Addressing the perception of DEA's commitment requires improved communication, including engagement with stakeholders, and provision of additional resources during transitions to new areas. Standardizing turnover processes and data collection procedures could further mitigate the risk of losing planned events and stakeholder contacts during turnover. Analysis comparing data from 2021 to 2022 highlights significant progress in areas where Operation Engage maintained stability in Community Outreach Specialist contractor positions and responsibilities.



Spokane community event (Seattle Field Division).

■ Enhance Metric Tracking and Data Collection Process

To improve the evaluation of activities across all engagement areas, DEA should start a more efficient system for recording, tracking, and maintaining metrics. After reviewing the metric data, discrepancies were identified in event categories and inconsistencies in the types of information recorded. Additionally, some locations lacked specific attendance metrics for events, and there was minimal tracking of media engagement activities. The division's efforts to boost social media usage proved beneficial for data analysis, as several unreported activities were discovered through social media searches. Instances where the Community Outreach Specialist contractor position changed resulted in the loss of associated data, highlighting the need for a standardized data collection and storage process to minimize challenges with turnover. To enable uniformity in data capture and reporting, training sessions should be conducted for Community Outreach Specialists. This training will make sure that all essential data is accurately tracked, facilitating comparative analysis of the initiative's performance over time.



ASAC Erika Jimenez at Youth Citizens Academy (Miami Field Division).

■ Leverage Dea Expertise

All Operation Engage locations adopted a shared strategy of responsiveness and willingness to engage with the community in any capacity. This dedication to outreach fostered trust and opened numerous opportunities for involvement. In many locations, DEA is regarded as a trusted ally and an expert on drug trends and resources. DEA's active participation in drug prevention efforts have strengthened the messages of local coalitions and heightened awareness about drugs beyond fentanyl and opioids.

"They want to see you there and they want to see consistency. They want to see that you're always working on something for the community, and they'll embrace you at that point."

Mr. Frank McCartney, DEA Community Outreach Specialist



Community Outreach Specialist Frank McCartney (right) with Ms. Delaware pageant winners (Philadelphia Field Division).

■ Community Outreach Specialist Enhancements

The Community Outreach Specialist contractor should be a DEA employee. A DEA employee has certain authority that a contractor acting in the capacity of a Community Outreach Specialist does not have. This alone sends a message to the community that the initiative is not that important. Additionally, contractors have typically not remained in place as long as a federal employee. The turnover of this key position creates challenges. Also, the chain of command when working with a contractor creates challenges. They work directly for their contractor supervisor while serving the Special Agent in Charge or other leaders within the field division. This creates issues of alliance and blurs supervisory control. Finally, the contractor does not have the authority for certain matters that a DEA employee does. That is, they are not permitted to obligate funding in certain matters and something as simple as using a government vehicle is not permitted. Although contracted Community Outreach Specialists have been successful, the optimal pathway is a DEA employee.

Some Community Outreach Specialists interviewed felt that the training provided did not prepare them adequately for the responsibilities of the position. While formal training is provided for newly appointed Community Outreach Specialists, additional training that is tailored to challenges unique to the region, updated frequently, and provided annually should be considered.



Community Outreach Specialist Brian O'Keefe (New England Field Division).

HIGHLIGHTS

Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

A key aim of Operation Engage remains the cultivation and expansion of public and private partnerships in every community to foster cross-sector collaboration. To achieve this, Operation Engage sites were tasked with using local community organizations and resources to bolster the initiative, fostering a more robust and collaborative approach for sustainable progress and ongoing development.

DEA persisted in collaborating with state, local, and federal law enforcement in all designated Operation Engage sites. Local partners played a crucial role in identifying the most disadvantaged and underserved areas, enabling field divisions to deliver resources more effectively. In numerous cases, divisions were able to supplement resources at existing events organized by local law enforcement. Furthermore, divisions actively broadened partnerships with community organizations. While some divisions encountered obstacles such as budget uncertainties, personnel changes, and skepticism from local organizations and leaders, they nonetheless achieved notable progress and added new partners and stakeholders in 2022.

As 2022 marks the second year of the Operation Engage initiative, the field divisions continued their collaboration with established partners. The steadfast commitment of DEA and the longstanding relationships with some partners enabled the divisions to build upon the successes of Operation Engage in 2021 and DEA 360 Strategy efforts, amplifying the effect of events and surmounting obstacles more effectively. Nevertheless, fundamental principles of Operation Engage are to cultivate new relationships and raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and other substances. In pursuit of this objective, the divisions welcomed **512 new partners** and stakeholders over the course of the year. This expansion of partnerships enabled the divisions to reach previously untapped segments of the community, introduce fresh perspectives, and diversify efforts in drug misuse education.

Effective communication, flexible planning, and feedback mechanisms between the field divisions and the community were crucial for the divisions to efficiently strategize drug awareness events and allocate resources. Collaborating with community leaders and nonprofits across various sectors allowed the divisions to adopt a comprehensive approach. On average, each division convened approximately 20 meetings involving 510 stakeholders from 58 organizations. This collaboration empowered each field division to customize Operation Engage resources to address the challenges posed by the opioid crisis more effectively. These initiatives offered stakeholders a deeper understanding of Operation Engage's objectives, witness DEA's commitment, and demonstrated the initiative's effect on their communities.



When the field divisions overcome the difficulties of building a relationship and getting a commitment from a new stakeholder, there's also the challenge of training stakeholders in the complexities of being an effective coalition member. SheRay's & Associates and Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America have both provided instrumental training that is aimed at educating stakeholders and increasing coalition effectiveness.

CADCA's Coalition Capacity Building training is designed for stakeholders who represent youth, parents, educators, law enforcement professionals, healthcare workers, and tribal and government leaders with a common goal of strengthening communities by making them safe, healthy, and drug free. This training introduced participants to the Strategic Prevention Framework, which includes the principal elements of capacity building, the fundamental concepts of effective prevention, understanding how to develop new partnerships strategically and proactively, and strategies for successfully recruiting and engaging new community partners. This in-demand training galvanizes the collective sustainability of the coalition and extends needed drug prevention services to the communities. CADCA invites key stakeholders to help them maximize their efforts. Capacity training is about bringing all these different people in and keeping them engaged in the work. The objective is sustainability and success. SheRay's consulting services allow the divisions to increase the effectiveness of stakeholders by providing a multicultural approach to their training.

SheRay's provides consultation on what the coalition should do, followed by how the team can move forward and get the membership together. SheRay's role is to foster a multicultural engagement and not just a homogeneous engagement. This is based on their experience in prevention work where considerations such as gender, race, socioeconomic background, and foundation are often missing. Their goal is to focus on providing understanding and consideration to those different groups and not the typical audience. SheRay's Managing Partner, Mr. Tracy Johnson, has seen numerous instances in which the focus is on the single generic group that yields subpar results. Therefore, the solution developed by SheRay's is tailored to each specific region and division. In other words, an approach used in Phoenix would not be the same as the approach used in Richmond. When Mr. Johnson was asked about how SheRay's consulting services increase the effectiveness of Operation Engage stakeholders, he stated:

"SheRay's does not say, this is what you need to solve your problem. Instead SheRay's would say, this is what you need to move forward in attempting to change the norm. We are attempting to change human behavior. This is the first necessity in sustainable prevention. Good prevention engages community members to create a new normal. Until that change occurs, it is difficult and potentially impossible to create a new normal."

Mr. Tracy Johnson, SheRay's Managing Partner



Community Outreach Specialist Gretchen Rivera at faith-based town hall with SheRay's (Miami Field Division).



Spokane Alliance for Fentanyl Education at Fall Family Festival event (Seattle Field Division).

Despite the addition of stakeholders, partners, and training events across nearly every field division, challenges persisted. The delayed allocation of funds presented a challenge for every division. Some Community Outreach Specialists had difficulties scheduling events, and some had events canceled because of budget uncertainties.

“It took three months after initially reaching out to set up a meeting and convince [tribal leadership that DEA] weren’t just coming in for a photo.”

Mr. Marcus Pickett, Community Outreach Specialist DEA’s Seattle Field Division

For some Operation Engage field divisions, establishing trust with community members and organizations remained a recurring obstacle this year. DEA continues to grapple with dispelling the perception of being solely a law enforcement agency, which hinders its commitment to community outreach programs. This negative perception is particularly pronounced among tribal leaders. Mr. Marcus Pickett, the Community Outreach Specialist of the Seattle Field Division, shared his challenges in arranging a meeting with the Tribal Council.

Previously, DEA had a youth event that lasted a single day and involved bussing tribal youth 45 minutes away from the reservation to Spokane.

These actions indicated a lack of sustained dedication from DEA, which caused the Tribal Council to question the motives of the Seattle Field Division and general distrust of DEA. Additionally, other Community Outreach Specialists encountered situations where events were canceled, and community leaders withdrew their support upon learning of DEA’s involvement. Nonetheless, Mr. Pickett’s persistence illustrated the potential for DEA to counteract that negative image.



Spokane Tribe 477 town hall event (Seattle Field Division).



SheRay's and Associates (Phoenix Field Division).

Build an effective team of Stakeholders

CADCA's Coalition Capacity Building training introduced stakeholders to the Strategic Prevention Framework, fostering effective prevention strategies and partnership development resulting in an effective coalition team. This training provides a rigorous course that improves stakeholder effectiveness, and helps stakeholders create guiding documents that are essential to the development of a successful community action plan.



First Responders Night at the Nutshell (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

Look for opportunities to adjust to community needs

Effective communication, flexible planning, and collaboration with community stakeholders empowered field divisions to customize Operation Engage resources, addressing methamphetamine and opioid crises more effectively, while also deepening stakeholders' understanding of the program's objectives and demonstrating DEA's commitment. Additionally, in its second year, Operation Engage continued to build upon previous successes, fostering both established partnerships and new relationships to further expand its outreach efforts.



Spokane, Washington community event (Seattle Field Division).

Establish DEA as an advocate for drug prevention

Fostering the community's understanding of DEA's dedication to addressing local drug threats and actively seeking avenues to prevent future risks has played a pivotal role in advancing the Operation Engage initiative. Establishing trust and securing support from community leaders and residents begins with comprehending DEA's identity, mission, and its alignment with the community's objectives.

Overview

Operation Engage expanded partnerships and collaboration within communities, using local resources for sustainable progress. Despite challenges, DEA's collaboration with law enforcement and community organizations has led to notable achievements, including the addition of new partners and stakeholders. Effective communication and training initiatives further enhanced coalition effectiveness and community engagement.

Adult and Community Outreach

DEA recognizes the importance of adapting information to meet the specific needs of communities, enabling community members to grasp the effects, and relate the presented information on a personal level. To achieve this, DEA built new connections, strengthened existing relationships, and tapped into local resources to broaden ongoing outreach and public awareness endeavors. Focusing efforts on underserved communities, the field divisions delivered preventive measures such as drug misuse prevention training, hosted town halls, workshops, community pop-up outreach events, and more.



National Night Out (St. Louis Field Division).

As an integral component of community outreach endeavors, the Operation Engage sites complement other local prevention efforts by offering an extensive array of resources, programs, and services tailored to the community. This grassroots approach to community engagement harmonized with DEA's enforcement initiatives, featuring the Operation Prevention curriculum focused on drug education and prevention, online resources catering to various age groups, after-school programs, special outreach events, and numerous other initiatives. DEA acknowledges the significance of a comprehensive approach and partnerships across all sectors to effectively combat drug threats and the multifaceted challenges confronting our communities.

Community Involvement

Operation Engage aimed to raise awareness within local communities about drug threats and the resources at their disposal. To achieve this objective, DEA supported community members by participating in local events, fostering trust, and building rapport. These efforts enabled DEA to grasp the community's needs, priorities, and ascertain how Operation Engage could aid communities in advancing their objectives.

In 2022, the El Paso Field Division and its partners provided over 40 drug prevention and education training courses to the community along with thousands of substance misuse resources. These presentations cover topics such as: DEA 101, Operation Engage activities, and drug trends and awareness. Some of the drug education literature included DEA Publications: Drugs of Abuse, Prescription for Disaster, Student Athletes and Opioids Poster, Prevention with Purpose, Growing Up Drug Free, and "One Pill Can Kill." The increase in presentations and community engagement during 2022 resulted in doubling DEA's community outreach from 5,000 affected in 2021 to 9,567 in 2022.

Overall Reach for Adult/Community Engagement:

Summits 7 Reach 5,800	National Night Out 6 Reach 22,000	Coalition Training 5 Reach 150	Community Involvement 51 Reach 18,111
Community Pop-Ups 16 Reach 8,522	Town Halls 3 Reach 315	Family Summit 11 Reach 1,386	



The Phoenix Field Division recorded 10 adult and community drug misuse training events. Though not all events were tracked, the total estimated reach from this year was 3,960 individuals. The division noted late funding of approved proposals and budget limitations as challenges preventing the division from reaching the same level of achievement as in 2021. Despite the limitations, the division was able to provide additional educational presentations to 4,328 community members.

In 2021, the New Orleans Field Division brought the Operation Engage initiative to over 10,000 community members including youth, college students, adults, and professionals in the Baton Rouge area through drug prevention and education training. It is crucial that parents, school board members, and community leaders meet and share knowledge regarding fentanyl and other substances to which their children might be exposed. In 2022, the New Orleans Field Division provided drug misuse prevention and education training to an additional 1,236 community members.

SheRay's and Associates workshop (Phoenix Field Division).

■ Conferences and Training

Community engagement efforts encompassed supporting local conferences and providing training sessions for various stakeholders, including community members, local agencies, educators, and healthcare professionals. DEA personnel delivered informative presentations to enhance comprehension of the identified drug threat, encompassing misuse patterns, neurological effects, and actionable steps for local intervention. Moreover, targeted training sessions were conducted to bolster awareness among intervention specialists, educators, and the parenting community fostering cross-sector collaboration. Upon invitation, DEA representatives contributed to conferences and summits, furthering community education on drug trends and risks. These presentations often featured guest speakers from diverse backgrounds and expertise, tailored to the specific interests of the audience.



■ Albuquerque

2022 Fentanyl Awareness Summit: A Community Conversation About Fentanyl

The El Paso Field Division participated in the 2022 Fentanyl Awareness Summit by providing drug prevention and education training and substance misuse resources. The event was hosted by Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque on October 13, 2022, at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Its purpose was to introduce an extensive fentanyl awareness campaign to kick-start a community education campaign called “keepNMalive.” This campaign is intended to combat this life-ending and family-shattering drug. Topics discussed included:

- 1 Fentanyl as the #1 killer of 18-45 year olds
- 2 Fentanyl and counterfeit fentanyl
- 3 Fentanyl’s effect on youth and families
- 4 Fentanyl’s connection to crime and homelessness
- 5 Resources to get help

REACH
2,100

Good Medicine Bundle

The El Paso Field Division partnered with CADCA on July 21, 2022. DEA delivered a three-hour breakout session introducing Operation Engage’s “Good Medicine Bundle,” which is a collaboration between DEA, the National Indian Education Association, and Discovery Education. It is a culturally-based education program whose intent is to prevent substance misuse among students using Native American customs, history, and wellness practices to promote holistic health. Culturally-based educational resources such as “The Good Medicine Bundle” are proven to be a highly effective teaching strategy. Classrooms using culture-based strategies are more successful in developing a student’s identity and culture, resulting in a more effective learning experience.

REACH
3,000

■ Philadelphia

Drug Prevention Training for Parents

Throughout 2022, the Philadelphia Field Division provided targeted training for parents in the community. Using its partnerships with Ben Franklin High School, Strath Haven Middle School, American Society for Quality Club, and the Science Learning Academy, the field division delivered the Operation Prevention curriculum, One Pill Can Kill curriculum, and educational resources to the adult community. DEA created the “One Pill Can Kill” campaign to raise awareness of a nationwide surge in fake pills that are marketed as legitimate.

REACH
2,600

■ Seattle

Leadership Summit

The Seattle Field Division worked with Spokane Alliance for Fentanyl Education and CADCA to provide specialized training for community stakeholders. This Leadership Summit included education about the dangers of fentanyl, breakout sessions to discuss community approaches, and motivational speaker Reverend Roger Powell, who provided words of encouragement. The field division provided the stakeholders drug misuse resources like “One Pill Can Kill” fact sheets and the “Prevention with Purpose” strategic planning guide.

REACH
180



Good Medicine Bundle (El Paso Field Division).

■ Kansas City

Drug Education and Prevention Summit

The St. Louis Field Division hosted a Drug Education and Prevention Summit with CADCA. The morning session consisted of a keynote speaker from the Olathe Leadership Lowrider Bike Club and the field division provided input on fentanyl and prevention efforts. The Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area spoke regarding their efforts in the region. The Missouri Institute of Mental Health gave a review of overdoses occurring in Missouri and their first responder programs. Attendees listened to CADCA trainer Catherine Brunson provide prevention and application techniques for drug prevention programs. Addiction is Real delivered information about parent drug prevention strategies. Johnson County Mental Health Adolescent Center touched on adolescent recovery and substance use. First Call spoke to their holistic continuum approach of care around substance misuse for individuals.

REACH
95

OPERATION ENGAGE

SheRay's relies on its diverse professional associates to focus on evidence-based prevention and treatment/intervention strategies that are multicultural in nature and gives the organization a unique advantage in providing the most effective strategies and programs.

SheRay's & Associates, L.L.C.



Community event (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

■ Richmond

Town Halls and Workshops

From April to December 2022, the Washington D.C. Field Division, in partnership with SheRay's & Associates, L.L.C., diligently addressed issues surrounding fentanyl, methamphetamine, and drug-related crime in the Richmond area while striving to enhance adult and youth involvement in underserved communities. Through virtual meetings with faith-based leaders and community stakeholders, the initiative provided a platform for DEA representatives, the Department of Health, local leaders, and concerned citizens to advocate for a drug-free Richmond. In June, insights gathered from a focus group were disseminated among participants, who were subsequently divided into three groups for a Town Hall discussion. This gathering delved into collaboration efforts, personal experiences with stigmatization, sustainability concerns, and community resource needs, exploring potential solutions for drug prevention, addiction, and mental health challenges. This grassroots endeavor fostered a more positive relationship between the community and law enforcement.

REACH
315

National Night Out

A number of Operation Engage cities took advantage of local 2022 National Night Out events to share resources and raise awareness in that local community. While not part of the Operation Engage deliverables, National Night Out is a community building and violent crime prevention event that promotes partnerships and camaraderie between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Parties, music, cookouts, festivals, safety demonstrations, youth events, visits from first responders, and more are used to attract community involvement and distribute vital violent crime and drug prevention education resources. National Night Out serves as a platform to establish new connections, offer drug prevention education, and enhance the public perception of DEA. Local police departments contribute by organizing K-9 demonstrations, displaying agency vehicles and equipment, and arranging activities for youth to encourage community involvement. The Seattle and Miami Field Divisions participated in similar events called the Riverfront Park Festival and the Winter Expo.



REACH

NEW ORLEANS	400
DETROIT	500
LOS ANGELES	3,000
WASHINGTON, D.C.	15,000
SEATTLE	2,000
MIAMI	1,100

Coalition Training

DEA facilitated a collaboration between Operation Engage sites and the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, aiming to bolster coalition support through capacity-building and developmental training. These sessions focused on evidence-based prevention strategies and processes, including the Strategic Prevention Framework. The training format comprised an initial plenary session, followed by tailored breakout sessions addressing location-specific topics, culminating in actionable items discussed during the closing plenary session. Objectives encompassed empowering coalition members with proven methods to enhance their capacity and programs, tackling overarching and specific challenges, fostering member interaction, and facilitating closer collaboration to leverage DEA's collective resources for sustainable community affect.

REACH
150

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In alignment with Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," DEA is committed to protecting civil rights and ensuring the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion are reflected throughout their programs and initiatives. The strategies of Operation Engage clearly demonstrate these attributes by practicing open and honest communication, soliciting feedback from community partners and stakeholders, and ensuring accountability through monthly and annual reporting of reach and impact results within each participating location. As part of the Operation Engage efforts, many field divisions provided diversity and stigma reduction training to the local communities.

In July 2022, the Phoenix Field Division provided tailored diversity and cultural competence training to local coalitions and community members, aligned with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework. This training aimed to heighten cultural sensitivity and recognize diverse norms when addressing demand reduction initiatives, such as drug prevention. Covering cultural interactions, cues, and communication techniques, the training emphasized the importance of culturally appropriate substance use prevention and intervention strategies to enable inclusivity and engagement across all demographics. By fostering stronger partnerships and connections within communities, this training bolstered DEA's prevention endeavors.

The New Orleans Field Division concentrated its prevention initiatives on educating parents about trauma-informed practices and dispelling the stigma surrounding mental health. Collaborating with SheRay's, the field division conducted adult education sessions from June to August 2022 in Baton Rouge, offering three training courses and hosting two community discussions.

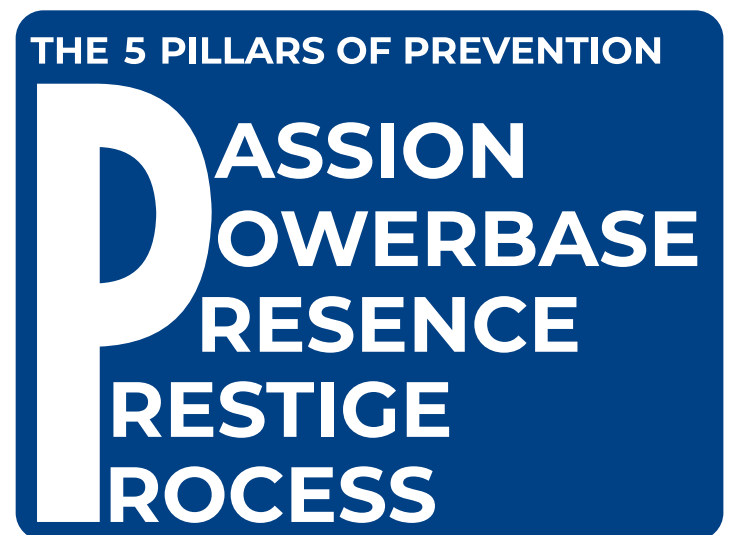


Community event (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

These faith and family dialogues aimed to uncover cultural stigmas, concerns, and potential remedies related to fentanyl use among youth and young adults. The conversations delved into prevention strategies, existing addiction resources, and mental health support available to parish members, fostering insightful discussions on these crucial topics.

The Miami Field Division and SheRay's hosted the 2022 Strengthening Faith-Communities' Partnership in Drug Prevention and Community Wellness Summit. For the summit, the division worked with community-based organizations (e.g., local schools, drug-free community coalitions, local psychologists, a medical examiner's office, local youth in recovery, a treatment facilities director, local DEA field leadership, and the U.S. Attorney's Office) and participated in a panel discussion for a community summit event. Before the panel discussion, District Attorney Harold Pryor presented work to advance second chance offender program opportunities.

The Community Wellness Summit promoted community awareness, and local resources on opioids and other drugs affecting the residents of Broward County. The goal was to bridge the gap between mental health, homelessness, gender, and addiction. During the summit, the audience was informed about opioid trends and local resources to help with their prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. DEA Miami provided a dynamic presentation that outlined the significant rise in value of cocaine (2008 \$18k/kg to 2022 \$31k/kg) in Southern Florida. SheRay's & Associates provided an engaging conversation about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion for developing effective drug prevention partnerships and the importance of the 5 Pillars of Prevention in minority communities.



Community Faith-Based Virtual Summit

OPERATION
ENGAGE

2nd Strengthening Faith-Communities' Partnership in Drug Prevention and Community Wellness Summit



■ Overview

During the second year of Operation Engage, community engagement continued to be a central objective. DEA field divisions actively participated in and organized numerous community outreach initiatives to raise awareness about local drug threats. Collaborating with local coalitions, drug prevention providers, and national program facilitators, they disseminated vital information within the local community through various channels such as local conferences, training sessions, pop-up events, coalition capacity building, and diversity, equity, and inclusion training aimed at educating and raising awareness of drug threats.

Operation Engage sites continued their support for national initiatives like National Prescription Drug Take Back Day activities held in April and October. All field divisions supported a Regional Family Summit on Fentanyl to address the alarming rise in drug-related deaths across the nation. Despite encountering some challenges, divisions successfully expanded Operation Engage initiatives, establishing DEA as a valuable prevention partner.

Youth Engagement

An essential goal of the Operation Engage initiative is to enhance awareness among young people in the community regarding the risks associated with substance misuse. Studies indicate that when awareness of drug risks increases, rates of drug use among this demographic tend to decrease. By leveraging initiatives such as the DEA Educational Foundation and working closely with national organizations, children of various ages can engage in age-appropriate activities aimed at educating them about the perils of drugs in an enjoyable and interactive manner.

The National Institutes of Health reported there has been a significant decrease in prescription opioid misuse among 12th graders. However, research indicates stable rates of cocaine, methamphetamine, and over-the-counter cold medicine misuse.⁵ DEA acknowledges the ongoing necessity for consistent drug education, empowering youth, promoting positive and healthy activities, fostering youth leadership, and upholding other fundamental principles. These efforts are carried out through presentations, youth summits, teen academies, special events, youth programs, workshops, and trainings. Collaborating with various youth groups and coalitions, the divisions aimed to further educate and empower young individuals as advocates within their communities. Establishing connections with diverse youth age groups allows for the expansion of outreach efforts and the exchange of ideas to catalyze positive transformations within communities.



Cuts and Convo (Los Angeles Field Division).

"It is helpful to get kids interested, as they must be shown how great it can be to get involved."
Jill Roberts, President and CEO, DEAEF

DEA Educational Foundation

The DEA Educational Foundation Youth Program, a part of the DEA Educational Foundation, was established to empower young people through free after-school programs that offer positive alternatives to drug use and inspire them to make healthy choices while exploring fun activities after school. Working with the DEA Educational Foundation, DEA offers various after-school programs to youth including dance, baseball, basketball, soccer, Baby Scientist, and other specialized programs. These activities are complimented with drug prevention and education sessions aimed at youth. Research shows that students who meet regularly with mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are also 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking alcohol.⁵

Youth Dance Program

The DEA Educational Foundation Youth Dance Program empowers young people through free after-school programs that offer positive alternatives to drug use and inspire them to make healthy choices while exploring the fun and expressive art form of dance. The program offers traditional dance, ballet, hip hop, and culturally specific dance options depending on the needs of the location. The program starts with a drug misuse and prevention awareness assembly led by a local professional dance company followed by a series of classes culminating with a performance at the school or community center. Professional dance instructors serve as role models and mentors to youth and help to strengthen self-esteem and decision-making skills.

REACH	
Baton Rouge:	13
Philadelphia:	99
Albuquerque:	81
Ft. Lauderdale and Broward County:	20
Yavapai County:	44
Kansas City:	10

Baseball/Basketball/Soccer/Kickball/ Track and Field Programs

The DEA Educational Foundation Youth Program offers baseball, basketball, and soccer programs to serve as a vehicle that empowers young people, teaches them focus and discipline, and allows them to express their emotions in a healthy way through sports training.

DIVISION REACH

Kalamazoo:	64
Albuquerque:	83
Southern California:	313
Ft. Lauderdale and Broward County:	42
Philadelphia:	206
Richmond:	6
Manchester:	15
Yavapai County:	170

Baby Scientist Program

Under Operation Engage some locations partnered with DEA Educational Foundation to bring the Baby Scientist program into the community. Baby Scientist is a nonprofit organization delivering fun and engaging Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics programs to underserved students. Dr. Kristy L. McDowell, founder of Baby Scientist and Ph.D. in Molecular Biology, along with agents from DEA, visited disadvantaged schools in the area's most underserved communities to provide fun activities, encouraging messages, and career inspiration through hands-on activities in science, technology, engineering, and math to youth.



DEA Educational Foundation Baby Scientist Program (Detroit Field Division).

Dr. McDowell delivered fun and engaging programs where youth were given “Baby Scientist kits” and could conduct science experiments, exposing the students to various scientific disciplines to provoke and stimulate their curiosity. The program aims to inspire an interest in the STEM field, an industry with a longstanding diversity and inclusion problem. Each class received two program sessions within one week, including two hands-on activities. Dr. McDowell delivered a brief scientific overview about the upcoming experiments and guided instruction for the students. Experiments included extracting DNA, chemical reactions, defying gravity, and creating cells.



Dr. Kristy L. McDowell.

The supplies for all experiments and lab coats were given to each student. Each session ended by explaining the critical role that biology and chemistry play in the body and cells, how the usage of “bad” drugs can negatively affect the functioning of the brain and entire body, and the importance of living a healthy, drug-free life so that the mind and body can perform at its highest level, which is crucial for future success as a STEM professional.

**REACH
40**

Cuts and Convo

As part of the National Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention Day, held on August 21, 2022, a youth centered Cuts and Convo event was held. The DEA Educational Foundation, the Los Angeles Field Division, Culture Shock Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Sparks all provided services at the event. The goal of the Cuts and Convo event was to train professionals on how to build trusting relationships with their youth. Local barbers received training on how to engage youth in conversation about substance misuse. An Operation Engage booth was set up and Operation Prevention resources, trinkets, backpacks, school supplies, and gift cards were provided. The DEA Educational Foundation provided healthy lifestyle presentations and promoted their youth program by providing LA Sparks signed basketballs.

REACH
800

Teen Academy

The DEA Educational Foundation partnered with the Philadelphia Field Division to host a one-day Teen Academy focused on career building and leadership skills, all while emphasizing the importance of drug prevention. Forty-eight high school students (18 more than 2021) attended the one-day conference. Students heard from experts in these fields and had the opportunity to take part in interactive sessions to help build ideas and new approaches to their futures. Besides the benefits to the students, the event brought together key partners in Philadelphia, all supporting the critical need for drug misuse prevention in the city. Following the event, students were encouraged to participate in the Post Speakers Series to develop and broaden their leadership and mentorship skills. The training was customized to include various sessions and workshops on drug education, refusal skill workshops, core essentials, life skills, college opportunities, careers, leadership building, prevention advocacy, and other topics.

REACH
48

DEAEF Reel Prevention Public Service Announcement Competition

The DEA Educational Foundation partnered with the St. Louis Field Division to host a PSA competition, Reel Prevention, which encouraged Kansas City high school students to make a 30-second PSA telling their peers about the dangers of drug misuse and encouraging them to lead a healthy drug-free lifestyle. The first-place winner was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, second-place winner was awarded a \$500 scholarship, third-place winner was awarded a \$250 scholarship, and the fourth-place winner received a football signed by the Kansas City Chiefs.



Kansas City PSA Reel Prevention participants (St. Louis Field Division).

The competition attracted 33 students with 25 students completing the competition. The competition gave the division an opportunity to reach high school youth and an opportunity for those participating youth to share their drug awareness message with other peers. Overall, the competition reached more students than the previous year and engaged teachers as well.

St. Louis Field Division: 33

REACH
33

■ DEAEF Culinary Arts Program

The Culinary Arts Program was new to the Richmond area. It was started to help the underserved youth living in Northeast Richmond. This program was started by Celebrity Chef Sammy Davis, Jr., a Richmond native, who received recognition after winning Food Network's "Chopped Redemption." Chef Davis had a difficult and violent childhood, and he credits skills, help, and life lessons learned while working in the restaurant business for saving his life.⁶

The COOKS program provided 10 weeks of free cooking classes for 10 students. These classes provided usable skills coupled with mentorship and prevention opportunity for its students. Participants learned practical culinary skills as well as personal skills and the importance of remaining drug free.

During a session held in the kitchens at Reynolds Community College on August 23, 2022, graduates of the program returned to help the students in a cooking competition against their parents.

REACH
16



Chef Sammy Davis at RVA COOKS award ceremony (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

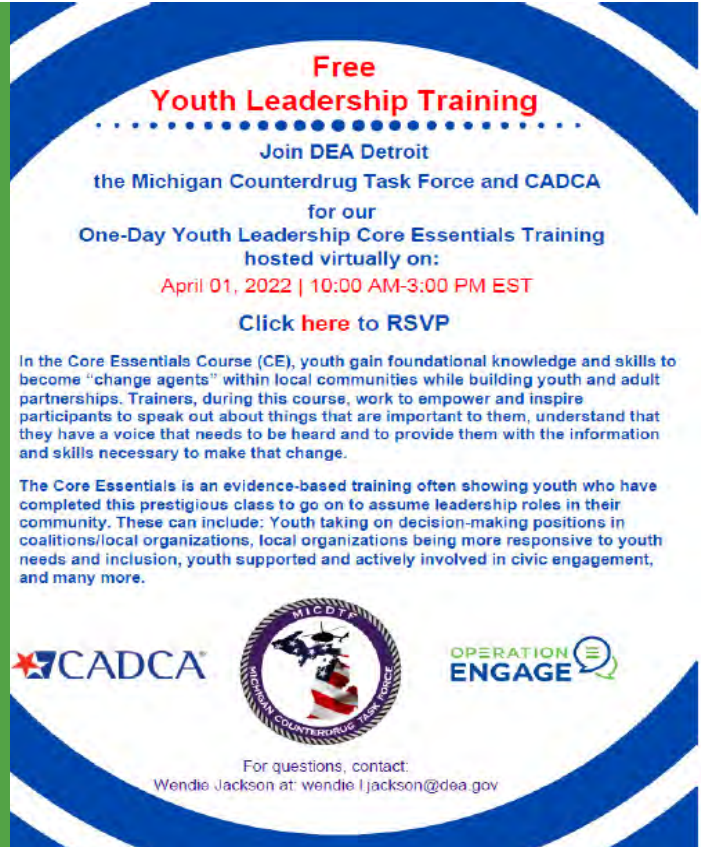


Drug prevention and education training were provided by Assistant Special Agent in Charge Christopher Goumenis, Ms. DeAndra Lee, and Celebrity Chef Sammy Davis, Jr. Every session provided the opportunity for prevention experts to provide resources to both the students and their guardians. This program built upon and created new partnerships between DEA and DEA Educational Foundation, Richmond Police Department, Challenge Discovery Projects, and the Richmond community. COOKS provided an opportunity to provide applicable life skills and drug prevention and education training to underserved youth and their guardians.

■ Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Youth Leadership

Several Operation Engage locations partnered with CADCA to bring youth leadership training to their cities. Through a mix of presentations, discussions, and activities, the attendees increased their capacity for authentic, effective youth involvement. Young people have powerful voices and bring critical insight and sustainability to prevention. CADCA tailored the Youth Leadership Training to meet the needs and address issues specific to the community to learn more about substance misuse prevention. During this event, students:

- Defined key leadership characteristics of an effective youth leader
- Identified the substance misuse problem most prevalent in the community
- Developed a Problem Statement to articulate the problem in a definitive way
- Conducted a Problem Analysis by identifying research-based risk and protective factors and local conditions that accurately portray how the problem appears in their respective neighborhoods
- Discussed and selected evidence-based strategies to intervene in a particular local condition using the Seven Strategies for Community Change
- Developed a comprehensive intervention strategy to translate into a Strategic Action Plan, describing who, will do what by when
- Drafted a Youth-In-Action Project






Free Youth Leadership Training

Join DEA Detroit
the Michigan Counterdrug Task Force and CADCA
for our
One-Day Youth Leadership Core Essentials Training
hosted virtually on:
April 01, 2022 | 10:00 AM-3:00 PM EST
[Click here to RSVP](#)

In the Core Essentials Course (CE), youth gain foundational knowledge and skills to become "change agents" within local communities while building youth and adult partnerships. Trainers, during this course, work to empower and inspire participants to speak out about things that are important to them, understand that they have a voice that needs to be heard and to provide them with the information and skills necessary to make that change.

The Core Essentials is an evidence-based training often showing youth who have completed this prestigious class to go on to assume leadership roles in their community. These can include: Youth taking on decision-making positions in coalitions/local organizations, local organizations being more responsive to youth needs and inclusion, youth supported and actively involved in civic engagement, and many more.

For questions, contact:
Wendie Jackson at: wendie.jackson@dea.gov



DEA Educational Foundation Basketball Program (Detroit Field Division).

■ Other Youth Events

Second Annual 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament

The Detroit Field Division participated in the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety Police Athletics and Activities League's basketball tournament. At the event, the field division staffed an Operation Engage booth, offering drug prevention resources such as the "Operation Prevention" Parent Tool Kit, various drug fact sheets, and "One Pill Can Kill" materials.

REACH
300

■ Camp Fearless

The El Paso Field Division, Albuquerque Police Department, Albuquerque Fire and Rescue, New Mexico National Guard, and the U.S. Attorney's Office hosted six four-day camps that focused on building positive relationships and self-image, engaging with positive role models, leadership, physical fitness, and team building with local youth. Camp Fearless is designed to encourage 8–13-year-old youth to pursue a healthy lifestyle and avoid drugs. The field division conducted drug prevention presentations for 200 youth, and provided giveaways and Operation Engage drug misuse information materials.

REACH
200



Camp Fearless (El Paso Field Division).

■ Overview

Educating and motivating young people to drive change plays a pivotal role in addressing drug use nationwide. Outreach initiatives served youth of all ages, enhanced their understanding of drug misuse, the perils of addiction, and the benefits of embracing a healthy lifestyle. Field divisions actively involved youth through programs emphasizing leadership development, drug awareness, access to local support services, and empowering them to effect positive change within their communities. These efforts proved successful, reaching thousands of young individuals across various Operation Engage sites.

At every Operation Engage site, the DEA Educational Foundation Youth Programs and Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America consistently served as a driving force behind delivering effective drug prevention education, illustrating to young individuals the advantages of maintaining wellness. Participants received practical resources to aid them in resisting substance misuse, covering various educational themes including self-worth, teamwork, responsibility, self-expression, academic excellence, and community engagement, among others. Students were encouraged to realize that their choices shape their journey and to aspire to great heights!

Media Engagement

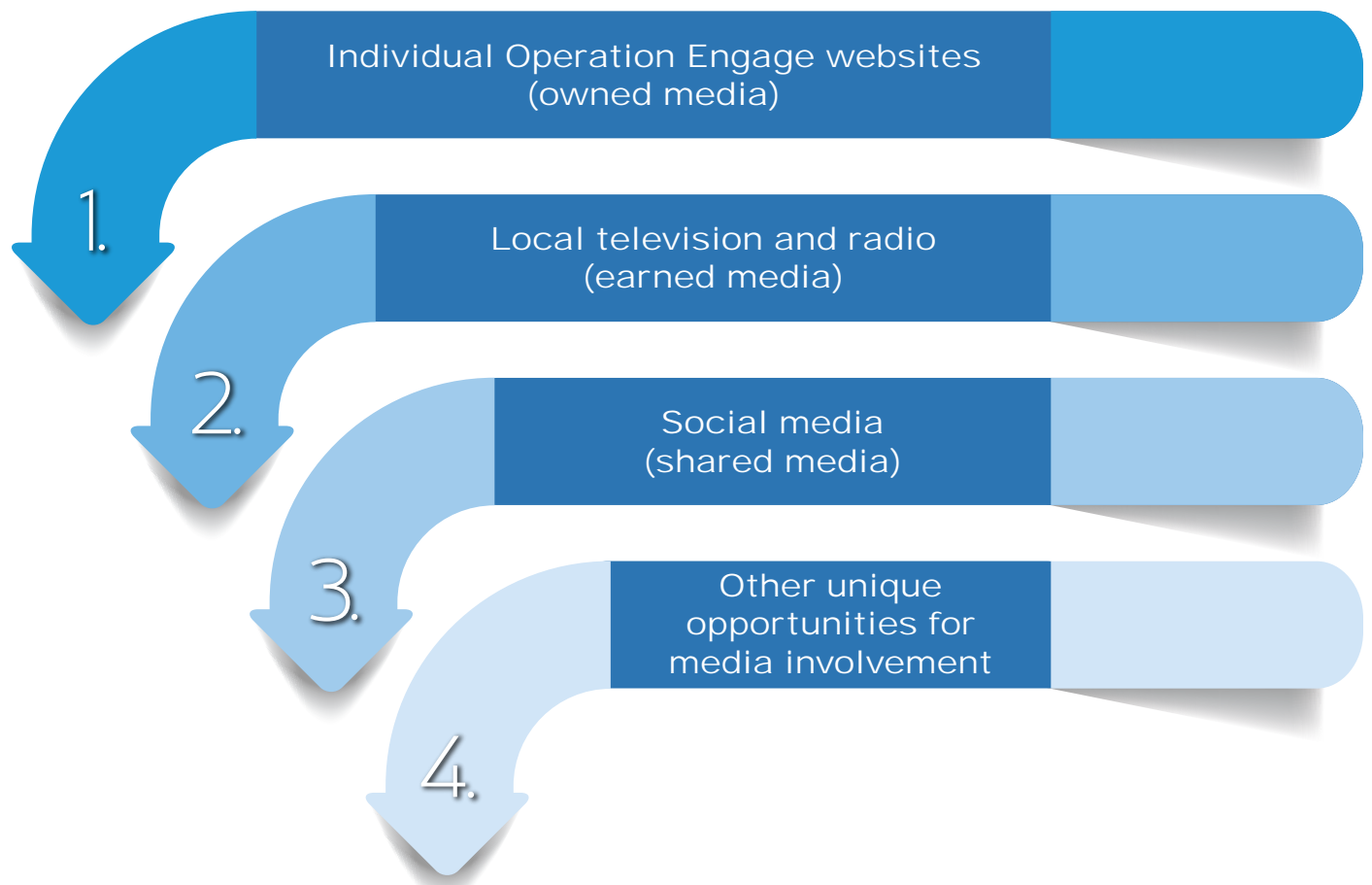
Once again, budget constraints limited media funding for the field divisions in the second year of Operation Engage. Consequently, the division-specific websites remained vital for communication and notification among the divisions, their partners, local media, and communities. Initiatives undertaken in the inaugural year to encourage audience engagement and to discover Operation Engage initiatives yielded a notable surge in traffic across all divisional websites.

A vital aspect of community outreach and communication involves developing a media strategy that encompasses a multifaceted, thorough approach to engaging with the media. DEA's objective regarding media engagement for Operation Engage began by equipping each location with the necessary tools and resources to enable brand consistency and a unified voice, along with a blend of targeted communications aimed at raising awareness, providing education, and issuing clear, direct calls to

action. Despite encountering challenges with advertising and paid media funding once again in the second year of Operation Engage, DEA leaned on popular sporting agencies, radio programs, and existing relationships with local media to raise awareness and advertise events in most Operation Engage locations.

Every location has an Operation Engage toolkit containing pre-made files and templates tailored for local DEA offices, community, and partner organizations for use throughout the year. All materials featured approved branding and messaging from DEA Headquarters, with versions available in both English and Spanish. Certain files were editable, enabling field divisions to incorporate localized information pertaining to additional resources or area-specific events.

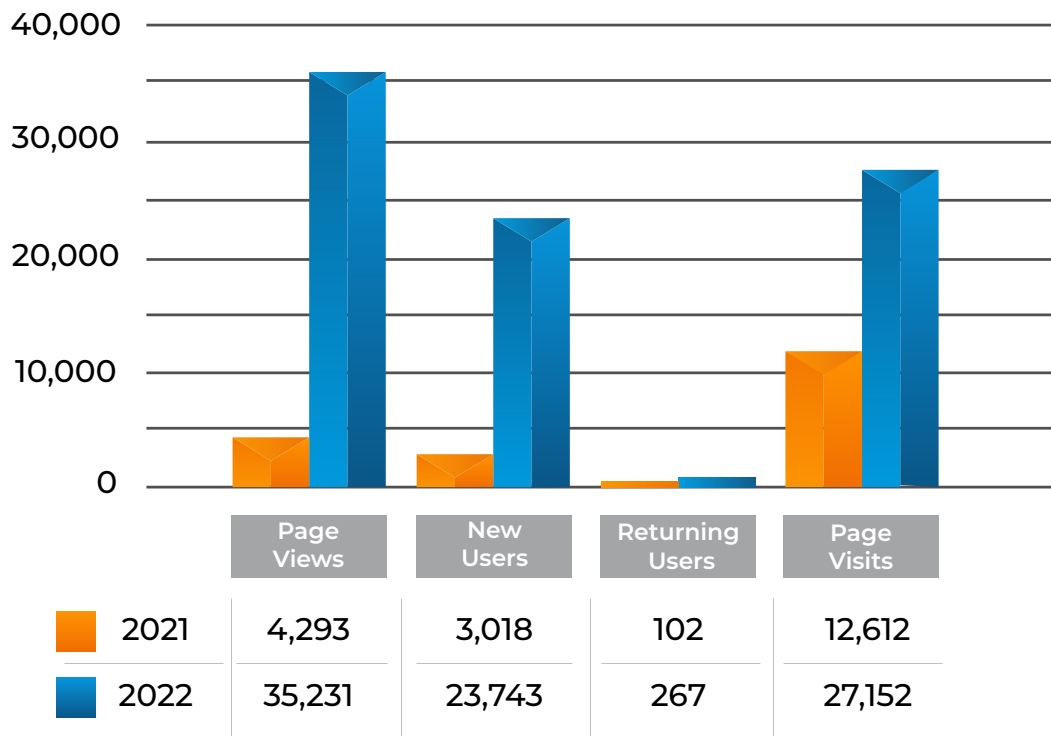
In addition to the toolkit provided, Operation Engage locations were encouraged to raise awareness about the local drug threats through:



Numerous Operation Engage locations have forged robust ties with the media, enabling them to sustainably use these connections to disseminate information about the drug epidemic and DEA's community outreach and prevention support endeavors, despite a lack of funding for paid media outreach.

Owned Media

Website Metrics 2021 VS 2022



The central website managed incoming traffic from various media channels, allowing for detailed data collection and analysis on a city-by-city basis to identify key audience engagement points for Operation Engage. The site was divided into two sections focusing on opioids and stimulants, offering targeted information and resources. The field divisions regularly updated their pages with real-time information about Operation Engage, other initiatives, and informative news stories, providing additional engagement opportunities. The website included essential details like a welcome letter, local drug threats, fact sheets, partner listings, and event information. Media efforts aimed to drive the community to these websites through social media, TV, and print media were successful. Traffic to the Operation Engage websites increased sixfold since 2021.

Field Division Microsite Metrics



35,231
Page Views



23,743
New Users



267
Returning Users



27,152
Pages/Visit

Operation Engage Website Suite Average Metrics

Average New Users: **2,158**

Average Returning Users: **24**

Average Visits: **2,468**

Average Page Views: **3,203**

Operation Engage Landing Page



19,648
Page Views



14,804
New Users



246
Returning Users



16,248
Pages/Visit

■ Earned Media

Earned media outreach was generally conducted in conjunction with a few larger DEA events, as well as through proactive outreach to media conducted by the local DEA office. Earned media includes news articles or video segments available from print or online news sources.

The El Paso Field Division's Public Information Officer Carlos Briano, and Special Agent in Charge Greg Millard created a resourceful relationship with eight local media outlets. In 2022, they appeared 116 times covering a wide array of Operation Engage initiatives. DEA Administrator Anne Milgram also appeared on local news networks promoting National Prescription Drug Take Back Days and Fentanyl Awareness Days. The field division's outstanding relationship with these outlets resulted in their invitation to speak as experts on any drug-related occurrence in the area. These appearances provided drug misuse and education resources to 1.86 million viewers and saved over \$105,700 in advertising funds.



SAC Jarod Forget (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

Newsletters

Albuquerque: DEA Operation Engage published in the Isleta Pueblo News in September, October, and November 2022. The publication reaches approximately 1,000 people monthly in the Isleta Pueblo area which is a 329 square mile area located about 15 miles south of Albuquerque. Contributions included the “One Pill Can Kill” fact sheet and National Prescription Drug Take Back Day announcements.

The El Defensor Chieftain is an award-winning locally owned and operated

community newspaper serving Socorro County and the surrounding area that reaches over 1,000 people. The El Paso Field Division published information about Red Ribbon Week activities at Socorro High School in November.

Television

Manchester: The New England Field Division continued to provide press conferences and informational campaigns that were frequently aired by the ABC affiliate, WMUR9 television network. On March 15, 2022, DEA joined other state leaders

for a televised event to inform the community about the growing threats of fake pills laced with fentanyl, and the importance of supporting and providing prevention and education services. DEA provided an additional televised interview promoting National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. This interview emphasized the danger of fake prescription medications and encouraged residents to participate in the event.

Radio

Richmond: The Washington, D.C. Field Division partnered with ESPN Richmond and SummitMedia, L.L.C. for a 3-week Operation Engage media campaign that included live radio interviews with the field division and Richmond's Special Agent in Charge. SummitMedia, L.L.C. is a diverse media outlet in Richmond, Virginia. Its Jeff Katz radio show reaches approximately 35,000 listeners daily. The field division ran commercials on SummitMedia outlets through July 2022 to discuss upcoming Operation Engage events. These announcements reached 334,500 listeners during the month.

Jeff Katz Radio Show Reach

Operation Engage and upcoming events were featured 4 times during the Jeff Katz radio show.

334,500

Commercial Announcements Reach

140,000

Interview Listeners Reach

The Washington, D.C. Field Division partnered with the Richmond Flying Squirrels baseball team to access a powerful advertising venue. This form of engagement exposed Operation Engage information to approximately 6,542 participants per home game, and 71,960 participants per month. The field division received two prime locations on the concourse near the concession stands for billboards, a recurring advertisement slot in The Nutshell (an official publication of the Richmond Flying Squirrels), and announcements during eight home games.

451,398

Richmond Flying Squirrels Reach

Manchester: The New England Field Division teamed up with Minor League Baseball's New Hampshire Fisher Cats to help spread the message about Operation Engage. The stadium allowed Operation Engage signage and allowed DEA Community Outreach Specialist Brian O'Keefe to announce a game and plug Operation Engage initiatives. These efforts had a positive effect on the community by providing important drug education and prevention resources to approximately 310,500 fans in 2022.

Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Field Division collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's office, California State University, Northridge Film Department, and UC Northridge Film Department, resulting in the creation of a public service announcement titled "One Pill Can Kill." The Los Angeles Field Division partnered with ABC 7 News to broadcast the announcement on its network. The FBI and U.S. Attorney's public affairs offices assisted with dissemination of the PSA.

Seattle: The Seattle Field Division capitalized on the popularity of the annual Hoopfest event by displaying an Operation Engage backboard, reaching a large audience of approximately 200,000 attendees. Furthermore, nine billboards featuring faces of individuals lost to fentanyl were erected across Spokane County, and a public service announcement was aired on KAYU Fox 28 and other local news outlets.

Phoenix: Using the "One Pill Can Kill" partner toolkit graphic as a marketing piece within local publications, the Phoenix Field Division distributed vital drug misuse and educational information to 15,000 Chino Valley community members. The estimated population of the Chino Valley area is approximately 18,050 community members. The field division's efforts during this marketing campaign reached 83% of the communities' residents.

■ Shared Media

Social media functions as an instant method for swiftly engaging with audiences to disseminate crucial campaign messages and materials, while also highlighting community resources and events. Every DEA field division received a dedicated Twitter (now X) handle corresponding to the Operation Engage site (e.g., @DEAABQ) for publishing both original and curated content. Additionally, locations were urged to coordinate with DEA Headquarters to jointly distribute content and amplify messaging to broader audiences across Twitter and Instagram.

The content encompassed various aspects such as thought leadership, resource provision, event promotion, and sharing and tagging content from community partners involved in Operation Engage. All Operation Engage locations used their Twitter accounts to actively share information on Operation Engage. The common theme for the hashtags were related to Operation Engage, Drug Take Back events, One Pill Can Kill campaign, Red Ribbon Week, and Family Summits on Fentanyl.

2.39M Impressions

61 Users

140 Posts

403 Engagements

592,951 Reach

Top Posts



SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Chief Meidl, Mayor Woodward and other local stakeholders are partnering with the DEA on Operation Engage Spokane, which kicked off today. It's a community-level approach to addressing the fentanyl drug epidemic through awareness, prevention, [@DEASpokane @DEASEATTLEDiv](#)



@DEAHQ:
2021#DEAYearinReview!

2,554 potential impressions

5 retweets

23 likes

Red Ribbon Week is here! Bridges and buildings across the country will be lit up in red to help us spread awareness! Did anyone see the Zakim in Boston last night? Looked amazing! [dea.gov/red-ribbon/kik...](#) #OpEngage



06:10 · 10/24/22 From Earth

9 Reposts 16 Likes

@DEANEWENGLAND

105,638 potential impressions

11 retweets

18 likes

DEANewEngland
@DEANEWENGLAND [Follow](#)

DEA National Prescription Take Back Day is happening on April 30th! Mark your calendars! Get rid of your unused and unwanted prescription medication before it gets into the hands of someone who shouldn't have it! Stay with us for more information! #OpEngage [@DEAHQ](#)



@DEANEWENGLAND

6,087 potential impressions

8 retweets

15 likes



Public Information Officer Carlos Briano (El Paso Field Division).

■ Overview

DEA relied on a multimedia approach to launch Operation Engage and share information to the public on local drug threats, local resources, and upcoming events. By far the most successful media strategy for 2022 was the drug awareness campaigns launched in collaboration with popular sporting agencies with a combined estimated reach of 991,300.

Although paid media was not available as part of the Operation Engage strategy, several field divisions used their previous media relationships to continue providing information to the public on National Prescription Drug Take Back Days, One Pill Can Kill campaign, and Red Ribbon Week. Other field divisions created press releases, used free print media in local newspapers, and worked with radio stations to issue public service announcements about DEA activities. The media engagement efforts by DEA reached a significant segment of the population in each of the Operation Engage locations despite operating under a limited marketing budget.

School Engagement

Educational institutions hold significant sway in prevention efforts. Frequently, it's the educators and administrative staff who initially identify indicators of potential drug issues, like irregular school attendance or decreasing academic achievement. Engaging students actively and empowering them to take the lead in initiatives not only benefits their school, but also enhances their effect as catalysts for change within their community.



Kansas City Youth Health Day (St. Louis Field Division).

Operation Engage aims to reach a wide audience of young people, striving to make a substantial difference either through direct involvement by DEA or by collaborating with educators, parents, and community coalitions. Its mission is to equip youth with the knowledge and abilities needed to choose healthy, drug-free lifestyles. Field divisions conducted informative sessions in elementary, middle, and high schools, centering on topics such as adolescent brain development, susceptibility to substance misuse, prevalent illicit drugs like opioids, stimulants, and marijuana, as well as emerging concerns like vaping and techniques for refusing drug use. These efforts use tools like Operation Prevention and other evidence-informed online resources provided by DEA to reinforce the presentations.

■ School Presentations

Field divisions organized presentations using the Operation Prevention curriculum for students and delivered training sessions to educators and school administrators during professional development days. This served as a platform to introduce DEA and federal partner resources to a wide array of school personnel, including those from schools both with and without existing DEA involvement. Schools were encouraged to share these resources on their websites for the benefit of students, parents, and staff members. Additionally, back-to-school events were used as an avenue to raise awareness and promote the availability of these resources to students and parents.



Operation Engage at Holland Middle School (Philadelphia Field Division).

Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Field Division provided school engagement at Indian Spring High School and Ellis Elementary. Presentations focused on facts about opioid misuse and prevention. The education material used included Operation Prevention modules and opioid prevention presentations. Throughout 2022, the field division met with board members of the Baldwin School District, which includes 19 schools, and provided a comprehensive presentation of Operation Prevention and its Operation Engage efforts. The presentations addressed the many issues facing communities, schools, and families while highlighting the positive changes possible for the district through a cooperative relationship with the division.



REACH
10,738

Baton Rouge

Even on the heels of COVID restrictions, the New Orleans Field Division was able to reach 1,516 students at MLK Charter School, Daphne Middle School, and Centerville Academy through drug prevention and education training. In 2022, Operation Engage education resources and training was presented to nine more schools in the Baton Rouge area, reaching 644 more students.

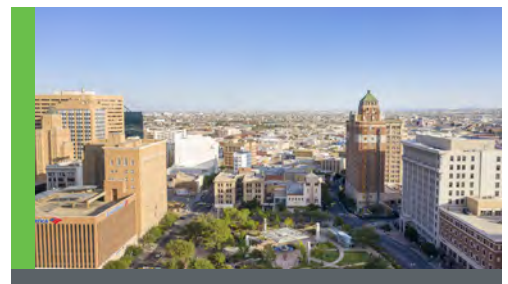


Drug misuse education was also given to students at Louisiana State University. In February, the field division delivered opioid education training and resources to 131 LSU doctoral staff and nurse practitioner graduates. In May, the field division delivered drug prevention and education training to another group of 125 medical school graduates. The field division affected the local community through the reach of 256 future healthcare professionals.

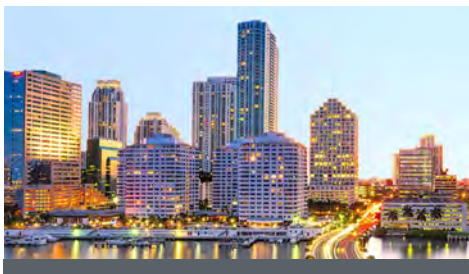
REACH
1,025

Albuquerque

The El Paso Field Division has worked through many barriers to reach local schools and provide Operation Prevention presentations. Many schools were not receptive to DEA's mission. In the Albuquerque area a certain stigma exists with having DEA come into your facility. Some view this as an admission of a drug problem. Many administrators do not want to admit that their school has a problem and therefore ignore repeated requests to present much needed information to their students. Outside of Red Ribbon Week activities, the field division was only able to conduct four presentations, reaching just over 1,600 students. In 2022, schools in Albuquerque were much more receptive. The division increased their presence by providing drug prevention and education training to 22 schools, reaching 8,775 students and education professionals. This was an increase, of more than 80% from the previous year.



REACH
8,775



Miami

The Miami Field Division played a crucial role in fostering substance use prevention by delivering comprehensive resources and training to the community. Their outreach initiatives served Cypress Bay High School, Fort Lauderdale High School, and Broward County Public Schools, where approximately 215 individuals, including youth, guardians, and staff, benefited from the valuable insights provided by the field division. By actively engaging

with schools and communities, the division not only increased awareness, but also equipped students with the knowledge and tools needed to combat substance misuse. The positive effect of the division's efforts is evident in the empowered individuals who are now better prepared to make informed decisions and contribute to a healthier and safer community.

REACH
215



Richmond

The Washington, D.C. Field Division worked with their partner, the Flying Squirrels baseball team, to provide many activities focused on attracting students in the community. The field division set up a booth in the Flying Squirrels stadium for RVA Night, a community engagement event held at the stadium in September. Over 7,500 people attended the event, and many visited the DEA booth. Approximately 300 "Preventing Marijuana Use Among

Youth and Young Adults," "Growing Up Drug Free," and various drug fact sheets were provided. Community tickets and a first pitch opportunity were raffled to attract community members and facilitate positive conversations. The field division continued its outreach efforts in October 2022 when the Flying Squirrels hosted Squirrel O Ween. This successful outreach event attracted over 13,000 youth whose guardians received essential youth drug prevention education resources.

REACH
20,500



Kalamazoo

The Detroit Field Division used Operation Prevention education resources at six public schools. In partnership with Kent Sheriff's Office and Fire Keeper Casino, the division was able to reach fifth graders at five Byron Center Public Schools and Berrien Springs Middle School.

REACH
4,500

■ Red Ribbon Week Events

The theme for the 2022 Red Ribbon Week Campaign was “Celebrate Life, Live Drug Free.” This theme emphasized the daily efforts of individuals throughout the nation who positively affect their communities by choosing to live free from drugs. Operation Engage sites used Red Ribbon Week in October as a platform to engage with schools and promote the message of drug prevention. Nationally, business places, bridges, and homes “Go Red” in celebration of Red Ribbon Week. This national campaign fosters collaboration among community partners, local leaders, and educators, uniting them toward a shared objective.



6th Street in Los Angeles California lit up red for National Red Ribbon Week.

Los Angeles

The drug misuse education and training provided by the field divisions during Red Ribbon Week plays a pivotal role in fostering a healthier and safer environment for students, teachers, parents, and the community at large. The Los Angeles Field Division and the National Guard reached over 65 schools and 50,000 students statewide. By imparting knowledge about the dangers of substance misuse, these educational initiatives like One Pill Can Kill and Operation Prevention empower students to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure. Teachers benefit from comprehensive training that equips them with the tools to recognize signs of potential drug misuse and intervene effectively.

REACH
50,000

Manchester

The entire Bedford community in New Hampshire actively participates in Red Ribbon Week, with their 2022 theme being “Bedford Goes Red.” This community initiative, sponsored by BeBOLD Bedford, in collaboration with Makin’ It Happen, and Raymond Coalition for Youth brings together private businesses, local government, and residents to organize various activities for Red Ribbon Week. Continuing a tradition from previous years, Makin’ It Happen and RCFY hosted breakfasts as part of the event, highlighting ongoing prevention efforts across the state and facilitating networking opportunities for the division.

Local businesses and households demonstrate their support by adorning red ribbons and red lights, signifying their endorsement of a drug-free lifestyle. Additionally, the New England Field Division partnered with the local police department and BeBOLD to participate in a sponsored dodgeball event, involving numerous business leaders from the area.

REACH
23,000

■ Other School Events

Los Angeles Sparks – Women’s Basketball

The Los Angeles Field Division continued its collaboration with the Los Angeles Sparks professional women’s basketball team to offer a comprehensive approach to opioid misuse prevention among high school students. The initiative comprised sessions on opioid awareness and overdose prevention led by community outreach specialists, along with two 60-minute basketball clinics and individual mentorship opportunities provided by Lisa Leslie of the LA Sparks. Each event attracted more than 60 students. The partnership between the division and the LA Sparks Women’s Basketball Team expanded the program to encompass both Los Angeles and Riverside County, positively effecting an additional 50 students and their families.

The after-school antidrug and mentorship program with the LA Sparks not only provided students with information about opioid use and misuse, but also offered mentorship opportunities through sports. Through this collaboration with the LA Sparks, the field division further strengthened its relationship with schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

REACH
480

■ Overview

Operation Engage successfully engaged schools by delivering the Operation Prevention curriculum both through virtual platforms and face-to-face interactions. Additionally, they supplied teachers and support staff with printed curriculum and resource materials. They also capitalized on national campaigns like Red Ribbon Week to enhance engagement within schools. Leveraging local coalitions and community partners, who often had deeper connections with schools, was another strategy employed by field divisions to amplify the message of drug use prevention through Operation Engage.

Although the school engagement efforts achieved overall success in terms of reach, they faced numerous challenges over the year. The lingering effects of COVID-19 persisted, and the negative stigma surrounding DEA’s presence in schools remained a hurdle. Nonetheless, DEA managed to apply the lessons learned from previous engagements and effectively used its relationships with community partners and advocates to overcome these hurdles. These strategies enabled DEA to find innovative approaches to school engagement.



Community Outreach Specialist Marcus Pickett (Seattle Field Division).

Workplace Engagement

According to the National Safety Council, three-quarters of businesses have experienced repercussions due to employee opioid usage. However, merely 17% of these businesses believe they possess the necessary tools to tackle this concern. Substance misuse stands out as a prevalent issue nationwide, imposing a staggering financial burden of over \$78.5 billion each year, covering healthcare expenses, productivity losses, associated criminal activities, and additional societal expenses. Specifically, \$20 billion is attributed to productivity declines, while \$29 billion accounts for health-related costs.⁷

The Milken Institute Center for Public Health, CADCA, and the Better Business Bureau collaborated with DEA to organize workplace roundtable events at Operation Engage sites. The objective was to increase awareness regarding local drug hazards affecting the communities where employers are situated to offer organizations resources for preventing drug misuse among their staff. Milken partnered with DEA offices to tailor employer outreach events according to each office's preferred strategy. Given that communities face distinct drug threats and hurdles, and DEA teams have differing levels of involvement with local businesses, the approach varied accordingly.

In addition to each DEA field division's existing workplace partner connections, the Milken Institute leveraged its contacts and expertise to pinpoint key businesses and workplace partners to engage. This involved providing drug education for employees and engaging in community outreach events and programs. Field divisions indicated some employers were reluctant to devote time to this training, citing the employee time lost during the COVID pandemic. However, a proactive group of workplace partners was established, with the pool expanding gradually as Operation Engage advanced. This network also acted as a channel to disseminate resources, campaign messages, and event information to employee's families and community members.

The workplace engagement initiative brought together businesses and nonprofits for a roundtable dialogue with DEA, aiming to exchange insights on how substance use affects the workforce. Following the meeting, participants were offered various avenues for further engagement tailored to their company's preferences, such as virtual presentations, bringing Operation Prevention to the workplace, using parent toolkits, recruiting for citizen's academies, joining Red Ribbon celebrations, or supporting take back events. The primary goal was to secure support and involvement from proactive business partners by hosting an interest meeting focused on addressing their specific needs or requests for continued participation. DEA's community outreach specialists and support personnel conducted presentations as requested to maximize attendance. To aid communities in tackling the repercussions of substance use in the workplace, DEA and the Milken Institute intensified outreach efforts within the business community, encouraging participation in roundtable discussions about substance use's effect, with subsequent opportunities for ongoing involvement. The initiative targeted both small and large corporate employers interested in social responsibility initiatives.



Workplace engagement event with the Better Business Bureau (Washington, D.C. Field Division).

New Orleans

In 2021, the New Orleans Field Division reached 80 individuals through workplace drug prevention and education training with the Milken Workplace Roundtable Event and the Louisiana Association of Self-Insured Employers. In 2022, the field division increased that reach by participating in five events attended by a total of 769 individuals. The workplace engagement efforts conducted in the Baton Rouge area were successful and opened the doors to further conversations within the local community.

El Paso

The El Paso Field Division collaborated with Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America to conduct a Workplace Engagement Training on August 11, 2022, designed to help companies and organizations discuss problematic substance use and misuse in the workplace. The training educated employers on the effects of substance use, how to identify signs and symptoms, and offered guidance and resources to employers on how to start conversations about substance misuse in the workplace. CADCA's Workplace Engagement Training resulted in improved employee well-being and a safer and more productive workforce. The program was attended by 40 individuals, a 40% increase over 2021's 24 attendees.

Richmond

The Washington, D.C. Field Division provided a workplace training program involving 17 participants representing businesses and nonprofits. In partnership with CADCA and the Better Business Bureau, professionals in prevention, mental health, health, and business gathered to receive the "Operation Prevention" curriculum, which addresses drug misuse challenges in the workplace. The intention of the event was to gain support and participation from proactive business partners. Topics discussed were the economic effect of substance misuse, drug-free workplaces, creating a positive environment for employees, and reducing stigma. The Washington, D.C. Field Division provided the latest Operation Engage and One Pill Can Kill materials and publications.

■ Overview

Throughout the second year of Operation Engage, the ongoing repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic persisted, affecting business operations, productivity, and overall profitability in the workplace. DEA field divisions faced numerous challenges in effectively engaging with local employers. While the collaboration with the Milken Institute offered a means of engagement, the prevailing economic challenges limited the creation of additional engagement opportunities.

In general, the workplace engagement endeavors proved fruitful, with field divisions noting a sense of increasing dialogue within the local community. Despite DEA not achieving significant outreach figures in this realm, efforts have been made to strengthen connections and enhance outreach as the Operation Engage initiative progresses.

Citizens Academy

DEA's Citizens Academy is a significant source of community involvement and a valuable tool for training stakeholders. The Citizens Academy provides comprehensive training designed for local citizens, leaders, and corporate figures, and the training provides insight into DEA's operations. These sessions included lectures from various departments, intelligence briefings, discussions on firearms, surveillance techniques, enforcement strategies, and prevention resources, all aimed at highlighting DEA's role in law enforcement and drug prevention efforts. This initiative also paved the way for potential collaborations with new agencies. To enable inclusivity, participants were recruited through internal networks and quarterly stakeholder gatherings, ensuring a diverse pool of candidates received access to DEA resources.

DEA's Citizens Academy is an in-person 5-to-8-week dynamic training program that provides civilians from local communities a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of DEA's critical mission and work. The academy is intended to:

- Enhance the ability of a DEA field division to cultivate, leverage, and strengthen community relationships.
- Rally community awareness for enforcement accomplishments and community outreach and prevention support activities.



Philadelphia Citizens Academy (Philadelphia Field Division).

Some of the objectives to be achieved by DEA's Citizens Academy include:

1

Increase community awareness of DEA's law enforcement and drug demand reduction efforts

2

Develop new relationships with public and private individuals and organizations

3

Establish a qualified pool of newly vetted and trained community liaisons to support DEA's demand reduction efforts

Attendees of DEA's Citizens Academy comprise a diverse range of individuals, including community leaders, retirees, representatives from businesses, colleges and universities, as well as those from civic engagement organizations and faith-based organizations, youth development agencies, and state and local government, among others. Upon completing the Citizens Academy, graduates are encouraged to actively support DEA's efforts by disseminating information within their communities about the risks associated with drug misuse and the significance of prevention measures and available resources.



Kansas City

The St. Louis Field Division concluded its inaugural Citizens Academy, spanning five weeks from October 13 to November 10, 2022. The diverse class consisted of individuals from different parts of the Kansas City metro area, representing various professions such as a pastor, sales representative, high school counselor, teacher, nurse, medical researcher, and CEO. During the program, participants toured the district office, received an informative lecture on fentanyl and its effect on the community, and took part in raid simulations. Additionally, graduates had the opportunity to interact with a panel of undercover agents, gaining insights into DEA undercover operations and training prospects.

Albuquerque

The El Paso Field Division held its third Citizens Academy in Albuquerque during August 2022. Public Information Officer Carlos Briano sat down with KRQE News and provided a televised interview where he introduced the Citizens Academy, Operation Engage, and its initiatives. The academy was attended by 25 individuals from many businesses and organizations and helped civilians gain an understanding of DEA's critical mission and to cultivate community awareness of DEA's law enforcement and drug demand reduction efforts. Classes were held weekly for six weeks and led by DEA professionals including DEA executives, special agents, intelligence analysts, the public information officer, and the Albuquerque Sheriff's Department.



Richmond

The Washington, D.C. Field Division hosted its sixth DEA's Citizens Academy in July 2022. There were 15 attendees that included faith-based leaders, law enforcement, teachers, business professionals, and students. The course gave attendees a detailed understanding of the intricacies involved in global drug enforcement, a better understanding of the critical mission and work conducted by DEA, and a platform to foster relationships between key stakeholder members in Richmond. DEA's Citizens Academy was very well received in the community, and it helped to solidify more local partnerships.

Special Agent in Charge Jarod Forget recognized the significance of the event in remarks made at the graduation ceremony:



Our DEA Washington Citizens Academy is an amazing opportunity for our local residents to engage with us on a deeper level—meet our hardworking employees, learn more about what we do, and how they can be a part of keeping their families and communities safer. - SAC Jarod Forget



Overview

DEA's Citizens Academy provides community leaders, professionals, and citizens with an in-depth understanding of DEA's drug prevention strategies. It aims to strengthen community relationships, raise awareness of DEA's activities, and foster collaboration with various stakeholders. Recent sessions in Kansas City, Albuquerque, and Richmond have been well received, featuring diverse participants from different sectors who are encouraged to support DEA initiatives and disseminate drug prevention information within their communities.

RESOURCES

Federal Government Agencies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control has been a leader in protecting Americans from injury and violence. It works proactively with its partners to track trends, conduct research, raise awareness, and implement prevention programs.

www.cdc.gov/injury/

National Institute on Drug Abuse

NIDA's mission is to advance science on drug use and addiction and to apply that knowledge to improve individual and public health.

www.drugabuse.gov

Office of National Drug Control Policy

ONDCP leads and coordinates the nation's drug policy so that it improves the health and lives of the American people. ONDCP is responsible for the development and implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy.

www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA's mission is to lead public health and service delivery efforts that promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes.

www.samhsa.gov

U.S. Department of Education

ED's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools administers, coordinates, and recommends policy as well as administers grant programs and technical assistance centers addressing the overall safe and healthy school community.

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/safe-supportive-schools/>

National Organizations

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America

CADCA's mission is to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create and maintain safe, healthy, and drug-free communities globally. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance and training, public policy advocacy, media strategies and marketing programs, training, and special events.

www.cadca.org

DEA Educational Foundation

The DEA Educational Foundation is a nonprofit educational organization established in 2001 whose goal is to educate the public on the many costs and consequences of illegal drugs in our society. The Foundation funds the DEAEF Youth Dance Program, which is a free after-school alternative to drugs through the fun, healthy, and expressive art form of dance.

www.deaeducationalfoundation.org

Elks Drug Awareness Program

The Elks National Drug Awareness Program is the largest volunteer drug awareness program in the United States and is committed to eliminating illegal drug use among all members of society.

www.elks.org/dap

Tribal Tech, L.L.C.

Tribal Tech collaborates with federal agencies and tribes to improve security, health, education, energy, and environmental services. Tribal Tech has provided a diverse range of services to federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector entities.

<https://www.tribaltechllc.com/>

Milken Institute

The Milken Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank focused on accelerating measurable progress on the path to a meaningful life. With a focus on financial, physical, mental, and environmental health, it brings together the best ideas and innovative resourcing to develop blueprints for tackling critical global issues through the lens of what's pressing now and what's coming next.

www.milkeninstitute.org

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

NASADAD is a private, nonprofit educational, scientific, and informational organization whose purpose is to foster and support the development of effective alcohol and other drug use prevention and treatment programs throughout every state.

www.nasadad.org

National Prevention Network

NPN is a NASADAD component group working to ensure effective and evidence-based tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use prevention programs and policies that are comprehensive and culturally competent. It is comprised of state prevention coordinators who are responsible for substance use prevention systems in each state.

<http://nasadad.org/npn-4>

Partnership to End Addiction

The Partnership to End Addiction's mission is to transform how the nation addresses addiction by empowering families, advancing effective care, shaping public policy, and changing culture. It empowers families and communities to help prevent and treat substance use disorder and addiction and support recovery for their children and loved ones.

www.drugfree.org

National Family Partnership

NFP is a national leader in drug use prevention education and advocacy. Its mission is to lead and support the nation's families and communities in nurturing the full potential of healthy, drug-free youth.

www.nfp.org

SheRay's & Associates

SheRay's provides services in developing and implementing technical assistance and training services in an innovative and practical format. It focuses on evidence-based prevention and treatment/intervention strategies that are multicultural in nature.

www.sherays.com

Young Marines

The Young Marines strengthens the lives of America's youth by teaching the importance of self-confidence, academic achievement, honoring our veterans, good citizenship, community service, and living a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. Its program focuses on character building and leadership and promotes a lifestyle that is conducive to being productive members of society.

www.youngmarines.com

Appendix A – Methodology

Report Objectives and Methodology

To properly document the results of Operation Engage in line with the program's objectives, it was recognized that a report was necessary to encompass all the achievements and obstacles encountered during its second year. Safety Research Corporation of America was enlisted to collaborate with DEA in producing the 2022 Reach and Impact Report. This report aimed to offer a comprehensive overview of the program, detailing metrics, and the execution of deliverables.

The assessment of Operation Engage's deliverables involved the integration of quantitative data, representing actual participation figures, and qualitative data, which delved into the broader context of successes, challenges, and motivations surrounding the conducted activities. To align these insights with Operation Engage's strategy and objectives, a multi tiered evaluation approach was adopted. This approach comprised location-specific metrics, individual interviews with Community Outreach Specialists (or their designates), and targeted discussions with 10 community partners supporting the Operation Engage sites. These methodologies were employed to gauge the extent and influence of the initiative within each respective location.

Data Collection

The metrics for each Operation Engage location were captured through:

- Monthly activity reports
- One-on-one interviews and local metric data from the Community Outreach Specialist or representative
- Additional information from DEA Headquarters and national program facilitators (e.g., DEA Educational Foundation, Milken Institute, CADCA, SheRay's)

Engagement Activity Compilation

Initially, SRCA asked each Operation Engage location to provide a full list of activities completed in each of the engagement categories (i.e., Stakeholder, Adult/Community, Youth, Media, School, Workplace, and the Citizens Academy). Using the information provided through the monthly activity reports and field division data, SRCA compiled a full list of all completed activities by engagement category.

Field Division Interviews

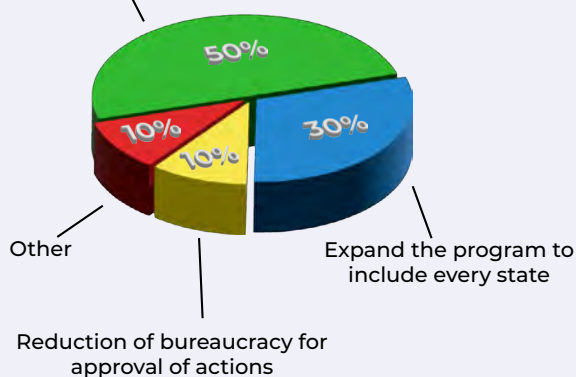
After compiling all activities by field division, SRCA conducted individual discussions with the Community Outreach Specialists (or division representatives). These discussions focused on a further review of the engagement activities provided along with understanding strategies for engagement, community involvement, supportive documentation of events, successes, and challenges of the initiative. During these discussions, SRCA asked for additional information about specific events with a timeline for completion. Due to personnel changes and budgetary restrictions, some metrics were unavailable in certain Operation Engage locations.

Field Division Community Outreach Specialist Survey

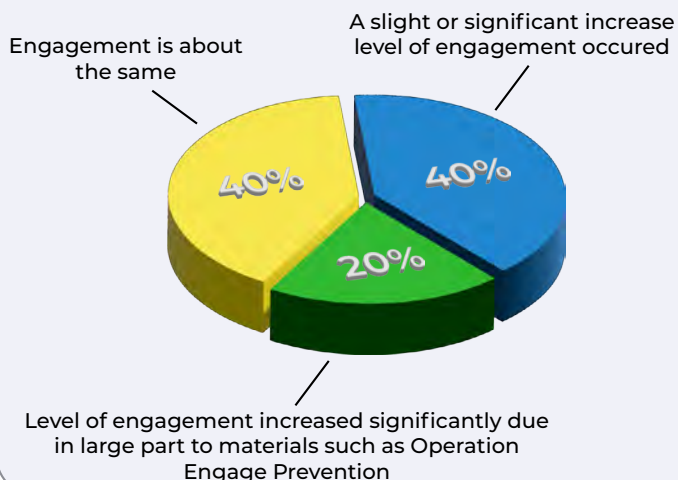
A set of measurements was established to assess the performance of the Operation Engage initiative. To perform a year over year analysis, SRCA requested the field divisions involved in the initiative to complete a survey. The survey questions asked the field divisions to gauge efforts within targeted areas and improvements they would make to the initiative. Ten out of the 11 Community Outreach Specialists replied to the survey. The following pie charts capture the results of the survey.

What Changes Would You Make Given a Clean Slate and Budget?

Funding to include funding for travel, or funding for event cost support (food and beverage) were cited most

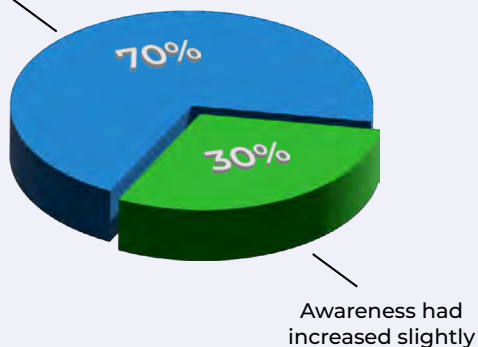


Community Educators and Parents Using Science-Based Prevention Materials



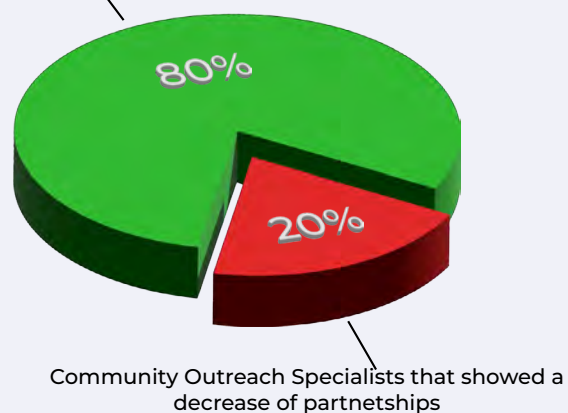
Community Members' Awareness of the Scope of Drug Misuse-Related Problems

Awareness had increased significantly

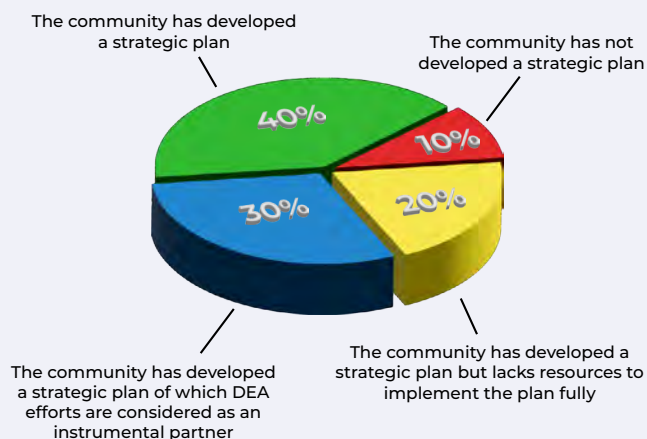


Public-Private Partnerships

Community Outreach Specialists that showed an increase of partnerships



Regarding Community Stakeholders' Development of a Formal Strategic Plan



Supplemental Information

Following a thorough examination of the data provided by the field divisions, SRCA initiated communication with DEA Headquarters to acquire supplementary information pertaining to social media and website analytics, original Operation Engage proposals, and national program facilitator statistics. SRCA proceeded to liaise with each national program facilitator to gather metric data concerning the events and activities conducted at each Operation Engage site. Furthermore, SRCA received a comprehensive briefing from the DEA Educational Foundation regarding the overarching program, as well as the specific achievements and obstacles encountered at individual locations.

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

The metrics analysis was conducted using the information obtained through data collection to determine if the following objectives were met:

- Increase in number of public-private partnerships in each location to collaborate on efforts to reduce drug misuse-related problems.
- Increase in community members' awareness of the scope of drug misuse-related problems in that community.
- Increase in engagement by educators and parents in using science-based prevention materials, such as DEA's Operation Prevention, to prevent drug misuse in each location.
- Community stakeholders' development of a formal strategic action plan to decrease drug misuse-related overdoses in each Operation Engage community.

Metrics Analysis

Based on the data collected, SRCA initiated the assessment and analysis phase. A detailed report was created for each Operation Engage location, encompassing a background on the local drug climate, location-specific Operation Engage information, and a thorough analysis of each engagement category, including reach metrics where available. The analysis also documented challenges faced by the locations, as well as engagement activities that deviated from the initial plan. Each report highlighted the activities of the Operation Engage location, evaluating their success in achieving deliverable objectives and their alignment with the broader goals of Operation Engage.

Stakeholder Interviews

In January and February 2024, a set of 10 phone interviews took place with stakeholders, as identified by each field division, and approved by DEA. SRCA presented a list of proposed interview questions to DEA for approval. These interviews aimed to gain insight into the participants' backgrounds and roles within Operation Engage, the importance of its activities, the effect on drug prevention awareness, lessons learned, prospects for sustainability, and recommendations for the future. After each interview, transcripts were made and summarized, with any quotes used in the report directly sourced from these transcripts.

Research Limitations

Throughout the data collection and analysis process SRCA encountered several challenges to obtaining quantitative and qualitative information from some Operation Engage locations. During 2022, there were several personnel changes in the Community Operation Specialist contractor role, which led to a lack of available contractor information and metrics during that absence. It was also noted that for some locations, Operation Engage event data was lost.

Appendix B – Glossary Of Terms

Added-value: Includes free airtime or spots.

Average session duration: The total duration of all visits divided by the total number of visits.

Bounce rate: The percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.

Call to action: Aims to persuade a viewer to perform a certain act immediately. In the case of the billboard campaigns, the call to action was to visit a website or call 211 for help.

Click-through: Clicks on a link included in outreach material to a specific digital asset, such as a website. In the case of this effort, click-throughs were links back to the microsite.

Digital impression: When an advertisement or any other form of digital media renders on a user's screen. Impressions are not action based and are merely defined by a user potentially seeing the advertisement, making cost per thousand impressions campaigns ideal for businesses intent on spreading brand awareness.

Earned media: Media relies on public or media relations to gain coverage about the event or effort—this may be online or offline.

Frequency: The average number of times a person was exposed to the media asset.

Impact: Short-term and long-term changes on the community as a result of Operation Engage—this may be related to sustainability of the engagement activities.

Impressions: The number of times a person passed and potentially saw a media asset.

Owned media: Content, such as websites or blogs, that the brand or organization controls.

Pages per visit: The total number of page views divided by the total number of visits.

Page views: The number of times a specific webpage is accessed. A page may be viewed multiple times in a single visit.

Potential impressions: Calculated by adding up the total followers of each Twitter author for a specified topic and time period.

Reach: Number of people exposed to the various components of Operation Engage (e.g., number of people trained, number of youth participants in the Youth Dance Program, and the reach/frequency of the PSAs).

Visitors: The number of unique individuals who visit the website. Visitors are determined by IP address.

Visits: The number of times the website is accessed.

Appendix C – Metrics

Figure 1. Website Engagement Metrics by Location

LOCATION	PAGE VIEWS	VISITS	NEW USERS	RETURNING USERS
operationengage.com	19,648	16,248	14,804	246
Albuquerque	5,487	4,052	3,583	51
Baton Rouge	2,029	1,454	1,315	20
Broward County	1,370	1,105	1,034	22
Kansas City	4,094	2,893	2,415	22
Manchester	1,386	1,061	987	30
Michigan	1,403	1,018	924	17
Philadelphia	9,078	7,576	6,560	31
Richmond	1,219	913	802	9
Southern California	3,535	2,844	2,526	21
Spokane	4,252	3,192	2,660	25
Yavapai County	1,378	1,044	937	19

Figure 2. Top Website Content

FIELD DIVISION	PAGE VIEWS	VISITS	TOP CONTENT
Albuquerque	598	473	Methamphetamine Fact Sheet
Baton Rouge	330	245	NCDAS: Opioid Epidemic: Addiction Statistics
Broward County	345	297	Narcotics (Opioids)
Washington, D.C.	543	448	Narcotics (Opioids)
Manchester	521	410	DEA New England Twitter
Michigan	417	328	Stimulants
Philadelphia	688	548	Substance Use Philadelphia: Unintentional Overdose Deaths
Southern California	773	606	California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard
Wichita	553	385	Kansas Department of Health and Environment: Substance Use Disorder & Overdose Prevention
Yavapai County	621	502	Narcotics (Opioids)

Figure 3. Social Media Engagement: “X” (Formerly Twitter)

“X” (Formerly Twitter)				
FIELD DIVISION	POSTS	AVERAGE VIEWS PER POST	FOLLOWERS	REACH
New England	46	247	4,469	11,362
Philadelphia	34	304	2,560	10,336
Washington, D.C.	45	155	5,654	6,975
Los Angeles	43	446	5,844	19,178
New Orleans	30	195	2,195	5,850
Miami	42	410	3,208	17,220
Detroit	35	185	2,286	6,475
El Paso	29	86	1,993	2,494
Phoenix	33	331	2,773	10,923
Seattle	46	144	3,017	6,624
St. Louis	31	94	2,064	2,914
Approximate Reach				100,351

Appendix D – Endnotes

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Notes

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