

# OPTIONS

---

## SAVE LIVES

### The Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach Naloxone and Safety Initiative (OPTIONS)

Fiscal Year-to-Date Totals through January 31, 2024

Prepared by Daniel S. Soucier  
Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center  
University of Maine

This brief provides updates on the activities of Maine OPTIONS Liaisons through the statewide OPTIONS (Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach Naloxone and Safety) initiative. This is based on data reported by OPTIONS Liaisons for Fiscal Year 2024 which runs from October 2023–September 2024. Liaisons are behavioral health clinicians working in all 16 counties in Maine, employed by behavioral health organizations contracted through the State of Maine, Office of Behavioral Health. In 2023, Governor Mills has increased funding to expand the Liaison program, with additional Liaisons and Recovery Coaches being hired across several of Maine’s counties.

Liaisons provide brief therapeutic interventions, conduct proactive outreach with communities at the highest risk of experiencing an overdose, de-escalate behavioral health crises, and engage in post-overdose follow up visits and referrals of persons in need, as well as affected others, to community- and state-based services. They collaborate and coordinate with those on the frontlines responding to people experiencing an overdose or at risk of overdose, including first responders like law enforcement and EMS. Anyone can reach out or make a referral to their local OPTIONS Liaison at <https://knowyouroptions.me/options-liaisons/>.

This brief highlights activities of the OPTIONS Liaisons and Recovery Coaches across a spectrum of services for individuals and communities to stay safe, get well and stay well such as:

- Who makes referrals to OPTIONS Liaisons
- How these referrals are made
- Where OPTIONS Liaisons refer clients
- How clients engage with those referrals
- Demographics of clients served by OPTIONS Liaisons
- Number of individuals trained in overdose and antistigma education
- Number of community events
- Number of naloxone kits distributed and to whom

Additional resources, data, and visualizations are available at [knowyouroptions.me](https://knowyouroptions.me) and [mainedrugdata.org](https://mainedrugdata.org).

## Key Metrics Snapshot

During the most recent reporting period of January 2024 OPTIONS liaisons' engagement included

- 683 client, training, or event contacts made with 61 client contacts attempted but unsuccessful
- 71 co-response or postoverdose follow-ups conducted, usually with law enforcement partners
- 175 individuals referred to treatment programs
- 170 individuals referred to community-based recovery support programs
- 211 individuals trained in overdose response and antistigma education
- 176 kits (352 doses) of naloxone (Narcan®) distributed

From October 2023 through January 2024 (fiscal year-to-date-totals), OPTIONS liaisons' engagement included

- 2,270 client, training, or event contacts made with 224 client contacts attempted but unsuccessful
- 245 co-response or postoverdose follow-ups conducted, usually with law enforcement partners
- 482 individuals referred to treatment programs
- 542 individuals referred to community-based recovery support programs
- 846 individuals trained in overdose and antistigma education
- 1,303 kits (2,606 doses) of naloxone distributed

## Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach (Referrals to Liaisons):

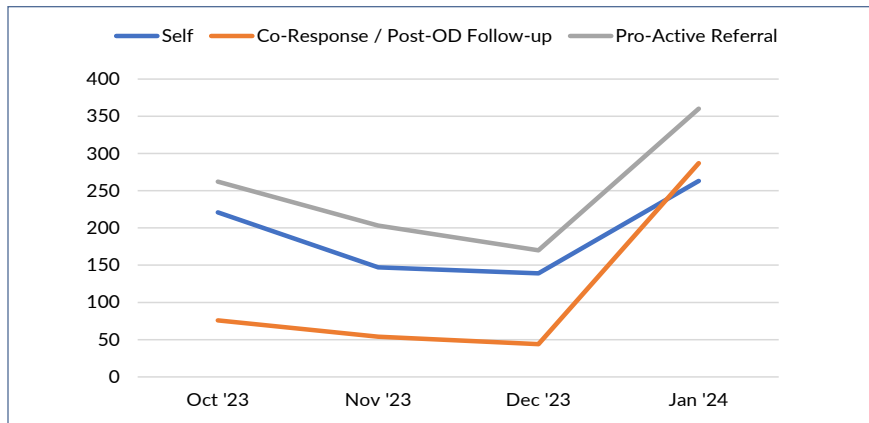
OPTIONS liaisons generate clients from operating alongside law enforcement officers as co-responders to nonfatal and fatal opioid overdoses as well as other substance-use-related public safety response calls. Co-response calls are those that OPTIONS liaisons respond to during the moment of crisis, whereas postoverdose follow-up visits are those that they respond to in the days following a substance-use-related crisis. Oftentimes, law enforcement partners accompany liaisons during both co-response calls and postoverdose follow-up visits.

OPTIONS liaisons also generate clients through self-referrals and proactive referrals. Self-referrals occur when individuals contact OPTIONS liaisons themselves. Proactive referrals are those made by public safety officials, clinicians, community-based substance use supports, and affected others.

The following chart and table show the number of law enforcement calls responded to and postoverdose follow-up visits conducted by liaisons along with the number of self and proactive referrals. During January 2024 there were 263 self-referrals, 360 pro-active referrals, and 287 co-response or post overdose follow-up calls. Fiscal year-to-date OPTIONS teams have received 770 self-referrals, 995 proactive referrals, and have conducted 461 co-response and post overdose follow-up calls.

Proactive referrals to OPTIONS liaisons come from a variety of sources including law enforcement, treatment providers, affected others, other OPTIONS liaisons, recovery coaches, emergency department clinicians, and first responders. Data regarding the source of proactive referrals began being collected during the second year of the program in October 2021. The following chart show the five most prevalent proactive referral sources during fiscal year 2024. Please note that referrals often come from multiple sources simultaneously. For example, a referral to an OPTIONS Liaison can come from a law enforcement officer, emergency department staff, and an affected other at one time. The five most prevalent proactive referrals sources from October

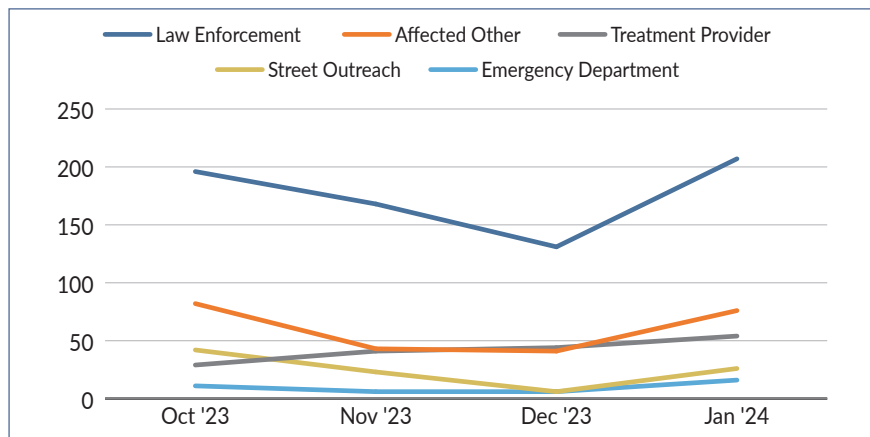
### OPTIONS Referrals by Type



Referral type	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Self	221	147	139	263
Co-Response/Post-OD Follow-up	76	54	44	287
Proactive Referral	262	203	170	360

2023–January 2024 are Law Enforcement (702), Affected Other (242), Treatment Provider (168), Street Outreach (97), and Emergency Departments (39). Proactive referrals are also generated through a variety of other sources including Emergency Medical Staff, Recovery Coaches and Peer Support, Criminal Justice, and Religious Leaders.

### OPTIONS Most Prevalent Proactive Referrals

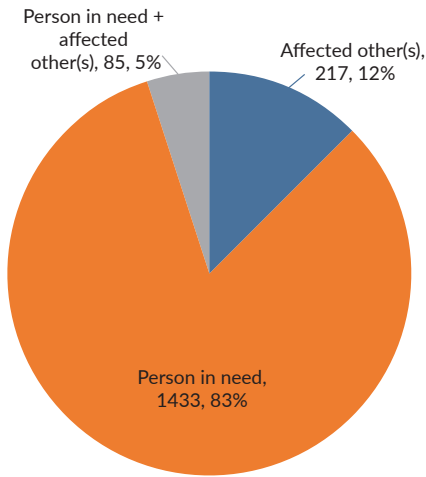


Referral type	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Law Enforcement	196	168	131	207
Affected Other	82	43	41	76
Treatment Provider	29	41	44	54
Street Outreach	42	23	6	26
Emergency Department	11	6	6	16

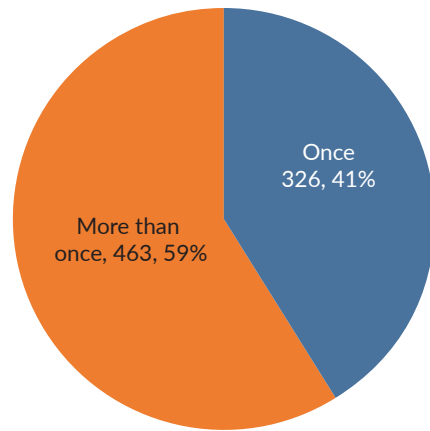
## Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach (Demographics)

OPTIONS teams serve not only individuals in need but also affected others. In many counties, liaisons are known members of the community who are able to reach at-risk individuals and those that might not engage with other state-based harm reduction, treatment, recovery, or prevention services. The chart on the left shows the number and percentage of clients who are persons in need (1,433, 83%) affected others (217, 12%) or both persons in need and affected others (85, 5%). The chart on the right shows the number and percentage of clients who are first time utilizers of the OPTIONS program (326, 41%) or someone who has contacted Liaisons multiple times (463, 59%).

OPTIONS Client Breakdown by Type

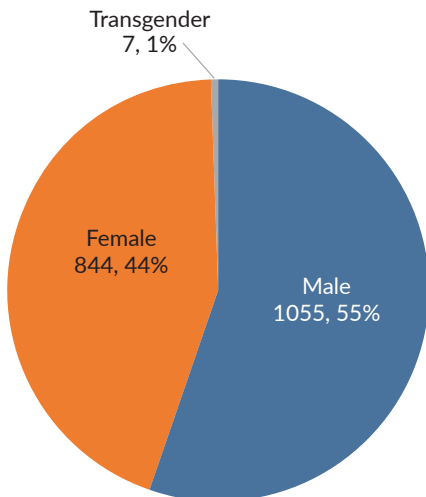


OPTIONS Utilization

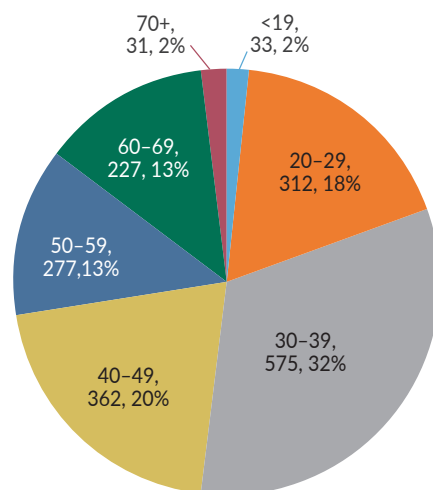


The following four charts show the demographic breakdown of clients served by OPTIONS liaisons: 55% of clients are male (1,055), 44% are female (844), and 1% are transgender (7). Two percent of OPTIONS clients are 19 years old or younger (33), 18% are between the ages of 20 and 29 (312), 32% are between the ages of 30 and 39 (575), 20% are between the ages of 40 and 49 (362), 13% are between the ages of 50 and 59

OPTIONS Clients by Gender

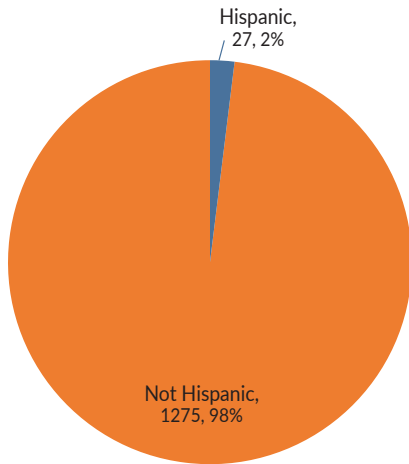


OPTIONS Clients by Age

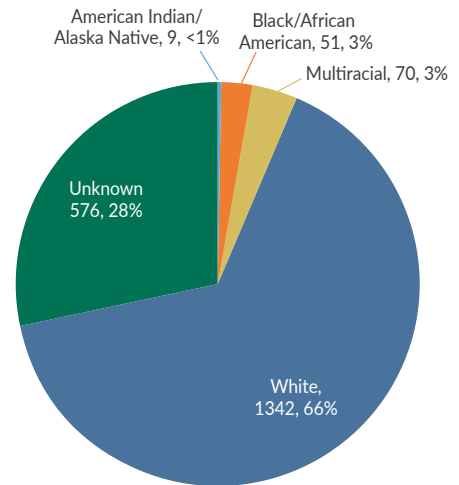


(227), and 13% are 60 or older (227). The ethnicity of clients is 98% not Hispanic (1,275) and 2% Hispanic/Latinx (27). The racial composition of OPTIONS clients are <1% American Indian/Alaska Native (9), 2% African American/Black (51), <1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1), 3% Multiracial (70), 66% White (1,342), and 28% Unknown (576).

OPTIONS Clients by Ethnicity

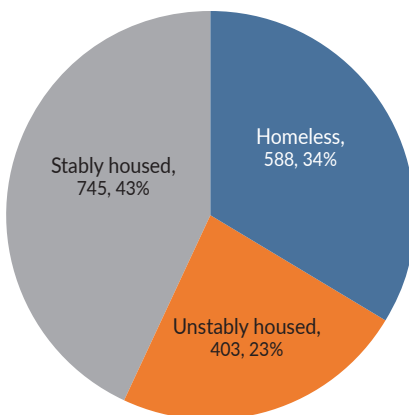


OPTIONS Clients by Race

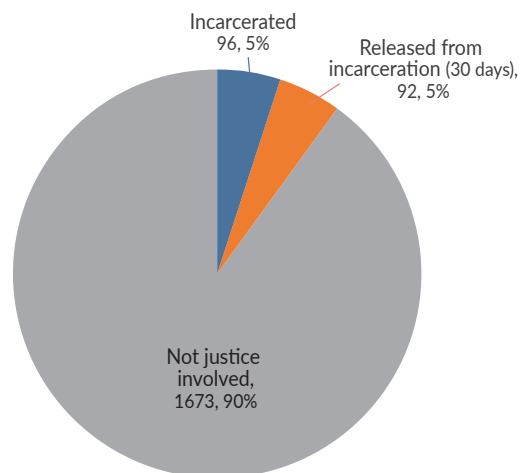


OPTIONS liaisons are effective at reaching individuals in need and affected others that are experiencing housing instability and experiencing homelessness as well as those who are—or have recently been—justice involved. The following charts show that from October 2023 to January 2024, 57% (1,148) of clients referred to OPTIONS liaisons are reported to be housing insecure; 23% (403) are unstably housed and 34% (588) are homeless. Those who have stable housing constituted 43% (745) of liaison clients. Five percent (96) of OPTIONS clients were currently incarcerated and 5% (92) had been incarcerated in the past 30 days.

OPTIONS Client Housing Status



OPTIONS Client Justice Status

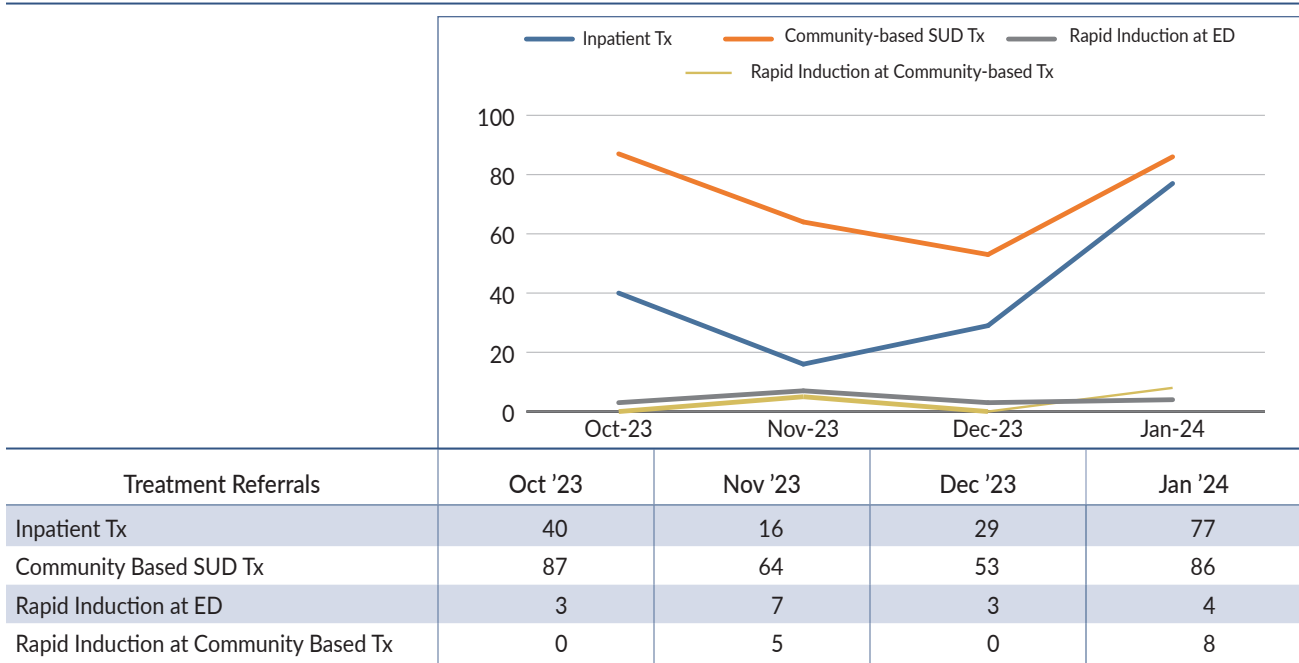


## Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach and Safety (Referrals to Services)

OPTIONS liaisons connect individuals with state- and community-based prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services. The following charts show referrals from OPTIONS Liaisons to various services across these four focus areas of the State of Maine’s Opioid Response Strategic Action Plan.

During January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 77 clients to inpatient treatment, 86 to community-based substance use disorder treatment, 4 to rapid induction of medication for opioid use disorder at the emergency department, and 8 to rapid induction of medication for opioid use disorder to at community-based treatment facilities. From October 2023–January 2024 OPTIONS teams referred 162 individuals to inpatient treatment, 290 to community-based substance use disorder treatment, 17 to rapid induction of medication for opioid use disorder at the emergency department, and 13 to rapid induction of medication for opioid use disorder at community-based treatment facilities.

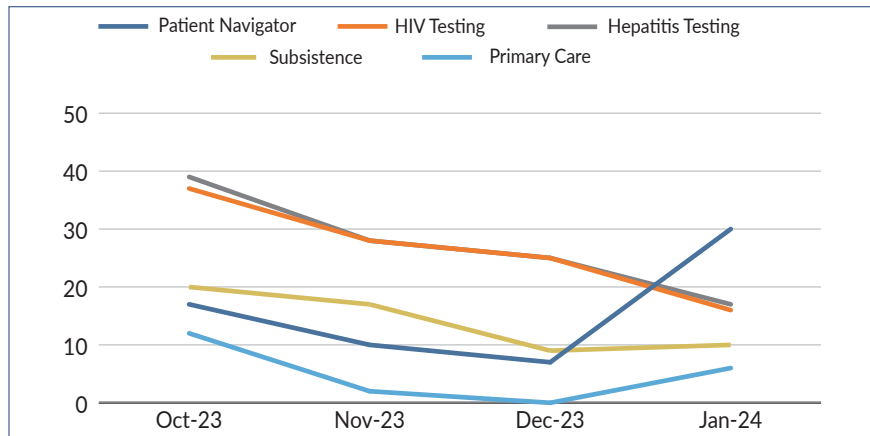
OPTIONS Liaison Referrals to Treatment Services



During January 2024 OPTIONS teams referred 30 individuals to patient navigators, 16 to HIV testing, 17 to hepatitis testing, 10 for subsistence services such as food and housing, and 6 to primary care providers. From October 2023–January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 64 individuals to patient navigators, 106 to HIV testing, 109 to Hepatitis testing, 56 for subsistence services, and 30 to primary care providers.

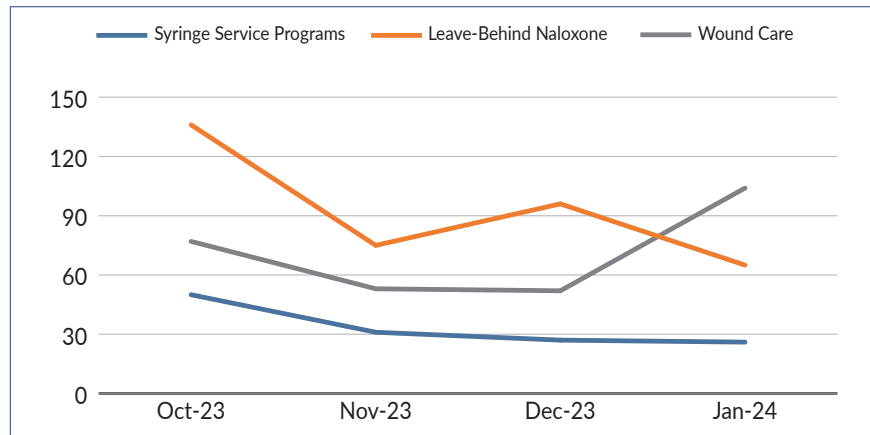
In January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 26 individuals to sterile syringe exchange programs, addressed wound care with 104 people, and distributed leave-behind naloxone kits to 65 individuals. From October 2023–January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 134 clients to sterile syringe exchange programs, addressed wound care with 286 clients, and distributed leave-behind naloxone kits to 286 individuals.

OPTIONS Liaison Referrals to Prevention Services



Prevention referrals	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Patient Navigator	17	10	7	30
HIV Testing	37	28	25	16
Hepatitis Testing	39	28	25	17
Subsistence	20	17	9	10
Primary Care	12	2	0	6

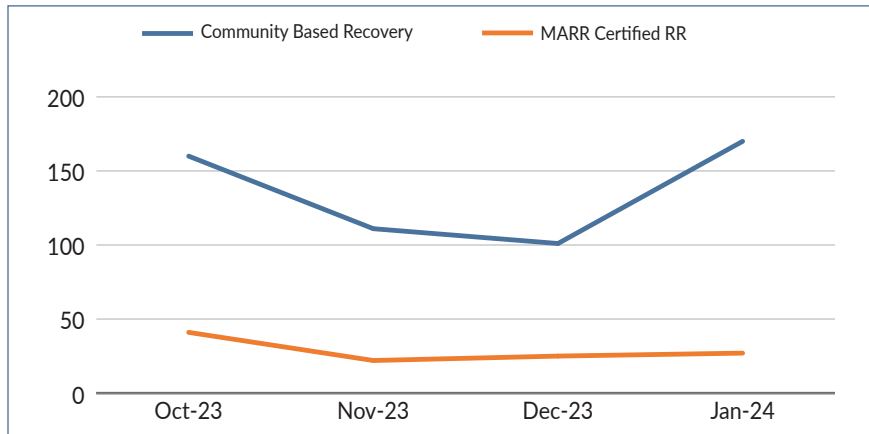
OPTIONS Liaison Referrals to Harm Reduction Services



Harm reduction referrals	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Syringe Service Programs	50	31	27	26
Leave-Behind Naloxone	136	75	96	65
Wound Care	77	53	52	104

During January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 170 individuals to community-based recovery services and referred 27 individuals to Maine Association for Recovery Residences (MARR) certified recovery residences. From October 2023–January 2024, OPTIONS teams referred 542 individuals to community-based recovery services and 115 individuals to MARR recovery residences.

### OPTIONS Liaison Referrals for Recovery Services

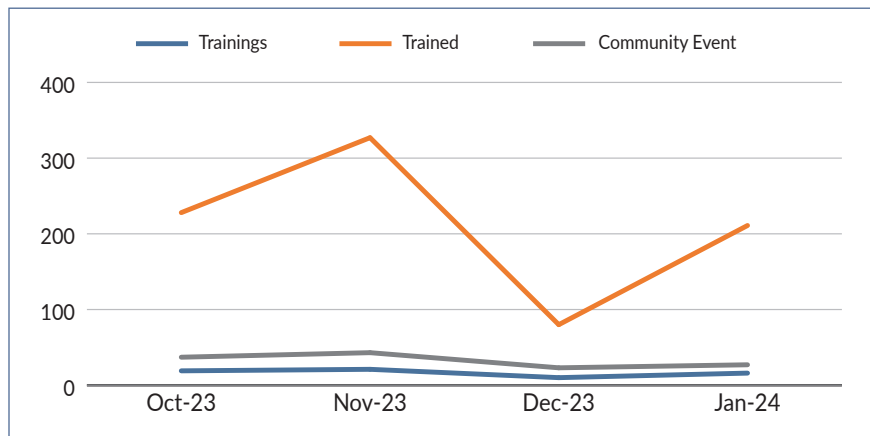


Recovery referrals	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Community-based Recovery	160	111	101	170
MARR Certified Recovery Residences	41	22	25	27

### Overdose Prevention Through Safety and Naloxone

OPTIONS liaisons also serve as community educators conducting a variety of trainings and community events including Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution and anti-stigma trainings. The chart and table show the number and cumulative number of trainings conducted, individuals trained, and community events by OPTIONS liaisons from October 2023–January 2024. OPTIONS liaisons have conducted 66 trainings, trained 846 individuals, and were engaged in 130 community events.

### Community Events, Trainings, and People Trained by OPTIONS Liaisons

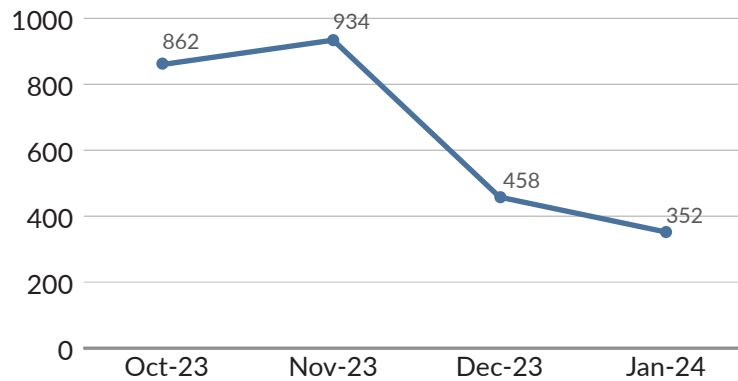


	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Trainings	19	21	10	16
Individuals Trained	228	327	80	211
Community Events	37	43	23	27

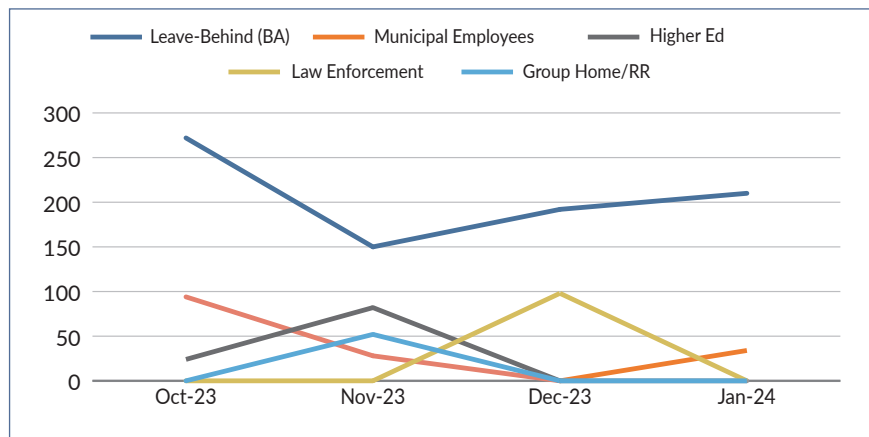


As part of trainings, community events, and outreach work, OPTIONS Liaisons serve as primary distributors of state-supplied naloxone to various members of the community from people in need themselves, affected others, clinicians, municipal employees, educational institutes, law enforcement, and many others. The line chart below shows the total number of kits distributed from October 2023–January 2024. The final chart shows the 5 most frequent receivers of naloxone distributed by OPTIONS Liaisons. During January 2024 OPTIONS teams distributed 176 kits (352 doses) of naloxone. From October 2023–January 2024 OPTIONS teams distributed 1,303 kits of naloxone (2,606 doses). The 5 most prevalent receivers of OPTIONS naloxone distribution are individuals provided with leave-behind naloxone kits (824 doses), municipal employees (156 doses), higher education employees (106 doses), law enforcement (98 doses), and group homes (52 doses).

Total Doses of Naloxone Distributed by OPTIONS Liaisons



Largest Receivers of Naloxone Distribution by OPTIONS Liaisons



	Oct '23	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24
Group Home/RR	0	52	0	0
Law Enforcement	0	0	98	0
Higher Ed	24	82	0	0
Municipal Employees	94	28	0	34
Leave-Behind (BA)	272	150	192	210