

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

South Africa has named overdose as a policy problem. The next step is to build the practical system that prevents deaths.

THE POLICY SIGNAL

On International Overdose Awareness Day, the Department of Social Development called overdose a serious challenge requiring sustained prevention, early intervention, appropriate services and coordinated action. Its Kimberley programme brought together government, civil society, communities, young people and service providers under the message **Prevent. Recognise. Respond. Recover.**

Why this matters

For the first time in this public framing, overdose is visible as a distinct South African policy concern rather than disappearing inside generic substance-use prevention and treatment.

That creates a valuable opening: government already accepts that awareness alone is insufficient and that a coordinated response is required.

The opportunity is to convert an emerging policy acknowledgement into a life-saving public-health architecture.

What is still missing

The published response emphasises prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, psychosocial support and referrals. It says little about the interventions that make an overdose survivable or detect rapidly changing drug markets.

- 1 **Wider naloxone access and peer-led response**
- 2 **Drug checking linked to rapid public alerts**
- 3 **Reliable fatal and non-fatal overdose surveillance**
- 4 **Low-threshold safer-use and overdose-prevention services**

THE PRACTICAL ASK

Move from an overdose-awareness campaign to a national overdose-prevention system.



SOURCE

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Scan the QR code for the full government report.