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SLO Overdose Awareness Day Event Invites Community Members to Heal and Help Prevent Overdose-Deaths on the Central Coast

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA— In recognition of SLO Overdose Awareness Day, the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Behavioral Health and the Opioid Safety Coalition invite community members to Mitchell Park on Saturday, August 29, 2026—from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.—for a powerful day of remembrance, education, and action to combat the growing opioid crisis. Community partners, individuals in recovery, and anyone impacted by overdose are encouraged to attend.

“Early intervention saves lives, and it starts with open conversations,” said Dana McEwen, San Luis Obispo Director of Behavioral Health. “When we talk openly about substance use, grief, and the realities of overdose, we make it easier for people to ask for help. By creating spaces like this event, we work to break down stigma and ensure everyone knows support is available, accessible, and judgment-free.

The local gathering is held in tandem with International Overdose Awareness Day—the annual global initiative dedicated to ending overdoses, honoring those lost without judgement, and validating the pain felt by grieving loved ones. This year’s local event features a keynote presentation “Talking About Grief: How to Talk About What No One Wants to Talk About” by Jamie Metzgar, the Director of Grief Support and Education at Hospice SLO. Community members can also take advantage of the free Naloxone training and a resource fair featuring local substance use prevention organizations. The event will end with candlelit memorial tribute to honor those lost to overdose. Food and beverages will be available for purchase.

San Luis Obispo County experienced 42 opioid-related overdose deaths in 2024, the most recent full year of data available ([CA Overdose Dashboard](#)). This considerable decrease (45.59%) from the 78 deaths recorded in 2023, is something local leaders and advocates believe stems from the unwavering prevention efforts across the county. Prevention efforts include the increase in availability of free Naloxone (over 2,600 units distributed from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026), youth outreach through the film “[Fentanyl High](#)” including a local screening, and the “[Fentanyl is Forever](#)” educational campaign which produced over 1,282,230 impressions from community members.

“SLO Overdose Awareness Day creates a space for awareness and belonging, where people at all stages of grief can feel supported and seen, and where we remember and honor loved ones lost

to overdose,” says Jenn Rhoads, County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health Opioid Safety Coordinator. “We celebrate lives saved with naloxone and treatment, and recognize the community still needs us to be vigilant in prevention. By hearing personal stories, learning prevention strategies, and breaking the silence, we can help remove the stigma around overdose. It affects people from all walks of life in SLO County—and only together can we stop it.”

Event Details:

- **What:** SLO Overdose Awareness Day
- **When:** Saturday, August 29, 2026, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Where:** Mitchell Park, 1400 Osos St., San Luis Obispo
- **Admission:** Free and open to all community members

Community members not able to attend this year’s event can access free Overdose Reversal Kits by placing orders online at NaloxoneNowSLO.org or at one of fifty community locations including free standing [NaloxBox](#) distribution sites. Free Naloxone is also available at Behavioral Health clinics in San Luis Obispo, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Paso Robles, and Atascadero.

More details about the Opioid Safety Coalition and SLO Behavioral Health Overdose Prevention can be found www.slocounty.ca.gov/osc. Community members may access substance use treatment services by calling the SLO Behavioral Health at 1-800-838-1381.

ABOUT SLO OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

SLO Overdose Awareness Day, founded by Kim Lacey after the accidental overdose of her son, is an annual local event created with the support of the [International Overdose Awareness Day](#) (IOAD) in Australia. [SLO Overdose Awareness Day](#) is a San Luis Obispo County nonprofit committed to raising awareness and providing resources about overdose, including how to access Naloxone and training to administer it. Through awareness campaigns, education initiatives, and community engagement, the organization strives to create a healthier and safer environment for all residents.

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