## Purpose

In 2017, WV had the highest rate of mortality by drug overdose in the US (57.8/100,000), tripling the national rate and surpassing second ranked Ohio by 20%.<sup>1,2</sup>

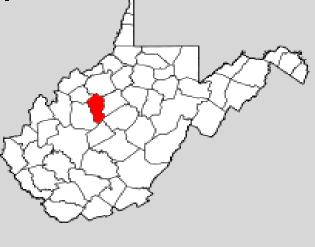
**WVSOM** 

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Of 220 US counties (top 5%) identified by the CDC for highest risk of opioid-attributed HIV and Hepatitis C outbreaks, over half of WV's counties (28/55) qualified with Calhoun County ranking 90<sup>th</sup>, top 2% nationally.<sup>3,4</sup>

In 2018, a multidisciplinary team of Calhoun County health providers and outreach workers led this research study to examine resident attitudes and perceptions on harm reduction programming: strategies designed to reduce the negative impacts of drug use, overdose, and mortality and increase access to treatment for people who use drugs. The team aimed to better understand and develop sustainable evidence-based interventions and a powerful county-wide response to the opioid epidemic.



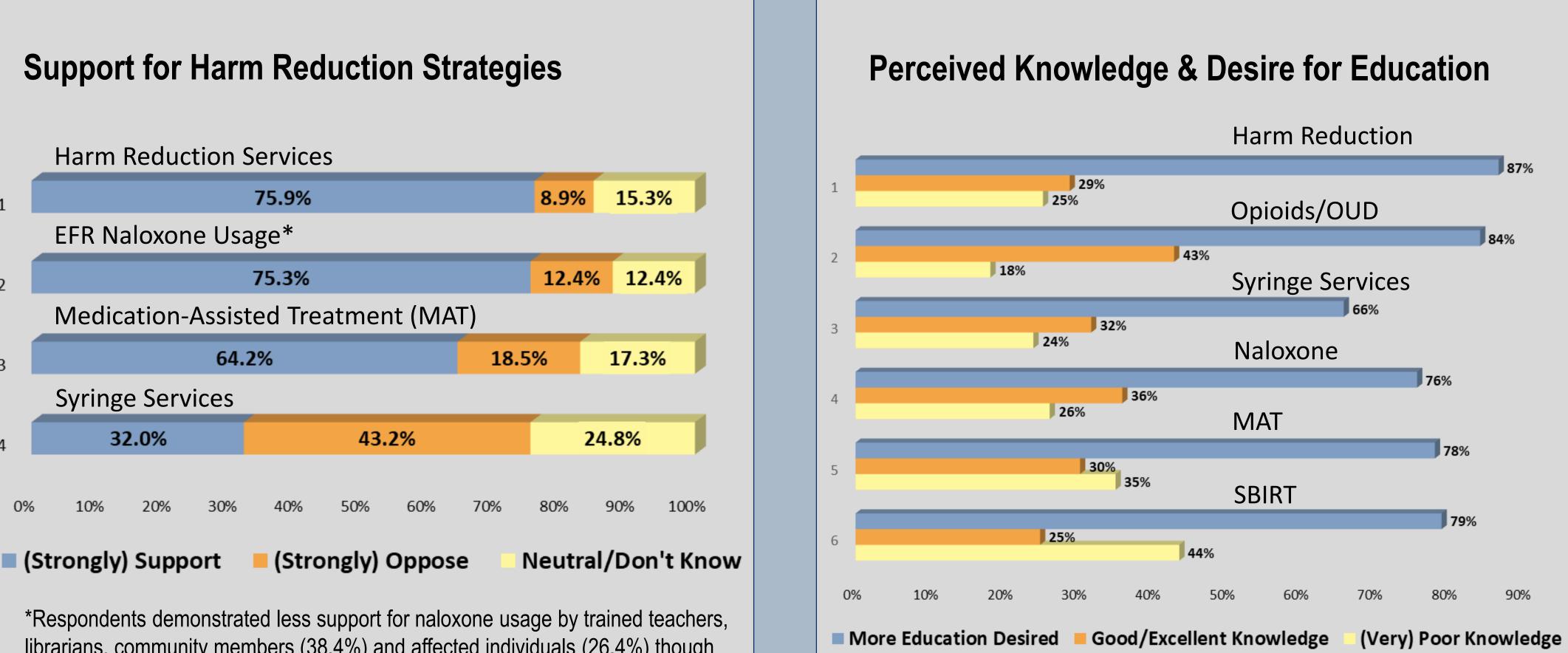
# Methods

- A voluntary, anonymous, 26-item survey disseminated to adult Calhoun County residents (18+ years old) from January to April 2019.
- Questions included 5-point Likert scale, multiple choice, and an open-ended item for comments, with basic program definitions adapted from the CDC.
- Team gained signed, informed permission from each community site for study conduct on premises.
- 180 residents completed the survey, representing about 3% of the county's adult population.
- Completed surveys were securely collected and stored via REDCap.
- Assessment included attitudes toward harm reduction programming, self-perceived knowledge of areas and interventions, education and outreach needs, mental health, drug use, screening history.
- No statistically significant associations demonstrated among attitudes, experiences, and demographics.

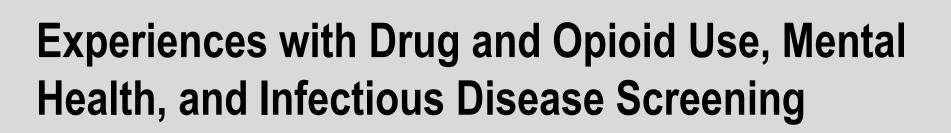
# Harm Reduction in Calhoun County, WV: **Community Perceptions & Paths Forward**

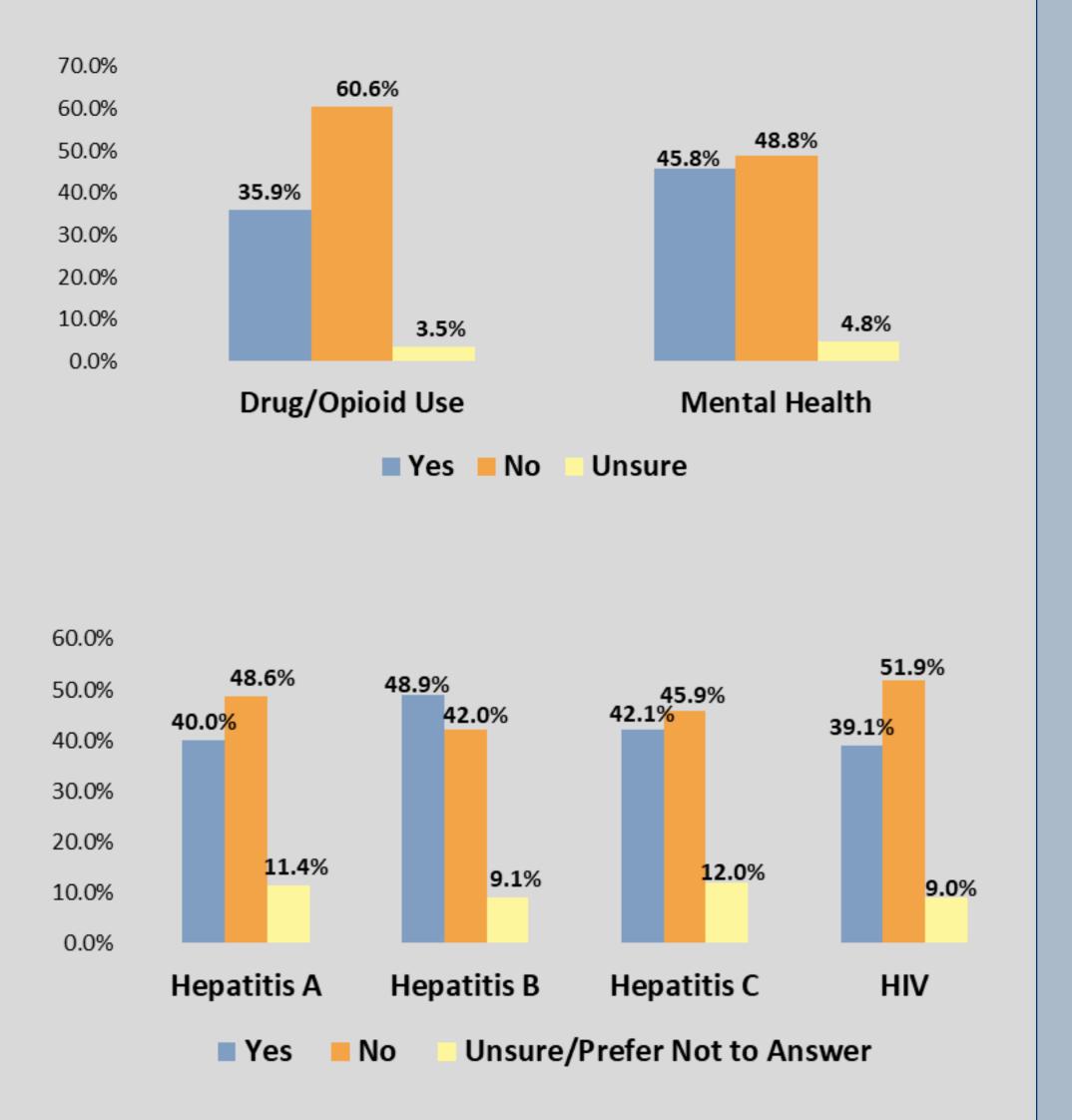
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# Results



librarians, community members (38.4%) and affected individuals (26.4%) though nearly 30% reported neutral/don't know.





\*63.1% reported interest in receiving hepatitis vaccinations if provided at low/no cost.

# Education & Outreach Outlets Identified

- Doctor's office (82.0%)
- School/classroom (80.8%)
- Health department (76.2%)
- Pharmacy (59.9%)
- Social media (58.1%)
- Newspaper (54.7%)
- Community forum (53.5%)

# **Participant Comments**

Calhoun County residents identify opioid misuse as a critical community issue. The respondent majority support County harm reduction services, naloxone usage by first responders, and medication-assisted treatment (MAT). These evidence-based interventions offer effective strategies for targeted response, though syringe services may not be widely supported at present.

The respondent majority overwhelmingly report the need for increased education and outreach pertinent to these topic areas, underscored by a perceived lack of applicable knowledge. Education and outreach throughout County schools, provider and healthcare outlets, are essential to positively address the illiteracy, confusion, and stigma persisting throughout the region. Increased and sustaining stakeholder collaboration, funding, and resource sharing across Calhoun County will cultivate understanding and momentum of the opioid epidemic as a public health emergency necessitating powerful intervention and response.

In collaboration among Westbrook Health Services and Minnie Hamilton Health Systems, data gathered in this project supported a 2019 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) Planning grant through Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA).

This study was developed and implemented in partnership among Westbrook Health Services, Minnie Hamilton Health Systems, and the Center for Rural and Community Health at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine under leadership of principal investigator, Eric Limegrover, PhD, ALPS, Director of Psychological Services at Westbrook Health. Special thank you to project team members Makayla Johnson, Barbara Mckown, Kristen Ruble among many who helped greatly in this effort. Research reported in this poster was supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number 5U54GM104942-04. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

- Accessed August 23, 2019



# Discussion





# Acknowledgements

# References

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West Virginia Opioid Summary. National Institute on Drug Abuse. https://www.drugabuse.gov/opioid-summaries-by-state/west-virginia-opioid-

summary. Revised March 2019. Accessed August 23, 2019. <sup>3</sup> West Virginia Opioid Epidemic: Most Vulnerable Counties. amFAR/Opioid and Health Indicators Database. https://opioid.amfar.org/WV.