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BACKGROUND:

Using fentanyl without anyone ready to administer naloxone or rescue breathing is a primary risk factor for fatal overdose. Overdose safety helplines monitor people using alone and trigger a rescue response when needed. Here we describe the implementation of one overdose safety helpline in Massachusetts.

INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION:

The Massachusetts Overdose Prevention Helpline started in October 2022, when it received its first grant funding from a private foundation, RIZE-MA. The service is staffed by volunteer operators with lived or living drug use experience. Operators are trained to get caller location, discuss overdose safety plan, confirm phone is charged, ensure they're accessible to first responders, and provide company to the caller while they use. Operators on duty are connected via phone tree software and utilize a service that ensures immediate connection with local emergency responders.

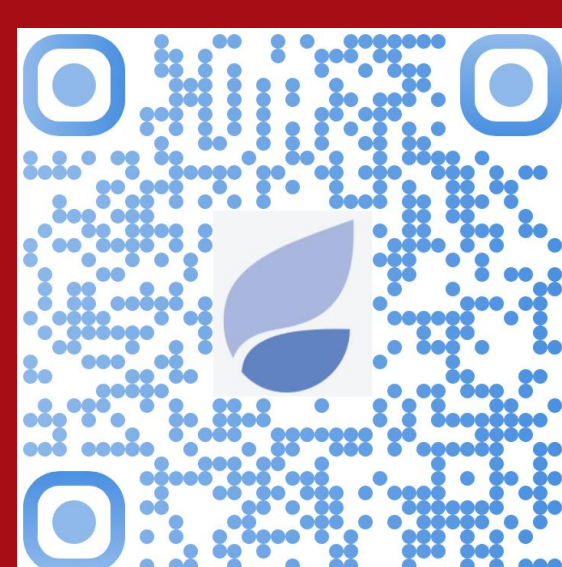
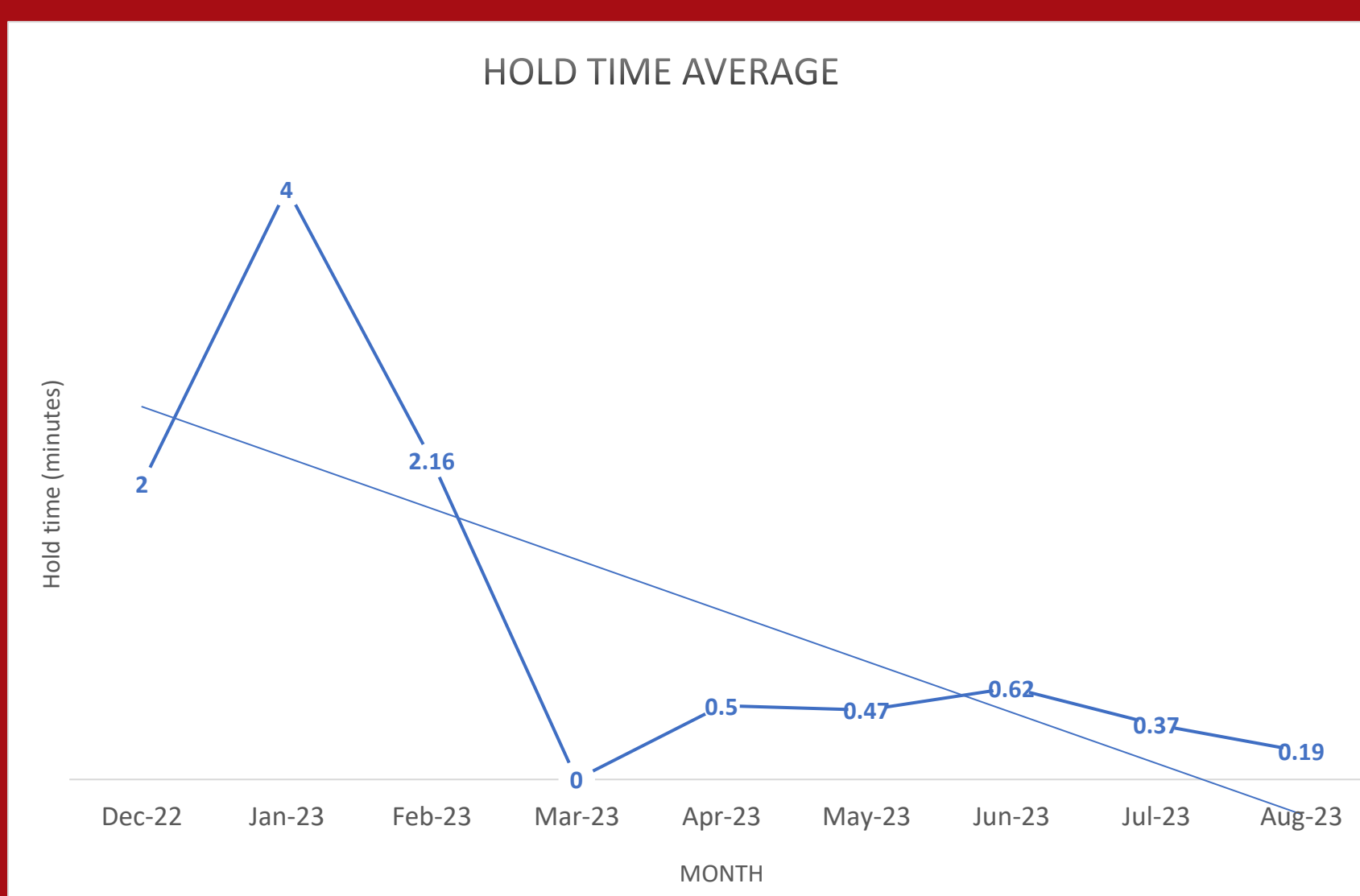
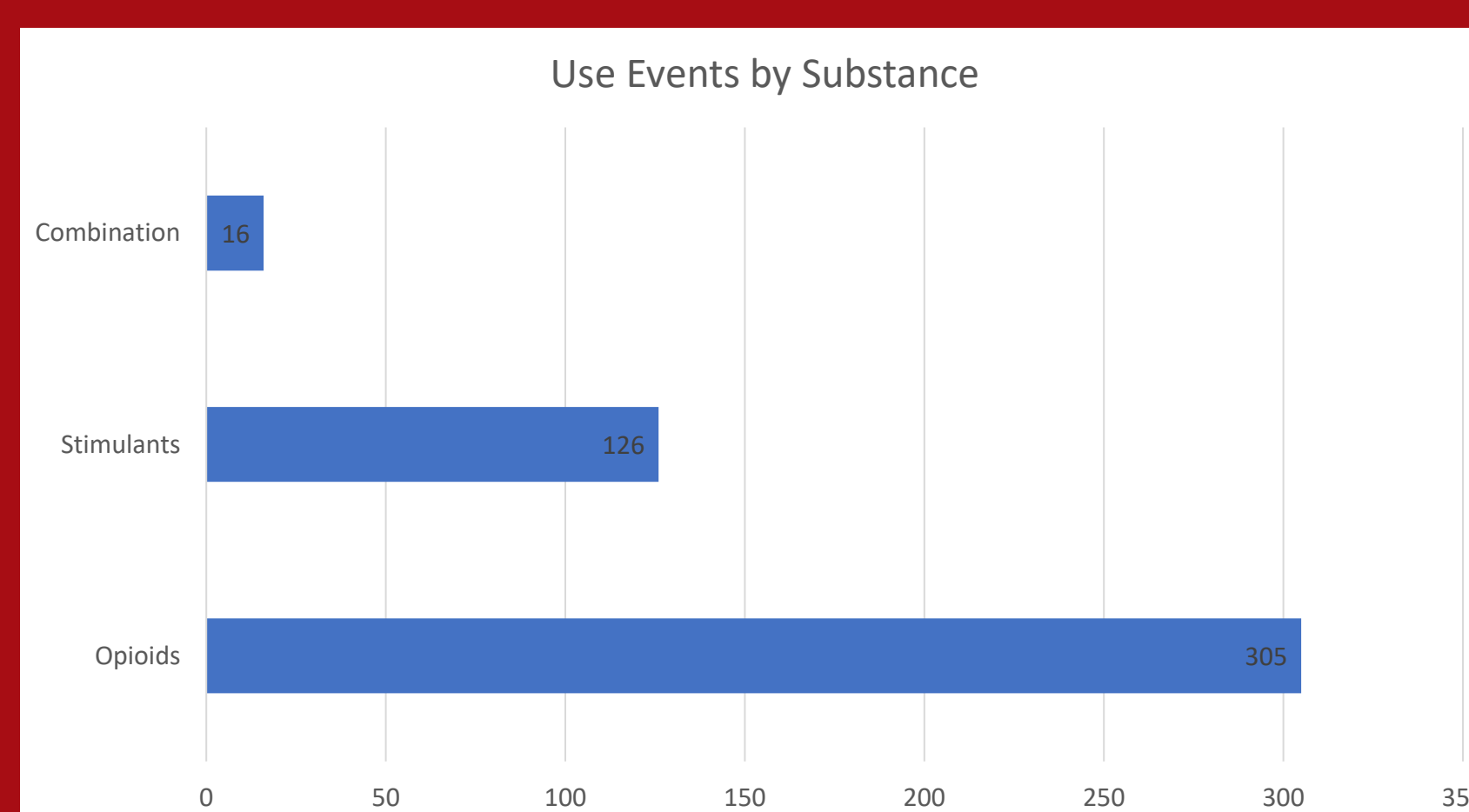
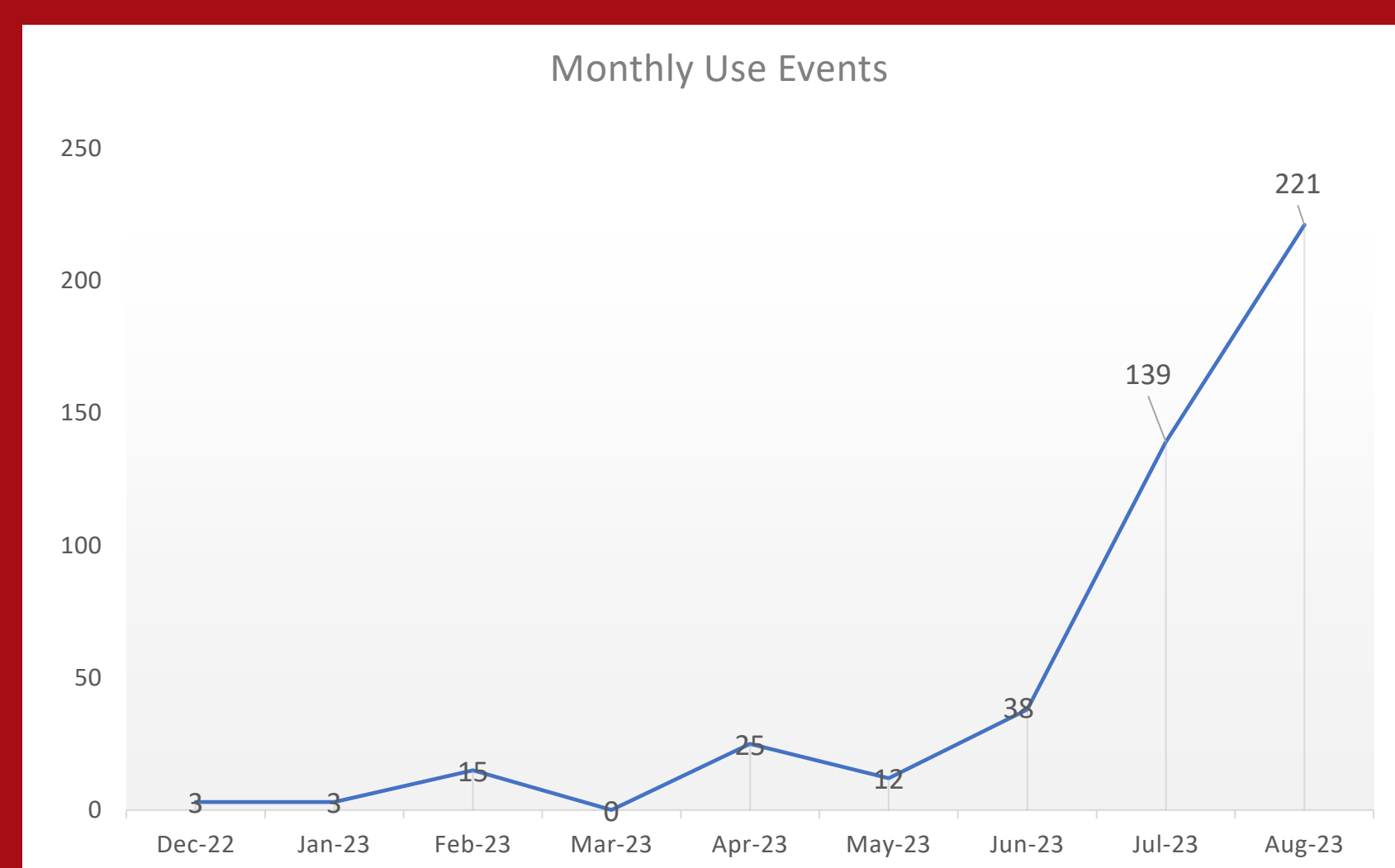
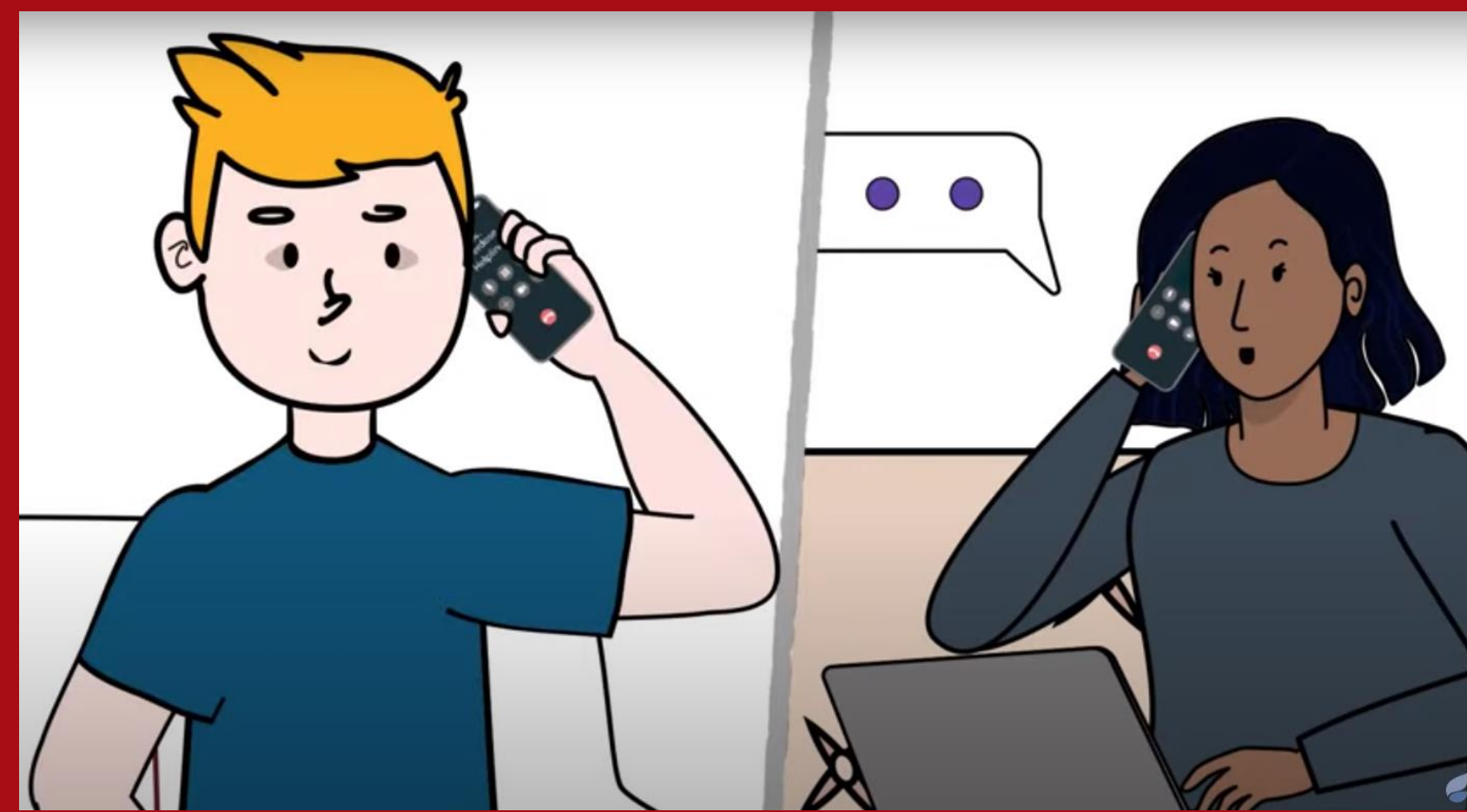
LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Technology can provide effective virtual spotting
2. Volunteer operators with living experience are willing to participate
3. Most calls do not result in an overdose, but provide opportunities for connection to a PWUD who is isolated
4. The system can be scaled to provide more comprehensive service

NEXT STEPS:

1. In August 2023, the MOPH became the first overdose helpline in the United States to receive state funding
2. Operators are being transitioned from volunteer to a combination of full-time, part-time, per-diem and on-call stipend payment models
3. MOPH is a member of the International Council for Helplines and is pursuing accreditation

Overdose safety helplines- an evolving intervention to prevent fatal overdose deaths



SCAN ME TO VIEW
INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO ON
HOW TO USE AN OVERDOSE
SAFETY HELPLINE

Route	Use Events	Percent of Total
Intravenous	114	25%
Intranasal	190	42%
Intrarectal	14	3%
Inhalation	135	30%

ROUTE OF USE:

Callers used substances across many different routes. Operator training recognizes that different routes have different overdose timeframes and there are adjusted protocols for each route.

Substance	Use Events
Fentanyl	117
Heroin	180
Oxycodone	8
Crack Cocaine	122
Methamphetamine	2
Cocaine	2
Speedball (Opioid/Cocaine)	16

SUBSTANCES USED:

Helpline callers used a variety of different substance types, including fentanyl, heroin, crack, cocaine and meth. Callers who reported using heroin were confident that there was no fentanyl, utilizing both fentanyl test strips and drug checking. Xylazine has been suspected by several of our callers given symptoms experienced during calls as well as positive xylazine test strips.

State	Use Events
Georgia	171
Wisconsin	117
Massachusetts	81
Pennsylvania	51
Virginia	13
Oklahoma	12
Texas	9
New Hampshire	4
New York	3
Kentucky	2
Florida	1

CALLER LOCATION:

All marketing (print and digital) was targeted in Massachusetts, though the helpline received most calls from out of state sources. More research is needed to determine the best way to reach people who use drugs in Massachusetts.