

THE OPIOID CRISIS  
&  
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN  
POPULATION:  
AN  
**URGENT** ISSUE

Maisha Fields BSN, MSN, FNP

Vonzel Sawyer Jr.





# Sound the alarm and Don't Press Snooze

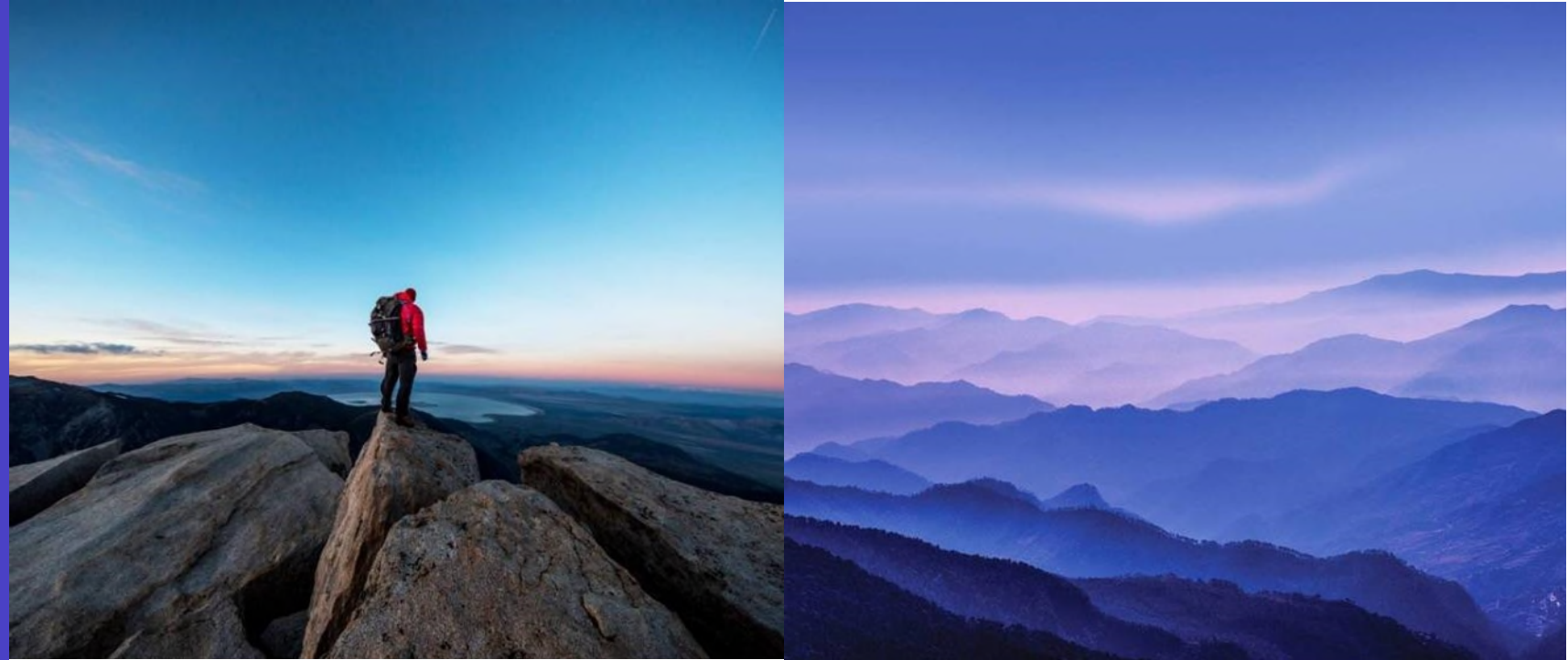


**In 2020, Black or African American Coloradans had the highest rate of death from drug overdose across all racial or ethnic groups: 36.3 per 100,000 people, which is double the rate for this population in 2018**

# Substance Abuse in the Black Community

- Leads to higher mortality rates.
- More likely to be victims of crimes
- Have higher rates of alcohol-related problems,
- More likely to contract HIV/AIDS
- Impacts not only the individual but also the entire family and community.
- Approximately 80% of the incarcerated adults in the U.S. have a history of involvement with alcohol or illicit drugs<sup>3</sup>
- SUDs lead to physical and mental health problems, affect relationships, cause financial losses, and occasionally lead to legal problems.
- SUDs are also associated with domestic violence, traffic accidents, and crime<sup>7</sup>.

# Key Take Aways



- Opioid overdoses rose by 54% in 2020, accounting for nearly two in three overdose deaths in Colorado.
- Fentanyl overdoses became more common, more than doubling between 2019 and 2020 and increasing by 10 times since 2016.
- Existing inequities and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the increase in overdose deaths in communities of color.



# Opioid Disparities

The rate of increase of Black/African American drug overdose deaths between 2015-2016 was 40 percent compared to the overall population increase at 21 percent.

# Trends in Illicit Drug Use

## *Illicit Drug Use*



According to the 2016 NSDUH, **20.4%** (6 million) of African Americans aged 18 and older reported using illicit drugs in the past year. This was higher than the national average (18.2%).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/Black%20or%20African%20American%202016%20sheet%202018.docx>



# Racism, Discrimination, and Stigma

**Figure 1: People of Color Were More Likely to Report Race and Ethnic Background or Culture as Reasons for Being Treated With Less Respect\*\***

*Reasons for Being Treated with Less Respect, 2021*

<b>Reported Reasons Why Adults Were Treated With Less Respect</b>	<b>All Adults Who Reported Being Treated With Less Respect</b>	<b>Adult People of Color</b>
Income or financial situation	58.3%	NA*
Ethnic background or culture	37.1%	89.2%
Race	36.0%	87.0%

\* Sample size of responses for individuals 18 years and older was too small to report.

‡ Asked of Coloradans 18 and older who reported being treated with disrespect.

# Deadly Effects of Stigma and Stereotypes

## *The Effects of Stereotypes*

**17 Million**

Whites reported having used an illicit drug within the last month

**4 Million**

Blacks reported having used an illicit drug within the last month

Although African Americans make up only **12.5%** of illicit drug users, **33%** of drug incarcerations are black. This leads to major roadblocks in treatments for substance abuse among the population, as there is a fear in self-reporting.<sup>1</sup>



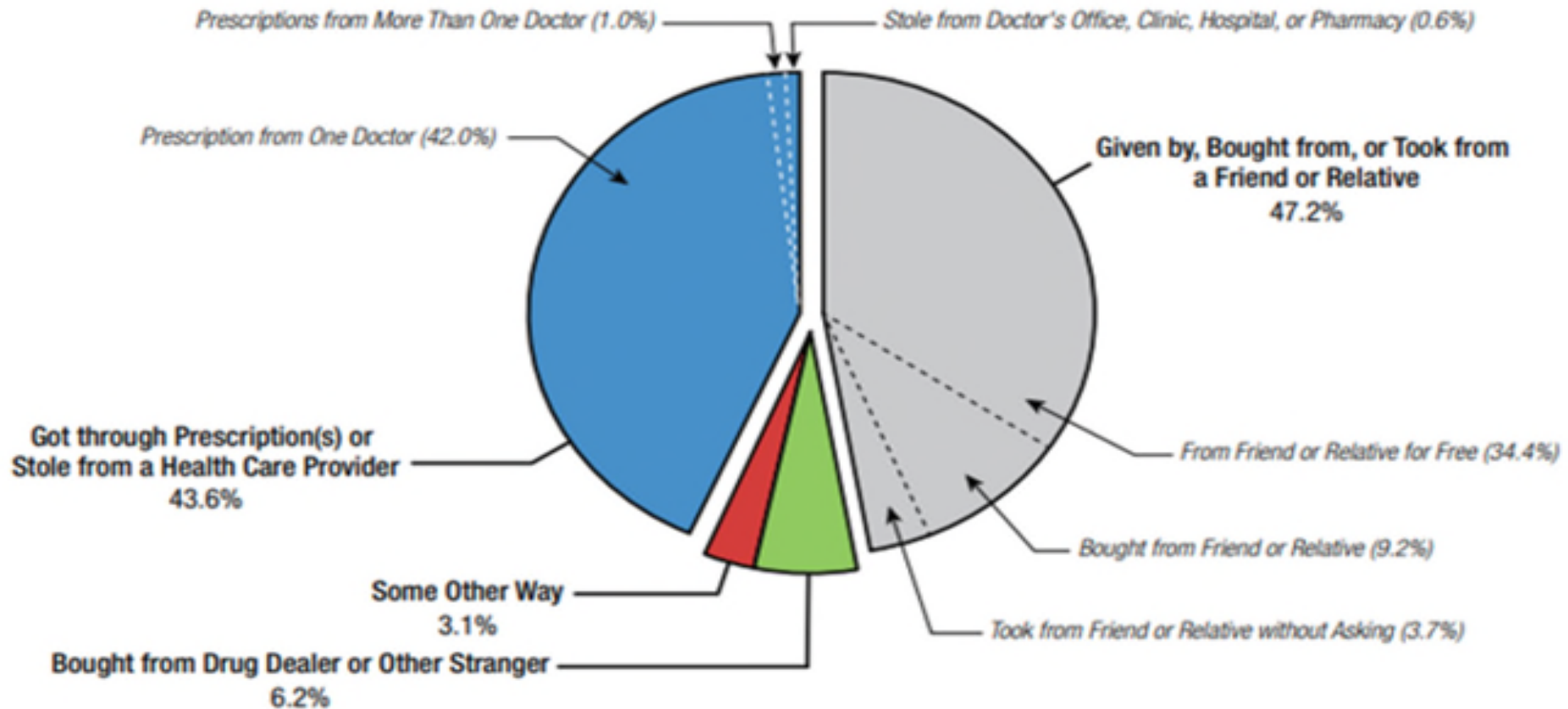
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>






# Where do people get their drugs?

**Figure 18. Source Where Pain Relievers Were Obtained for Most Recent Misuse: Among People Aged 12 or Older Who Misused Pain Relievers in the Past Year; 2020**



**9.3 Million People Aged 12 or Older Who Misused Pain Relievers in the Past Year**



A glowing yellow tent is pitched on a rocky mountain peak at night. The tent is illuminated from within, casting a warm yellow light. The background shows a dark, starry sky with a bright star or planet visible in the upper right. The overall scene is a high-altitude, rugged landscape.

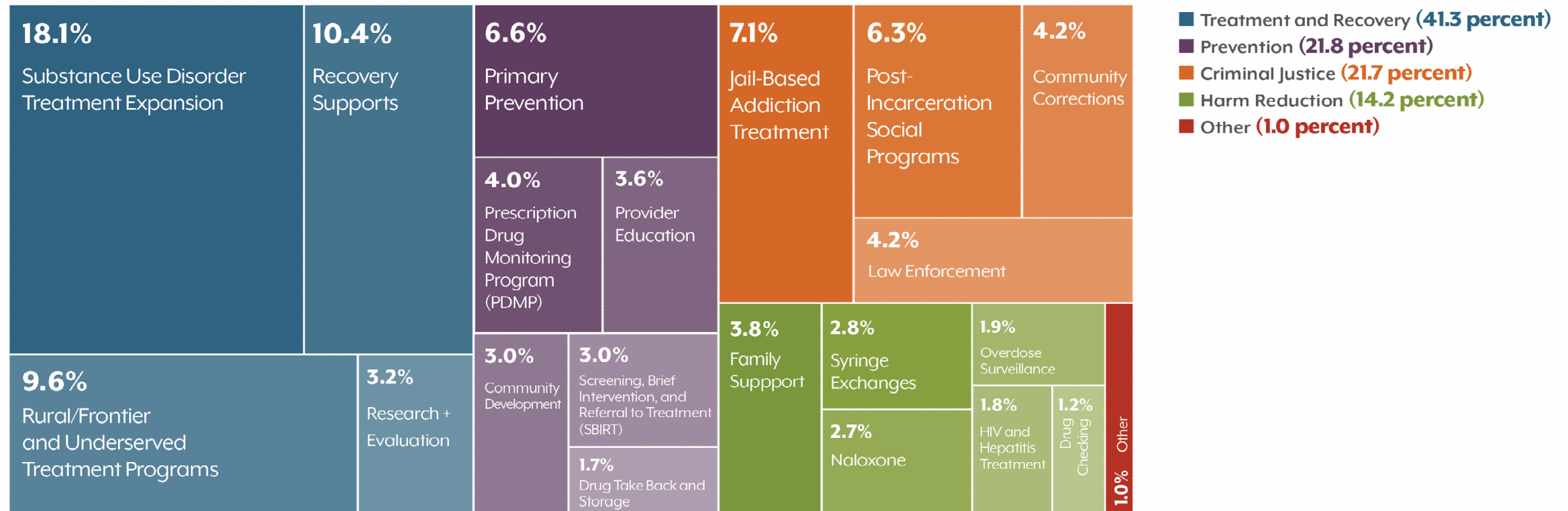
The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.

Walt Disney



# How we are currently tackling the Opioid Epidemic

**Figure 1: Aggregate Survey Results**



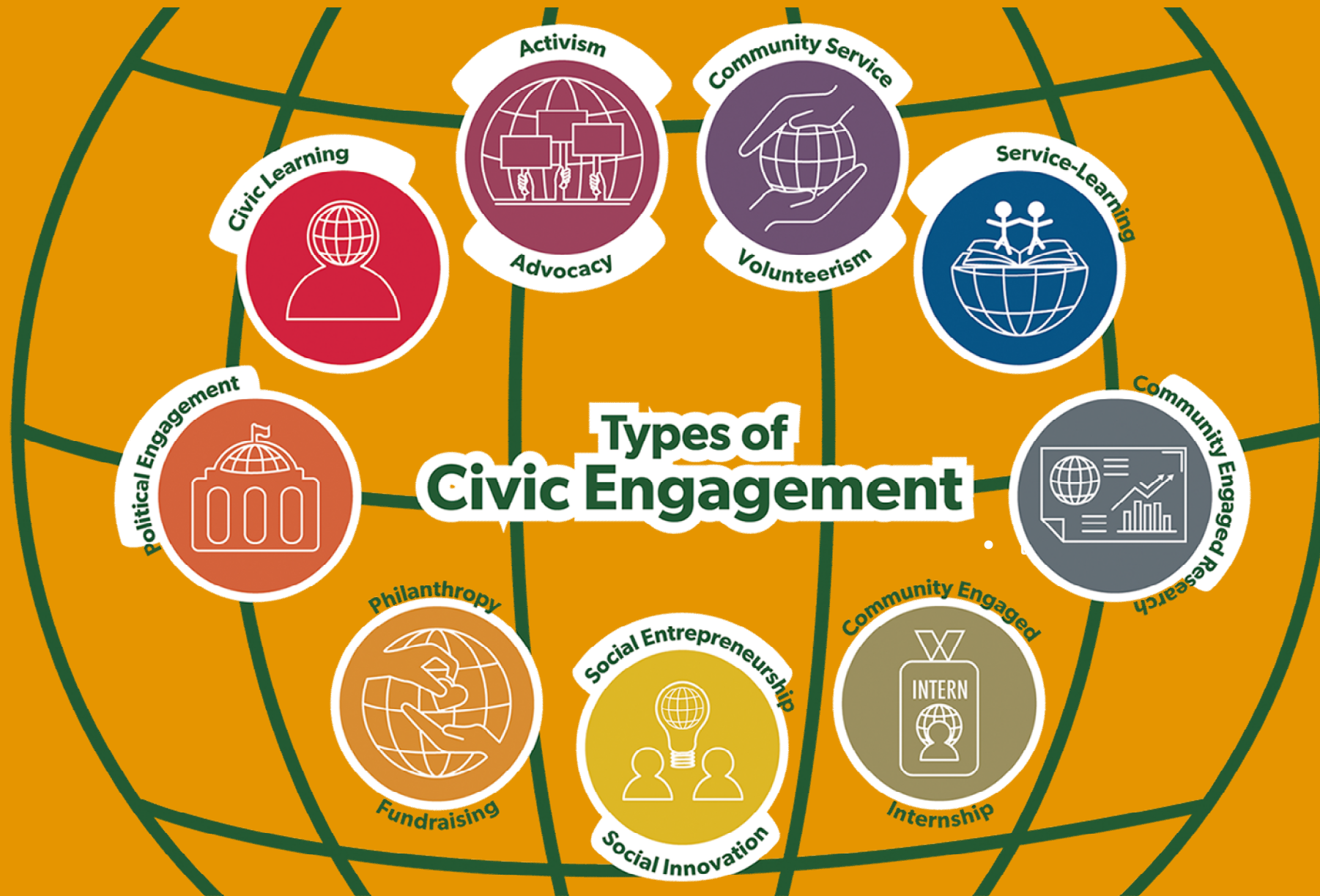


# The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

- Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention supported a community-informed process to co-create the **Colorado Consortium Black Committee** State Plan as a State Advisory Committee.
- This plan sets an overarching direction for the next seven years
- Outlines actions to advance risk reduction and early diagnosis
- Improve outcomes for Black Coloradans experiencing or at-risk substance abuse and their families who live, work, and play in Colorado.

# Why do we need to create a State Plan

- Monitor trends to better understand and respond to the epidemic.
- **Advancing research** improving data quality to better identify areas that need assistance and to evaluate prevention efforts.
- Build state, local, community and family capacity
- **Reduce opioid and substance abuse deaths and addiction in the black Community**
- Support providers, healthcare systems, and payers
- **Build a Culturally Sensitive and reflective workforce.**
- **Partnering with public safety officials and community organizations**
- Increase public awareness
- **Increase Funding for prevention and intervention programs targeted toward the black community**
- **Reduce stigma, racism, and discrimination in healthcare**



# Timeline for Creating the State Plan

Hire Project Manager	Form Work Groups	Provider Database	Community Resource list	Gaps in Service
Manage the state advisory committee	Data Public Policy Workforce Measure and Outcomes Intervention Engagement/ Outreach Messaging Campaign	Develop a list serve of all black peer-to-peer recovery specialists, therapists, clinicians, and more	Maintain quarterly updated resource list of black community resources	Identify gaps in access, service delivery, education, training, research, and data collection.



Maisha Fields  
maishajfields@gmail.com

Vonzel  
Sawyer Jr  
vonzel333@gmail.com

# Thank you

