



Evidence-Based Approaches to Drug Policy: a Roadmap for Minnesota: *Data Collection and Evaluation*

About the Research

In 2023, Minnesota lawmakers funded a research study to develop policy and funding recommendations for drug policy that reduces harm and maximizes community health and safety.

Rise Research submitted two linked reports, the first laying out the state of the evidence, [Drug Policy: State of the Evidence](#) (2024), and the second making recommendations for Minnesota lawmakers, [Evidence-based Approaches to Drug Policy: A Roadmap for Minnesota](#) (2025).

The recommendations were broken into six sections, showing the complexity of the policy problem: Healthcare, Harm Reduction, Social Determinants of Health, Drug Policing, Data Collection and Evaluation, and "Crosscutting"—recommendations that cut across the other five sections.

This brief document highlights the key findings and recommendations from the reports in an easy-to-read format. Links to the original report are provided throughout for additional reading.

Data Collection and Evaluation Context

To create drug policies that truly improve health and safety, we need to measure their success accurately.

Traditionally, we've measured drug policy success by tracking things like illegal drug prices, how many drug seizures police make, how many people are arrested or jailed for drug crimes, and how many people use drugs overall. However, these measures don't show how drug policies actually affect communities and individuals. Evaluation should also look at broader health, safety, and economic outcomes to get the complete picture.

Minnesota has made some progress in this area. For example, the state now shares overdose data with the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) to generate real-time insights into when and where overdose is happening ([Minn. Stat. 144E.123](#)). In addition, Minnesota is developing a comprehensive statewide plan to address substance use and addiction ([Minn. Stat. 4.046, Subd. 3](#)).

¹ This was in response to population-level outcomes that indicate that our current approach is not working, including continued rising rates of overdose mortality in Minnesota and racial disparities in overdose mortality, the lack of access to evidence-based treatment for substance use disorder, the number of people incarcerated for drug crimes, and racial disparities in incarceration.

² Researchers reviewed the academic and gray literature, conducted over fifty interviews with Minnesotan experts in the field, and a statutory analysis to arrive at roughly 150 recommendations.

However, important work remains. For example, Minnesota still needs to connect public safety spending on drug enforcement to measurable public health and safety outcomes.

The recommendations below can help guide future data collection and evaluation priorities. We've highlighted the most critical recommendations from this policy area below, and the full report contains eight recommendations for data collection and evaluation - we encourage you to review that complete section.

Recommendations

For each of these recommendations, the primary outcome expected is to increase our understanding of overdose risks to inform our response strategy.

#	Abridged recommendation
139	Legislate a periodic strategic planning process and review of all statewide drug policies, including the impacts of drug policing policies on public health, public safety, and social determinants of health. This should include attention to racial disparities in all outcomes of interest.
140	Mandate that the appropriate state agencies track and make publicly available the costs related to drug law enforcement.
143	Collect more granular epidemiological overdose data on race and ethnicity, and use this data to allocate funding to inequitably impacted communities.