

# POLICIES IMPACTING THE OPIOID OVERDOSE EPIDEMIC

A NUMBER OF POLICIES, INCLUDING AND BEYOND DRUG POLICY, HAVE IMPACTED THE OVERDOSE EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES. THE EFFECTS ARE EVIDENT IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR. HERE'S A TIMELINE OF WHY.

## 1696, 1705...

Laws were put in place to **dehumanize African Americans** and **sanctify their white slave owners**.

In 1696, South Carolina included language in the law that slaves had "**barbarous, wild, savage natures.**"

In 1705, Virginia passed a law to ensure that white people would **not be criminalized for killing a slave**.

## 1875

A San Francisco ordinance criminalized the "smoking of opium in smoking-houses or dens", **mainly owned by Chinese immigrants**.

## 1914

### Harrison Narcotics Tax Act

was the first congressional action countering the United States drug trade, limiting opiate production, sale, and distribution, even by physicians, imposing taxes and the police as enforcement mechanisms.

## 1880-1920

First cocaine epidemic

## 1930

16 states banned marijuana, with the intent of the law being against Mexican immigrants.

## 1934

### National Housing Act

established the Federal Housing Administration, solidifying and exacerbating **redlining**.

## 1969

President Nixon called a **War on Drugs**, creating first methadone program. Funding focused on treatment and on law enforcement intended to negatively affect Black communities, creating justice inequities.

## 1970

### Controlled Substance Act

Replaced over fifty pieces of drug legislation, establishing system of control for narcotics and psychotropic substances.

"We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black [people], but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and black [people] with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did." -John Ehrlichman, Nixon's domestic policy chief

### Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act

### Civil Asset Forfeiture Laws

## 1973

**Drug Enforcement Agency** established

## 1973

**Rockefeller Drug Laws** in New York passed, penalizing heroin, morphine, cocaine, cannabis possession with minimum of 15 years to life in prison.

## 1980s

State and local syringe exchanges begin

## 1982

The **second War on Drugs** increased money to law enforcement while decreasing money for treatment

## 1986-88

**Anti-Drug Abuse Act**

● 1988

The **White House Office of National Drug Control Policy** was established.

● 1989

**Anti Drug-Abuse Supplemental Appropriations Act**

enacted by President HW Bush to increase funding to treatment, law enforcement, education, and prisons.

● 1990s

Washington state was first to enact "**Three Strikes**" laws, which are now in more than half of all U.S. states.

● 1998

Amendments to **Higher Education Act of 1965** denied financial aid to students with drug convictions.

● 1996

**Mental Health Parity Act**

Regulated that funding used for mental health benefits be no less than annual/lifetime funding used for physical health.

● 2000

**Drug Addiction Treatment Act**

amended the Controlled Substances Act allowing providers to prescribe narcotic treatment in their offices, rather than offsite.

● 2002

**Unequal Treatment**

The Institute of Medicine released a seminal report entitled *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*.

● 2008

**Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act**

prevented group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide mental health or substance use services to provide equal benefits to that of medical/surgical benefits.

● 2009

**Rockefeller Drug Reform**

Removed mandatory minimum sentences.

● 2010

**Fair Sentencing Act**

Reduced sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine from 100:1 to 18:1.

● 2012

Washington State and Colorado legalize marijuana.

● 2013

**Stop and Frisk** deemed unconstitutional.

● 2016

The **Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act**

Includes funding for criminal justice reform, treatment prevention, overdose reversal, and law enforcement.

● 2018

**Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities (SUPPORT) Act**

Provided a comprehensive response across sectors, but gaps remain.