

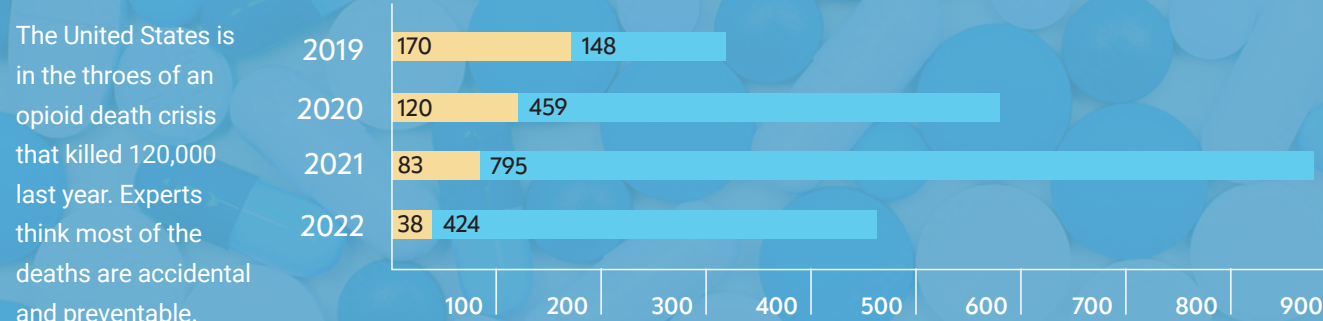
NEW HOPE TO PREVENT OPIOID FATALITIES

Narcan, the nasal spray that delays overdose deaths, is now available at no cost from a Chula Vista vending machine as well as the Chula Vista and National City police stations.



ACCIDENTAL DRUG MEDICATION DEATHS

Accidental Drug-Medication Deaths, Non-Opioid, Opioid, and Fentanyl cases



Source: San Diego County Open Data Portal

GRAPHIC BY RAZYLIN AVENDANO / STAFF

BY RAZYLIN M. AVENDANO

C OVID-19 has killed nearly 1.2 million Americans.

So have opioids.

Naloxone may be the wonder drug that saves tens of thousands of lives. Also known as Narcan, it is a fast acting nasal spray widely available at no cost in San Diego County.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone and morphine that likely killed 120,000 Americans last year alone. Their intended use is to treat pain, but they are highly addictive and are often fatal if used improperly. Fentanyl is the worst of the bunch. It can be 100 times stronger than morphine and was the leading cause of opioid-related deaths in 2021, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Fentanyl's power to kill is almost incomprehensible. A crystal the size of a baby aspirin can kill a person in minutes. Last month San Diego DEA agents seized a stash of smuggled fentanyl toxic enough to kill every person in the United States and Caribbean.

Free naloxone kits are available in a vending machine at the McAlister Institute South Bay Regional Recovery Center at 1180 Third Avenue, about six miles from the Chula Vista campus. It is San Diego County's first naloxone vending machine. Plans are to install 12 machines throughout the region, according to an NIDA spokesperson.

To access the medication, one needs to scan a barcode, complete a form and watch a short video demonstrating effective administer of naloxone. Naloxone is also available at the Chula Vista and National City police departments, no questions asked.

A New PATH, a Spring Valley rehabilitation organization, will deliver naloxone. The Harm Reduction Coalition of San Diego (HRCSD) reports that it has distributed more than 4,000 naloxone kits through mid-March, with hopes of passing out 33,000 by June.

Naloxone nasal spray is an FDA-approved opioid antidote to temporarily treat an opioid overdose. It works by attaching itself to opioid receptors and inhibiting its effects. There are no negative effects on the body if administered by mistake. Naloxone is fast-acting, but temporary. It lasts for about 30 to 90 minutes, enough time to call 911.

San Diego County's efforts are part of state-wide Naloxone Distribution Project, created by the California Department of Health Care Services in 2018.



FREE NARCAN —

This vending machine at the South Bay Regional Recovery Center, 1180 Third Avenue in Chula Vista, dispenses free doses of Narcan after viewing a short video on the proper administration of the overdose antidote.

PHOTO BY RAZYLIN AVENDANO / STAFF



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LAWMAKERS LIBERATE LOWRIDERS



Photo Courtesy of Rigoberto Reyes

ON THE ROAD AGAIN — After a 31-year absence National City and other Chicano communities may soon see a return of low riders and other modified vehicles cruising the boulevards. Falsely blamed for crime and gang activity by former Governors Ronald Reagan and Pete Wilson, cruising and low riders were banned throughout the state. Chicano activists have argued for three decades that the ban was racist and that low riders are a harmless, enjoyable part of SoCal culture.

CRUISING BAN LIFTED, LOW RIDERS MAY RETURN

BY RAZYLIN M. AVENDANO

NATIONAL CITY —

"Low and slow" is a go.

National City has officially repealed a 31-year ban on cruising that Latinos have argued for decades was racist and demeaning. Now advocates for low riders and Latino car clubs are pushing for a statewide green light for the resumption of cruise nights in Chicano communities.

"Si se pudo!" (Yes it is possible) rang out in the council chambers.

Celebrations continued a few days later on nearby Logan Avenue where nearly 400 lowriders and exotic cars gathered under the bridge for the 53rd celebration of Chicano Park Day. Rafael Perez of the United Lowrider Coalition said the repeal of anti-cruising laws are reminiscent of the original fight for Chicano Park in 1970 and it was proper to celebrate "the community coming together...in such a sacred place."

Legislation born in the South Bay has inspired cities like San Jose and Sacramento to repeal cruising bans. In February Assemblymember David Alvarez introduced Assembly Bill 436, which would amend the California Vehicle Code to allow cruising and the operation of height-adjusted vehicles.

Cruising, as defined by the code, is the "repetitive driving of a motor vehicle past a traffic control point" within a certain span of time. Alvarez's bill would amend it to exclude Section 21100 — which currently gives local authorities the power to enact anti-cruising ordinances.

Alvarez said the time to end the war on lowriders has arrived.

"(AB 436) would allow individuals who want to participate in cruising to do so without the threat of potentially being pulled over by law enforcement," he said. "Currently, under the California Vehicle Code, that activity is banned in several cities throughout California."

Alvarez said his bill would also remove Section 24008 of the code that deems vehicles modified to be lower than the rims as illegal.

"The law currently says that if your vehicle is too low, you are violating state law in the entire state, not just in different cities," he said. "This would make cars that are lower than traditional cars legal. So it is both the car and the act of cruising and bill (addresses)."

National City enacted its cruising ban in 1992 due to stated concerns about traffic congestion and gang activity. Latino leaders including Herman Baca of the National City-based Committee on Chicano Rights scoffed at the notion that middle aged professionals who often invest \$100,000 in a modified car were gang bangers.

"It was anti-Chicano to the core," he said. "No one ever died in a high speed collision involving a lowrider."

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'AS SOCIAL AS TACOS AND THE BEACH BOYS' —

Chicano car clubs worked hard to overturn the ban on cruising and low riders, including Los Amigos, the venerated organization known for its humanitarian work.



Photo Courtesy of Rigoberto Reyes