



Overdose Prevention Center in Burlington, VT:

**How One Small City Overcame a National Backlash
Against Harm Reduction to Pass Good Policy**

April 29th, 2025

Mike Selick, MSW

Director of Capacity Building and Community Mobilization

Selick@HarmReduction.org

**NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION**

**National Harm Reduction Coalition creates spaces
for **dialogue and action** that help heal the harms caused
by racialized drug policies.**



Policy &
Advocacy



National &
Regional
Conferences



Trainings &
Technical
Assistance



Overdose
Prevention



Resources &
Publications

What even is Burlington?

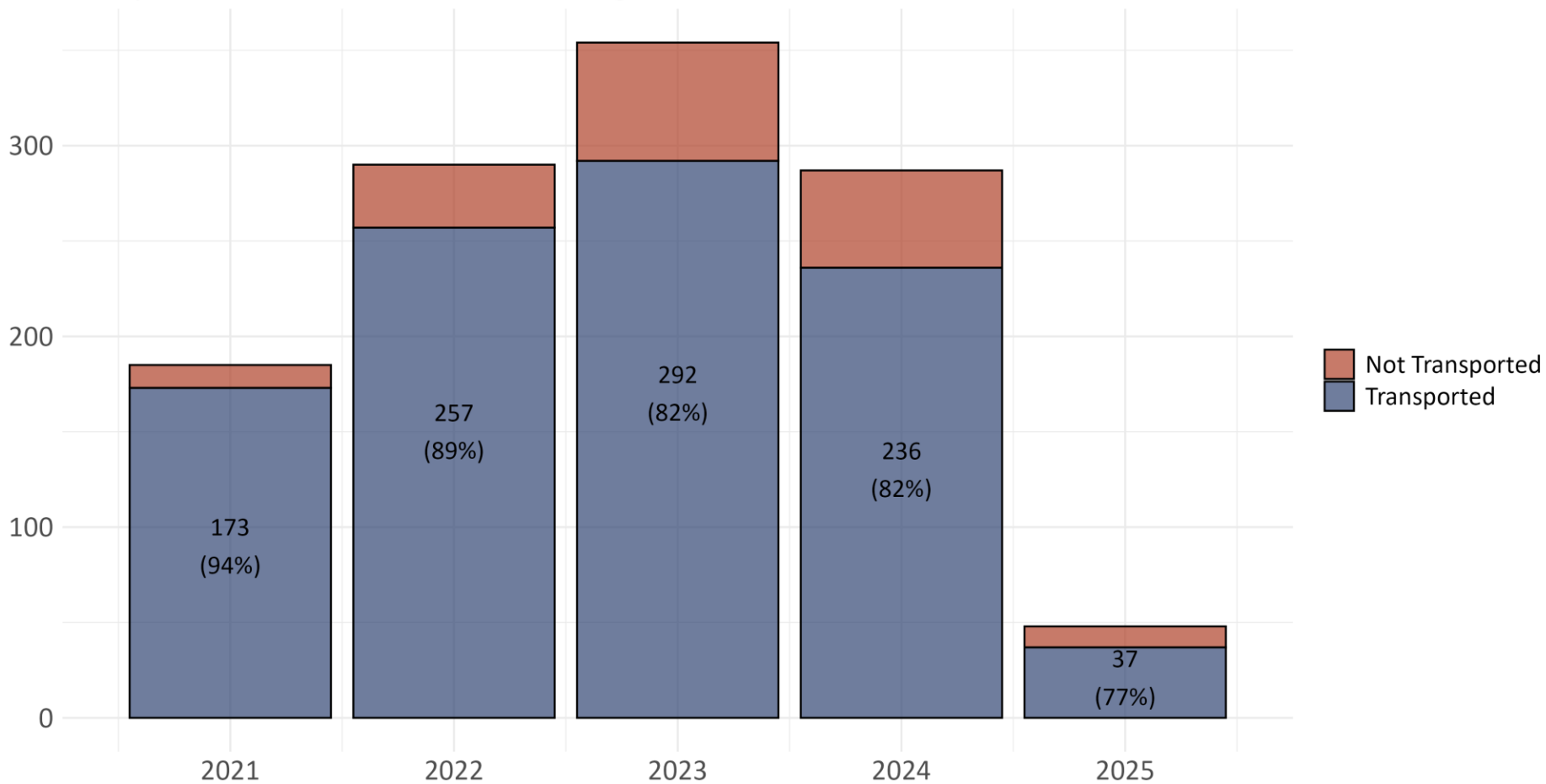








Transports for Confirmed Overdoses/Drug Events



Data through 3/31/2025

Political Climate

- Burlington Defunded the Police! Well, sort of...
- Burlington was the first city in the nation to decrim bupe
- Vermont has a Republican Governor
- Vermont has a conservative health department

So how did we do it?!

- Almost a decade of advocacy
- Educating all of our legislators
- Many many trips to the state capital
- Bringing in experts like researchers and staff from OnPointNY to educate everyone about how effective OPCs can be.
- People with lived experience fighting for change
- And support of a lobbying firm from Drug Policy Alliance to help push us over the edge.

Where are we at today?

- The organization that will run the OPC has been identified!
- The Vermont Department of Health has written guidelines that must be followed
- The City Council voted to give the \$1 million a year to the program in order to run an OPC!

What is next?

- We need a location
- New staff need to be hired
- Need to build a smoking room
- Need to get legal support for likely federal interference



**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING
THIS WORKSHOP!**