



## WHO

**Treatment First WA is a coalition of experts and community leaders who support replacing failing drug laws with a public health approach – treatment, recovery, and education.**

- We are public health experts, treatment professionals, legal and law enforcement experts, elected officials, leaders who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and formerly incarcerated and directly impacted community members working together for a public health approach to substance use disorders. [Meet our steering committee.](#)

## WHY

**Our current approach to drug use is failing. Decades of treating personal use as a crime has only made matters worse. Our current drug use laws can ruin lives based on a single mistake.**

- Possession of even a small amount of drugs can land someone in jail and saddle them with a lifelong criminal record that interferes with getting a job, housing, or student loans. Recovery is hard enough as it is, but incarceration makes it more difficult, and disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- Our goal is to reduce overdose deaths (1,173 in WA in 2018) and other substance use public health impacts, and improve access to treatment and recovery.

## WHAT

**We need a better approach. We need to stop wasting money and time on a broken system, and invest in improving access to treatment and recovery services. We need to address the root causes of substance use disorders with programs and services that actually work through the Treatment and Recovery Act.**

- Redirect some of the marijuana taxes we're already collecting to treatment and recovery services, stop arresting people solely for their substance use disorders and saddling them with criminal records, and connect them with appropriate health and support services instead.
- Expand access to recovery and treatment services, such as:
  - 24/7 triage centers for people in crisis
  - case management
  - mental and physical health care
  - housing
  - apprenticeships and job training

## HOW

### The Treatment and Recovery Act would:

1. **Expand access to solutions that work.** Increase by nearly 30% (\$125 million) [state funding](#) for local, community, and tribal substance use disorder treatment and recovery programs from existing marijuana tax revenues.
  - Remove health insurance barriers, since Medicaid and private insurance currently don't cover treatment and recovery services while people are incarcerated.
2. **Use public health-based approaches first, instead of arrest and prosecution.** Reclassify personal use drug offenses from crimes to a civil infraction and connect people with the right services to address the root causes of their substance use disorder, helping them get back on track.
  - Give people caught possessing personal use amounts of drugs a civil infraction and connect them to treatment via mandatory service assessment. If the person attends the assessment within 72 hours, the civil infraction will be waived. Existing criminal penalties for selling or manufacturing illegal drugs remain in place.
3. **Enhance public health education about substance use disorder.** Direct \$10 million annually to a statewide education campaign about substance use and how people can get help for themselves or loved ones, through grants to local health departments.
  - Require funded programs to include messages that destigmatize issues surrounding substance use disorders, explain that people do recover from substance use disorders, and encourage people not to be afraid to seek help.

For more information contact [info@treatmentfirstwa.org](mailto:info@treatmentfirstwa.org), [TreatmentFirstWA.org](http://TreatmentFirstWA.org)