



Hidalgo County Health &
Human Services Department
Epidemiology & Surveillance

Opioid Awareness & Prevention Initiatives in Hidalgo County

A Multi-Agency Public Health Response

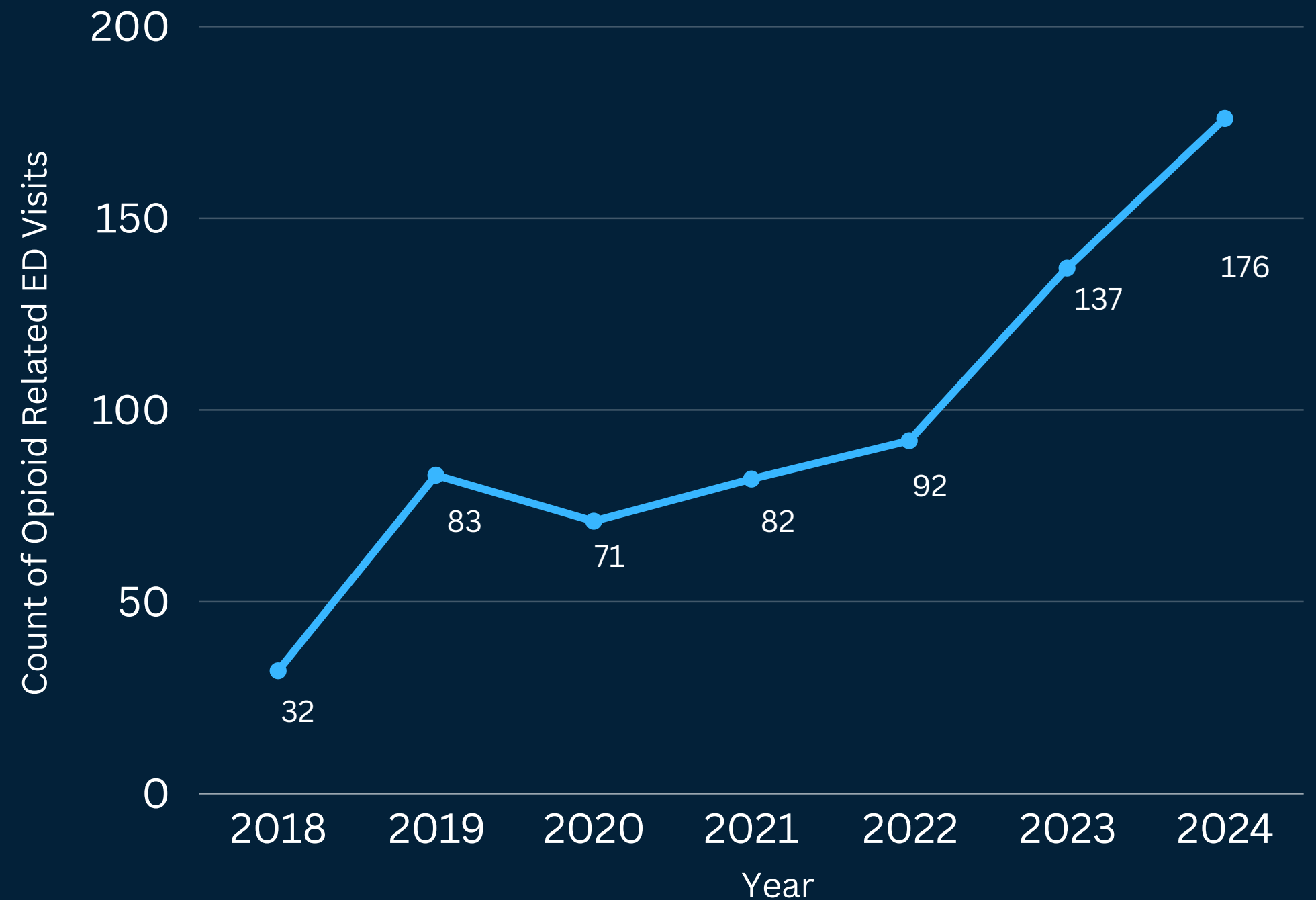
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August 13, 2025

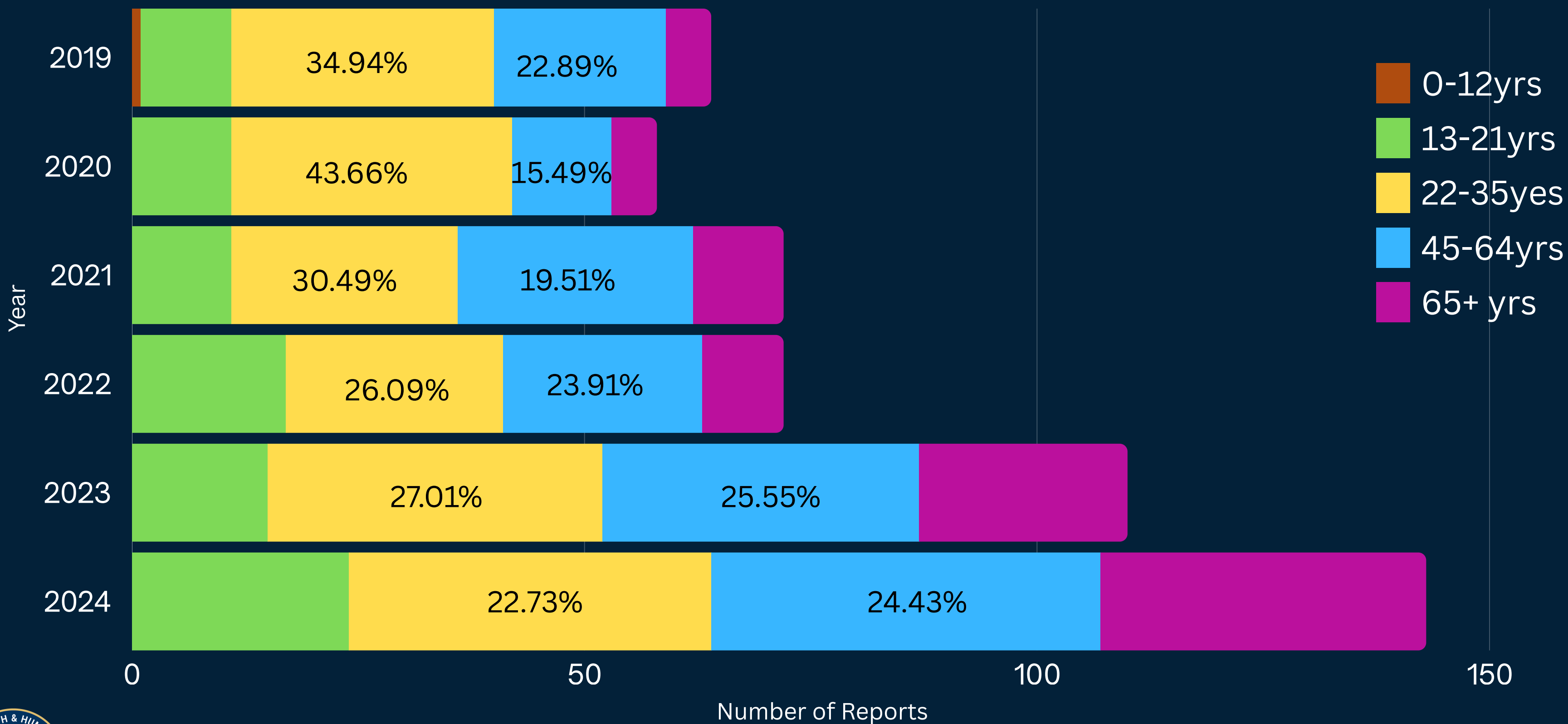
The Challenge We Face

- Increase in overdose-related ER visits
- Underreporting of nonfatal overdose events
- Lack of coordination between public health and first responders
- Limited community knowledge and resources

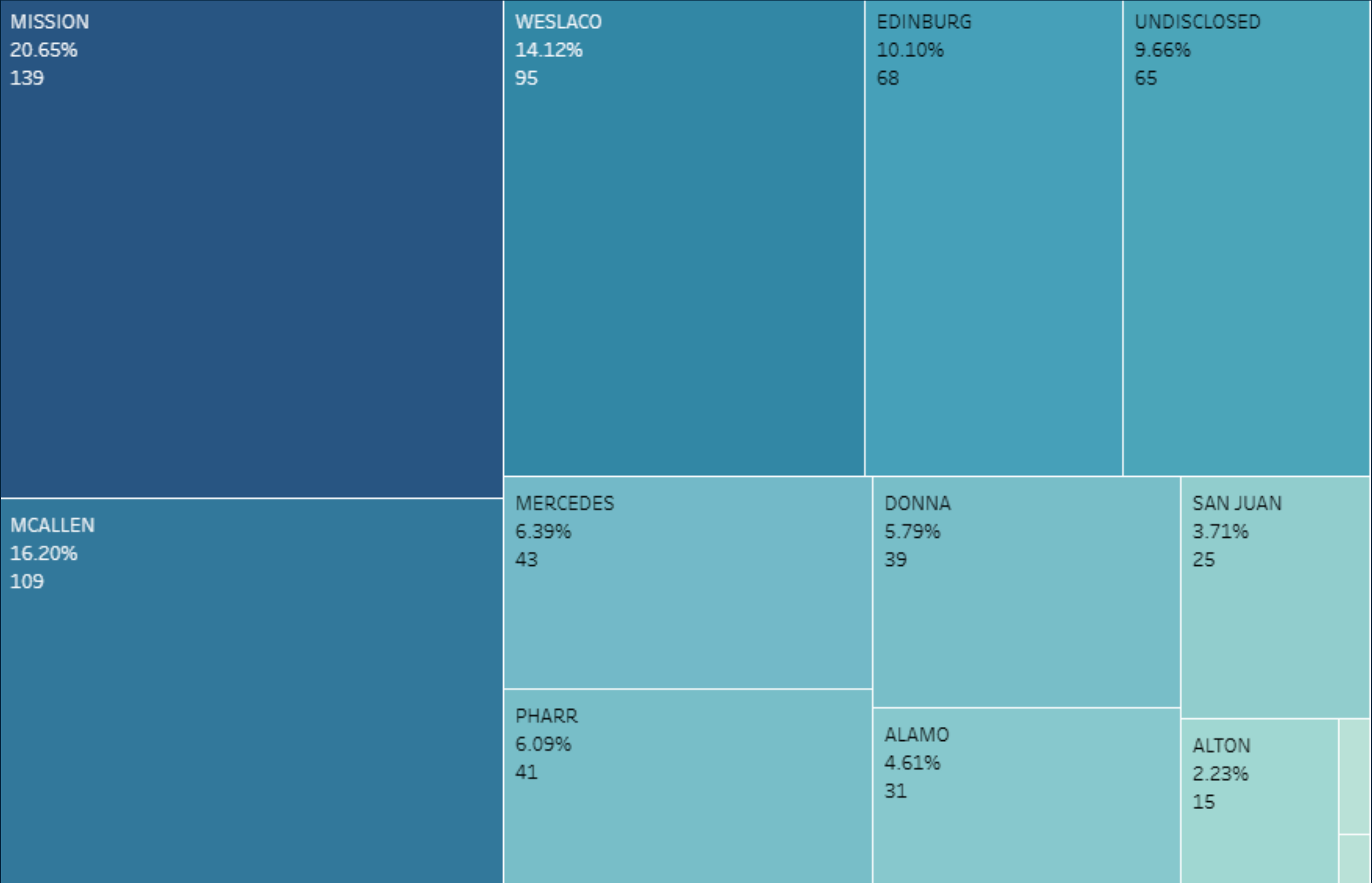
**Opioid-Related Emergency Department Visits
in Hidalgo County, 2019-2024**



Opioid-Related Emergency Department Visits in Hidalgo County by Age Group, 2019-2024



Opioid-Related Emergency Department Visits in Hidalgo County by City, 2018-2024



Hidalgo County, TX

- Males have primarily been the larger group of visits but females have significantly increased in 2023
- Mission, TX residents make up 20.65% of visits followed by McAllen and Weslaco

Source: Essence



Tracking Opioid Overdose Events with TxS2

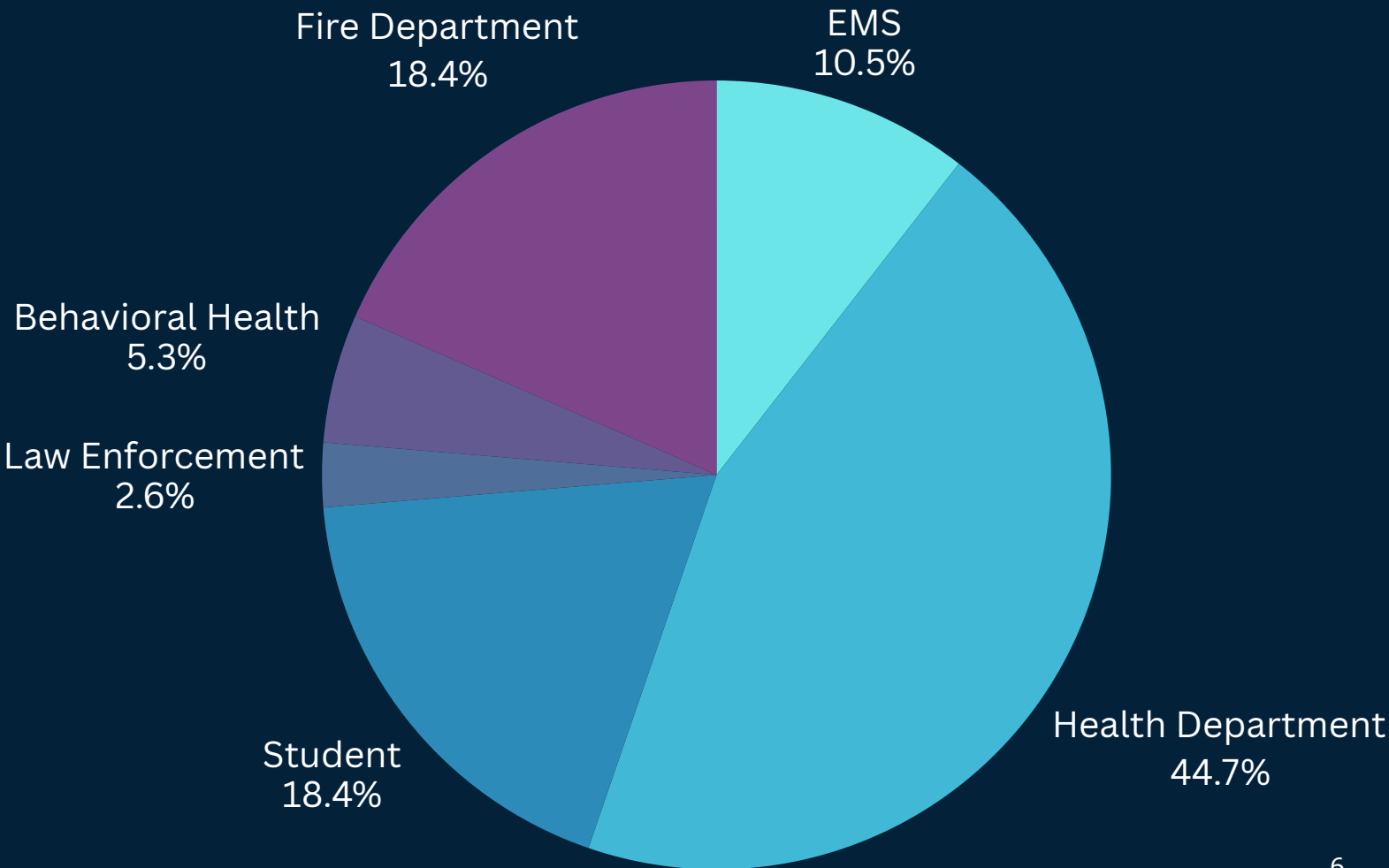
- Texas Syndromic Surveillance (TxS2) is a statewide public health surveillance system hosted by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).
- ESSENCE (Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics) is the analysis software used
- Uses syndromic surveillance methods to detect trends in real-time health data.
- Establishes a baseline of typical activity, then uses algorithms to detect aberrations.
- Sends alerts for emerging threats; DSHS User Guide and training modules online



Community Needs Assessment

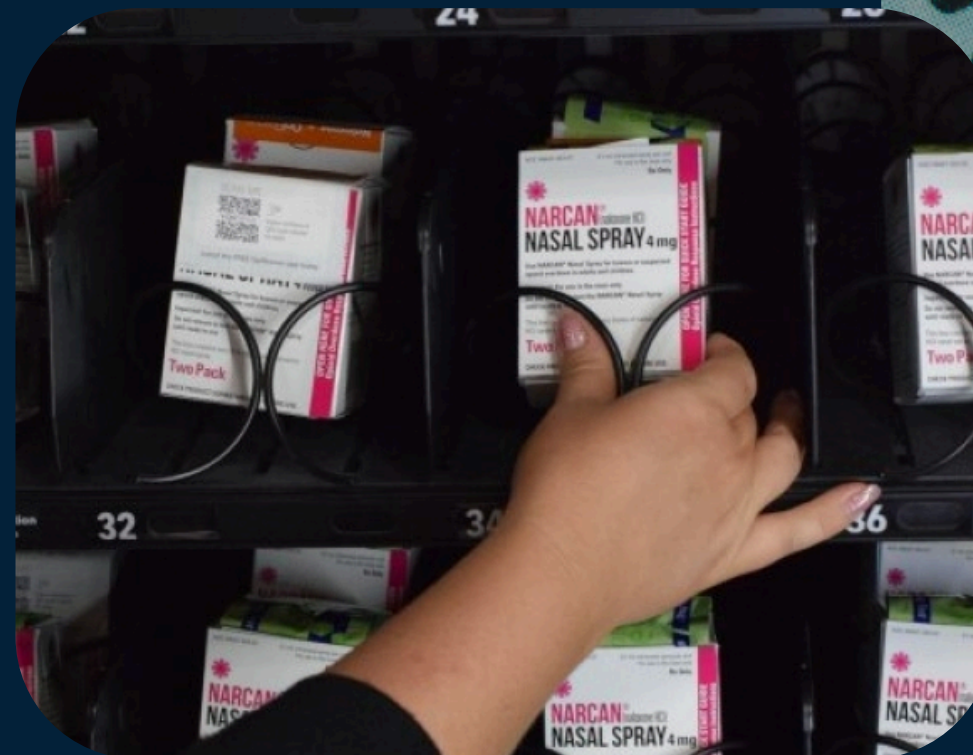
- When asked whether they knew where to obtain naloxone in Hidalgo County:
 - 60% said “no”
 - 34.29% said “yes”
 - 5.71% said “not sure”
- When asked whether they have ever acquired naloxone:
 - 48.57% said “no”
 - 51.43% said “yes”
 - Employer, pharmacy, opioid training event, university, and community distribution event
- Themes:
 - What is Narcan?
 - Where to find it?
 - Not widely advertised
 - Lack of communication between agencies

Community Needs Assessment on Opioids, 2025



Taking Narcan Directly to the Public

- Free Narcan vending machines stocked by Behavioral Health Solutions
- *Bring It Back* campaign modeled after City of Laredo's "Knock and Talk"
- Outreach at bars/clubs: Narcan kits + restroom flyers
- Localized flyers for mail-in Narcan ordering & support services
- Narcan vending machines



Partnering for Prevention

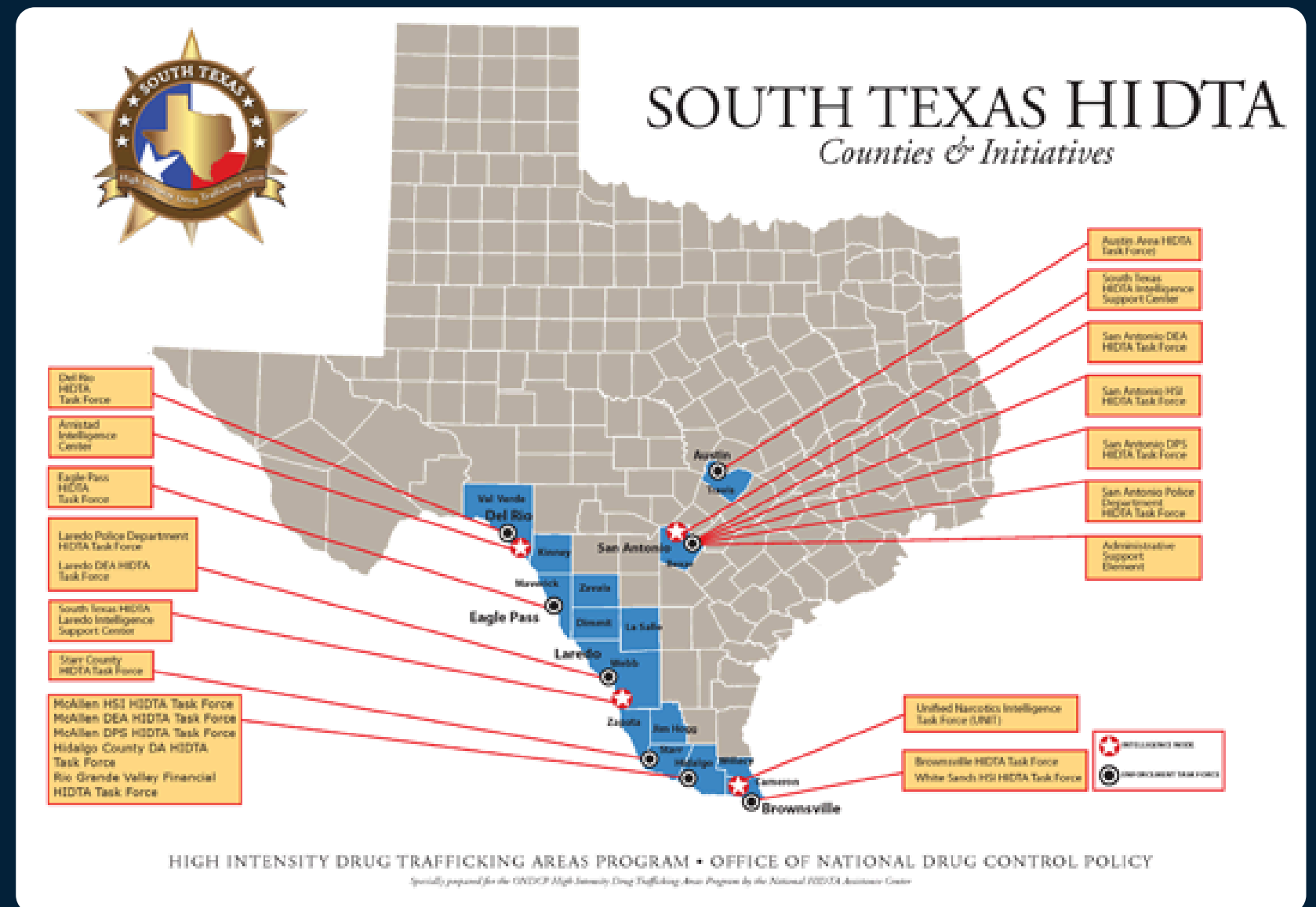
- South Texas HIDTA Task Force
- U.S. National Guard Counterdrug Program
- Behavioral Health Solutions of South Texas
- Local public health departments and elected officials; tabletop exercise



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Educating Communities Across Ages

- National Guard offers “Train-the-Trainer” curriculum
- Middle school education: over 300 students reached
- Free Narcan trainings for agencies and schools
- Community presentations on opioids and overdose response



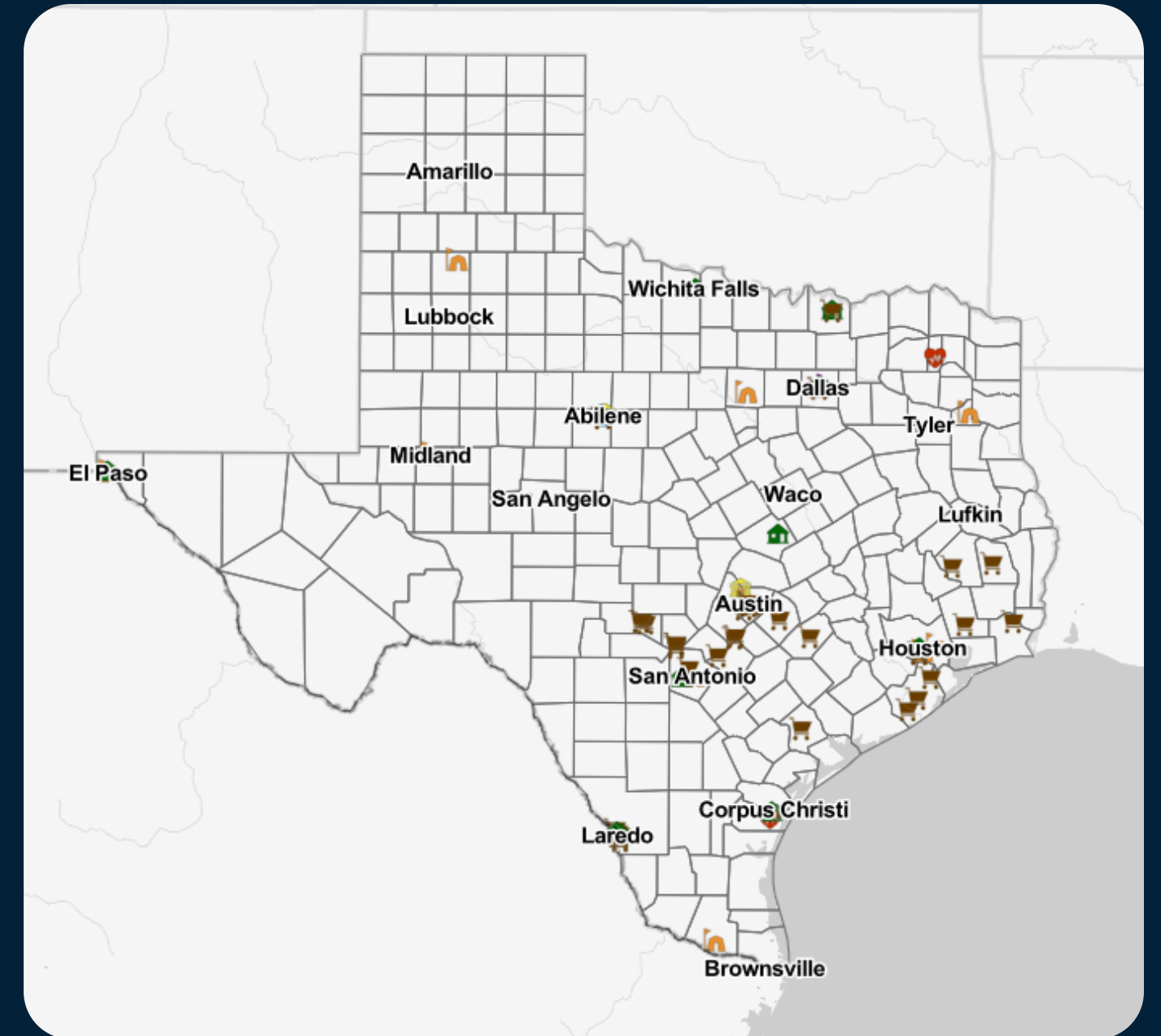
Tabletop Exercise

- To be scheduled before end of year
- Participants: elected officials, public health, EMS, hospitals, etc.
- Simulated large-scale overdose event
- Goal: establish a coordinated regional response plan



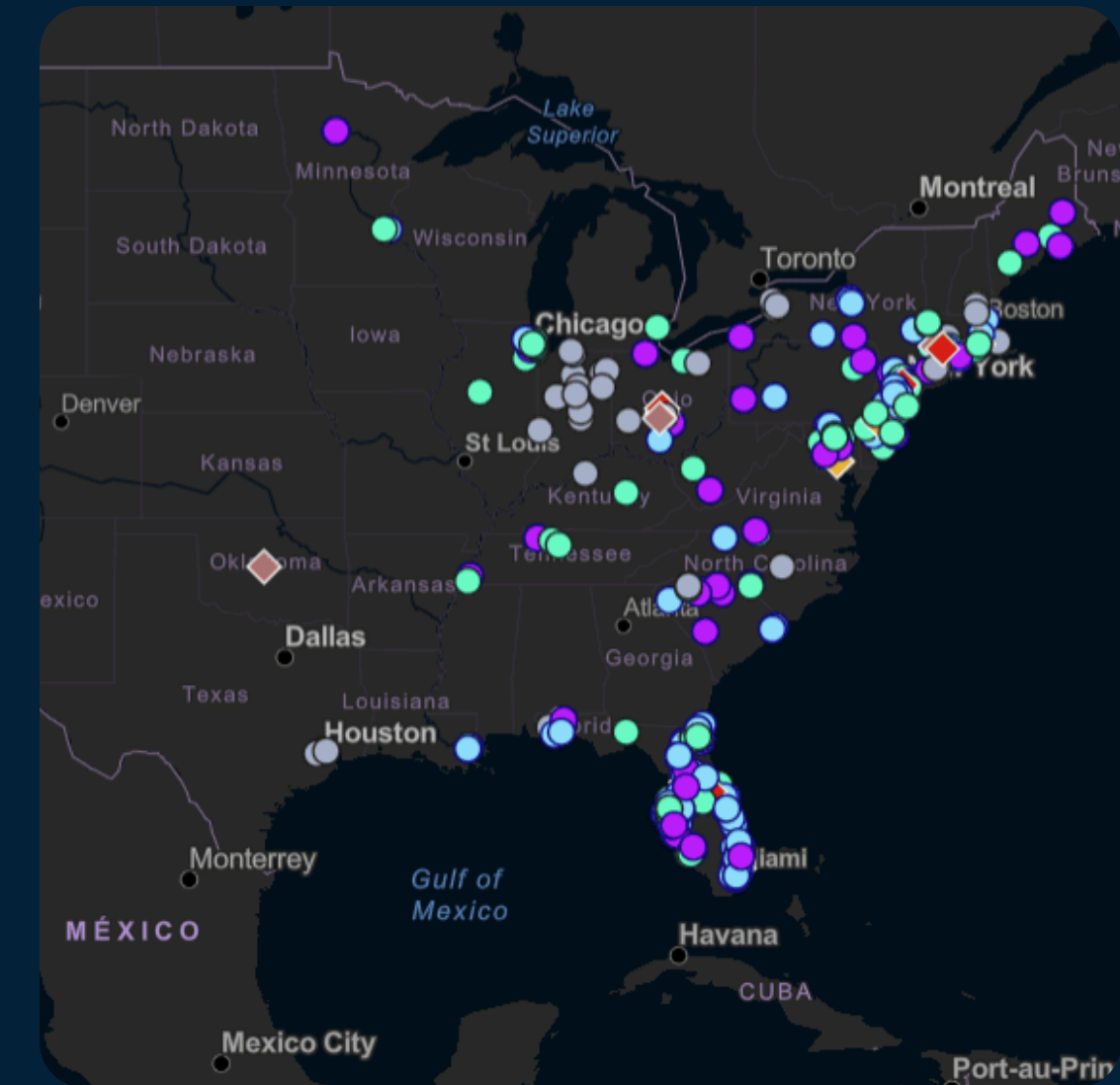
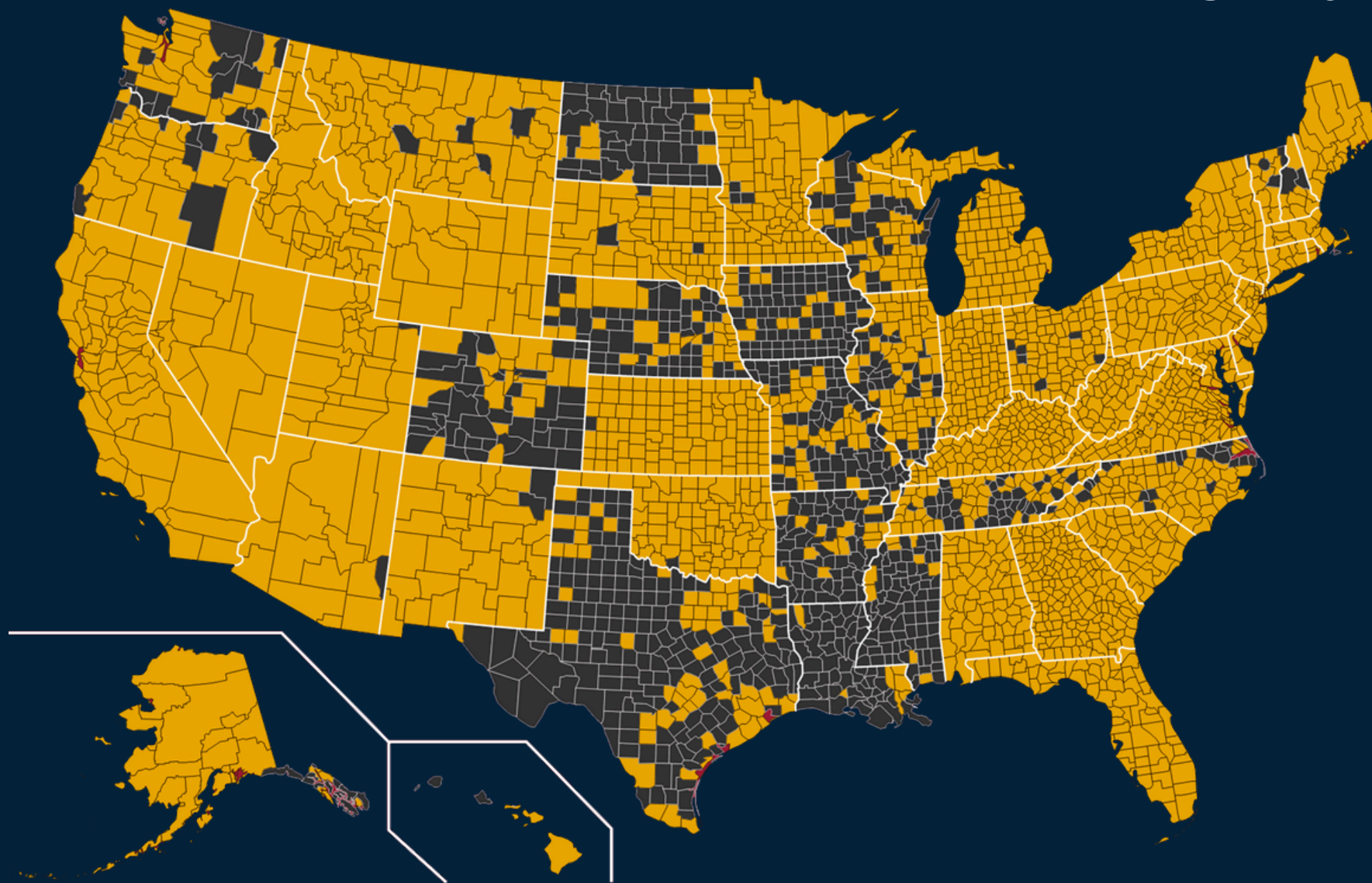
Data-Driven Strategy Development

- MPH intern analyzed ER visit data trends and created strategies
- Mapping high-need areas
- Targeted outreach planning
- Integrating OD Map reporting for real-time surveillance



Strengthening Overdose Reporting & Surveillance

- Texas Senate Bill 1319: Encourages overdose event reporting
- OD Map: Free federal tool for real-time overdose tracking
- Benefits: immediate response, trend detection, cross-agency visibility



How Border Jurisdictions Can Join In

- Invite National Guard and HIDTA to your area
- Connect with behavioral health partners for Narcan distribution
- Leverage your surveillance data for targeted outreach
 - Syndromic Surveillance
- Plan your own tabletop exercise to test response systems
- Utilize ODMap to track real-time overdose events





Thank You!

Hidalgo County Health and Human Services

Epidemiology & Surveillance

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