California Healthy Places Index™

Riverside's HPI Adoption: A County-wide Data & Policy Solution for Equitable Investments

The Challenge:
Making Informed Decisions Based on Comprehensive Data

Riverside County — the fourth most populous county in California and the 10th in the country with a population of 2.4 million — embraced the Healthy Places Index (HPI) to elevate its programs and services to advance health equity and racial justice.

The county scored 30.4 out of 100 on the HPI, a ranking based on eight social conditions that influence health and wellbeing compared with all other California counties. Social conditions — such as education, adverse childhood/community experiences, clean air, and health — were only exacerbated due to national and global crises like COVID-19, the opioid crisis, climate change, and harmful policies driven by systemic racism.

On August 4, 2020, Riverside County supervisors declared racism a public health crisis, linking racial discrimination to higher rates of health problems for people of color. This declaration further underscores Riverside's need for access to data on social conditions linked to health, calculated at the neighborhood level, to understand the impact that race and place have on life expectancy at birth and overall community health outcomes.

Riverside's leadership needed easily-accessible, real-time data to analyze and make informed decisions about allocating resources equitably. The county struggled to collect comprehensive data that could paint an accurate picture of social conditions. Their existing data, based on a multiplicity of social factors across cities and neighborhoods, could not be linked. They needed a more detailed and sophisticated tool for public policy decision-making and guidance on directing resources where they would have the most impact. **They needed the HPI.**

The Goal: Raise the county's HPI Score by 40 points in 40 Years

If there could be a silver lining during COVID-19, it would be the awareness and elevation of HPI as a powerful tool and resource for data aggregation. Leadership at Riverside University Health System - Public Health (RUHS-Public Health) was familiar with the HPI pre-pandemic, using the tool to better understand how social determinants of health (SDOH) impacted under-resourced communities and why Riverside County was experiencing these impacts more severely than other districts. The county then fully embraced the index after seeing its implementation by the state during the pandemic.

Now, the HPI is utilized across all county agencies to promote health equity from the Colorado river, to the Coachella valley, to the Salton Sea. The county now has the goal to raise the county's HPI score by 40 points in 40 years and has used the HPI data to restructure departments into different portfolios — Human Services, Public Safety, Riverside University Health System, Finance, and more — each led by an assistant CEO. These leaders are trained on the HPI and its eight policy action areas — economic, education, housing, health care access, neighborhood, clean environment, transportation, and social factors — to understand and recognize the connections between race and place when addressing health equity. Now, all of the county departments, including probation, behavioral health, and social services use the HPI to establish goals, prioritize investments, and coordinate action.

The use of the index is gaining momentum in every discipline across the county. The Riverside County Department of Public Social Services is using the HPI to identify communities most in need to streamline access to services and initiate pilot programs, such as the No Wrong Door program, and more.

Riverside County is aiming to raise its HPI score by

40 POINTS IN 40 YEARS

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Turning HPI Data Into Action

Riverside County's Public Health Department won an Overdose Data to Action Grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) leveraging the use of HPI data in their application.
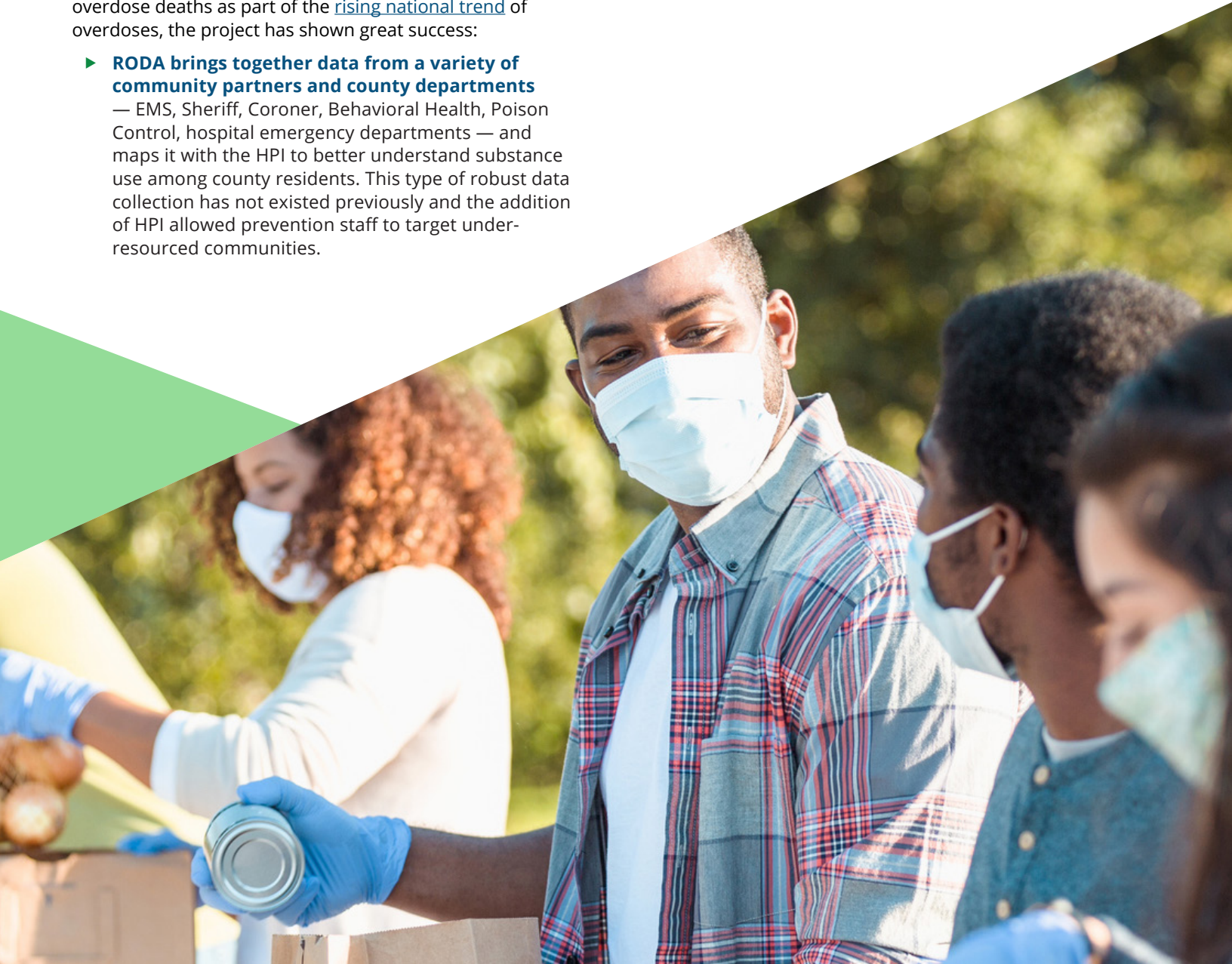
Through the grant, the department created the Riverside Overdose Data to Action (RODA), an initiative to collect and track the most comprehensive and timely overdose data available in the region by using the HPI data and platform to overlay and visualize data from the state and several county departments.

With RODA, stakeholders can analyze which regions have both high rates of overdoses and poor health conditions, represented by low HPI scores, to determine the best prevention efforts and prioritize communities with the most need.

Although Riverside County has seen increased rates of overdose deaths as part of the rising national trend of overdoses, the project has shown great success:
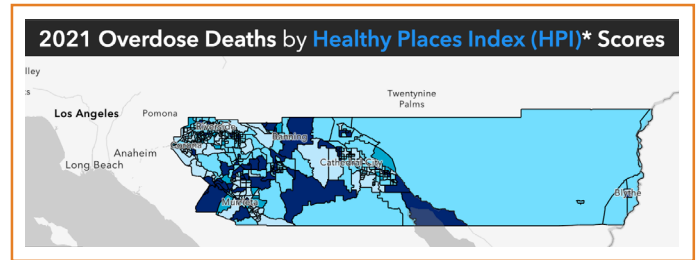
▶ **RODA brings together data from a variety of community partners and county departments** — EMS, Sheriff, Coroner, Behavioral Health, Poison Control, hospital emergency departments — and maps it with the HPI to better understand substance use among county residents. This type of robust data collection has not existed previously and the addition of HPI allowed prevention staff to target under-resourced communities.

▶ For the first time, the aggregated data provides information about the drugs involved in overdoses along with underlying factors such as a person's medical history, past experience in the legal system, homelessness, mental health, and previous substance use treatments and rehabilitation. **RUHS-Public Health then combines the county's HPI data with RODA data to inform intervention efforts.**

▶ RODA catalyzed the county's Board of Supervisors' decision to actively support the department's efforts and to form a Fentanyl Task Force, calling attention to the Overdose Fatality Review Team and the department's data dashboard.

▶ RUHS-Public Health, through RODA, is now **releasing timely overdose information to the community.**

Turning HPI Data Into Action
(cont.)

2021 Overdose Deaths by **Healthy Places Index (HPI)*** Scores

▶ RUHS-Public Health also created an **interagency Overdose Fatality Review Team** that meets monthly to analyze overdose deaths and discuss possible ways each case could have been prevented. The department then produces quarterly reports about what comes out of the reviews as well as proactive solutions. For instance, the Hemet-San Jacinto region — an HPI-identified high-need area — demonstrates two of these solutions:

- RUHS-Public Health identified a pattern where EMS would often return to homes because of a emotional crisis following a loved one's overdose death a few weeks prior. As a result, the department is now piloting a crisis intervention team in the Hemet-San Jacinto region to help family and friends when an ambulance is called due to an overdose. The team provides the family with links to Narcan and Behavioral Health Department resources.

- The department developed a successful educational and outreach program for middle and high school students, a critical audience for substance use prevention. Hemet Unified School District is a pilot site for this program based on HPI data identifying this community as a high-need area.

▶ Finally, HPI is helping quantify and identify areas where prevention can make a huge difference. It's highlighting the upstream inequity factors that contribute to overdose deaths. **And that's HPI at its core.**

About the Healthy Places Index

Created in 2018 by the Public Health Alliance of Southern California, the Healthy Places Index is a powerful data and policy platform that breaks down data on social conditions that affect health by neighborhood. The main goal of the Healthy Places Index is to advance health equity through open data. We provide community leaders, policymakers, academics, and other stakeholders with the tools they need to identify inequity, prioritize equitable investment, and strengthen community voices with sound validated data.

The HPI has become a go-to data tool for hundreds of state and local government agencies, foundations, advocacy groups, hospitals, and other organizations that want to apply a health equity lens to better direct over a billion dollars in community investments and develop critical programs and policies across the state. Learn more about HPI at healthyplacesindex.org and visit the main Public Health Alliance website at thepublichealthalliance.org.

Can we partner on a project to address inequities in your community? Get in touch at **AskHPI@ThePublicHealthAlliance.org**

Public Health Alliance
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
The Public Health Alliance is fiscally administered by the Public Health Institute

For more information visit: **healthyplacesindex.org**