

# WEST VIRGINIA

## USE OF STR/SOR GRANT FUNDS TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS

### Background on opioid-specific grants to States

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administers the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis (STR) and State Opioid Response (SOR) grant programs. These grants aim to address the opioid crisis by increasing access to treatment, reducing unmet treatment need, and reducing opioid overdose related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery activities for opioid use disorder (OUD) in the States. States received a total of \$500 million for each of FY 2017 and FY 2018 through STR. Additionally, in FY 2018, States received an additional \$1 billion in new funding through the SOR grants. In FY 2019, States received \$1.5 billion through SOR. Eligible applicants for both STR and SOR are the State alcohol and drug agencies.

### Allocations for West Virginia

West Virginia received \$5.8 million through STR for each of FY 2017 and 2018, and \$28 million through SOR in FY 2018. In FY 2019, West Virginia received a total of \$42.6 million through SOR.

### Overview of West Virginia's efforts to address the opioid crisis

STR and SOR grant implementation has focused on enhancing capacity of existing providers and promoting startup of new providers in high need/high-risk areas, braided funding to maximize impact based on allowable activities, and sustainability. West Virginia's primary areas of focus have been twofold:

- Extending the reach of the Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment (COAT) model of medication-assisted treatment (MAT), based out of West Virginia University in Morgantown, via a hub and spoke strategy.
- Expanding access to treatment for high-risk populations including 1) pregnant and postpartum women and their children, 2) overdose survivors 3) offenders re-entering the community, 4) veterans, 5) individuals of racial minority populations, 6) individuals who are Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ).

### Prevention: stopping opioid misuse and reducing harm

**Community Engagement and Organizing** - Representatives from twelve local prevention coalitions have participated in the National Coalition Academy (NCA) Expansion for Sustainable Prevention Programs, and STR funds have allowed the state to convene a

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) State Academy in WV, enabling greater participation. In addition to refreshing the primary and secondary prevention skills of local coalitions, the CADCA Academy training has promoted the use of community planning and organizing skills in the area of OUD prevention and early intervention, i.e., harm reduction. Local prevention coalitions are responsive to the level of readiness in their communities to address OUD issues, which means they work on stigma reduction campaigns, engage first responders and other local stakeholders in naloxone distribution, and plan/coordinate access to harm reduction programs and support services.

**Harm Reduction Programs** – 17 county health departments were funded with STR funds to provide harm reduction programs. Along with access to syringe services, these programs are becoming critical in the State and provide comprehensive services, including HIV/Hepatitis testing, hepatitis A and B vaccinations, peer recovery support services, family planning, and linkage to care. In March 2019, the WV Bureau for Public Health issued a Health Advisory about an increase in new HIV infections among people who inject drugs. WV is also one of the States in the midst of a Hepatitis A outbreak associated with injected drug use, with 56% of individuals co-infected with Hepatitis C. Expansion of harm reduction activities was already underway with SOR/STR, however, with this emerging health concern these activities are becoming even more critical.

## Increasing access to treatment

### Access to MAT

- **Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment (COAT):** COAT is an outpatient, group treatment-based model of MAT for OUD, to ensure comprehensive care and adherence to evidence-based practices. The model embraces individuals at different stages of recovery and offers case management and appropriate therapy for any comorbidities. STR funding has been used to expand this model via a Hub and Spoke strategy to help address transportation and workforce barriers in rural areas. Hub and Spoke brings expertise, including provider training, prescribing, and counseling services via technology to communities that could otherwise not have the capacity to reliably offer quality care to patients. The expansion has included 4 additional Hubs and 10 Spokes, with 4 more spokes identified to come online later in 2019. Project ECHO is used for regular professional development and case consultation to ensure that all practitioners have the opportunity for professional development within their communities. The expansion reaches 10 counties with no outpatient treatment providers and expands capacity in an additional 6 counties. SOR awarded 14 Treatment grants and 14 Peer Recovery Support grants to increase access to MAT and provide support services for those in treatment. Transportation barriers in rural areas are being addressed through collaborative efforts with the WV Transit Authority.
- **Project Engage and Provider Response Organization for Addiction Care and Treatment (PROACT):** Initiated with STR funding, Project Engage is an evidence-based approach designed to identify individuals with OUD in the Emergency Department

(ED), provide support using peer recovery coaches located in the ED, and retain individuals in treatment by linking them to community resources upon discharge, as well as using a three-day bridge with buprenorphine when determined appropriate. ED-based MAT services are in place in Cabell County and are being planned for seven additional locations. PROACT is a version of the COAT Hub, with additional resources to create a “one stop shop” for harm reduction services, basic health care, peer recovery support services, and referral to education/employment/family services. The prototype is now established in Cabell County.

## **Special Populations**

- **Drug-Free Moms and Babies (DFMB):** This is a wrap-around program for pregnant and post-partum women, offering integrated care and support for sustained recovery. Due to the comprehensive and individualized nature of services needed for program success, DFMB utilizes braided funding. Clinical services are reimbursed through other funding mechanisms, particularly Medicaid, which allows STR funds to be used to support recovery coaches, case management, and other support services. The program started with 4 sites and STR has been instrumental in expanding to additional 7 sites, each affiliated with a birth facility in the state.
- **OUD Treatment Initiatives in Criminal Justice Settings:** STR and SOR funding has allowed the WV Bureau for Behavioral Health (BBH) to engage in new, critical partnerships. After a year of discussion and planning to understand systems, WV BBH engaged the WV Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation in a partnership to provide two OUD treatment initiatives in correctional settings. A twenty-bed unit has been designated as an alternative to a court-ordered prison term for individuals with OUD who choose to participate in a long-term MAT program. The program will serve individuals from judicial districts statewide. The second initiative will provide MAT in WV's ten regional jails, to maintain MAT for inmates who enter regional jail locations already engaged in treatment. Both models include Peer Recovery Coaches to facilitate continuity of care and assist with other re-entry supports upon release. The project has already started in one jail, with the remainder to come on board during calendar 2019. Prior to this project inmates were unable to access MAT while they were incarcerated.

## **Professional Development**

Over 700 professionals and peer recovery coaches were trained on effective MAT practices, with a particular focus on working with pregnant and postpartum women and their children; opioid overdose survivors – particularly those seen by emergency responders and in hospital emergency departments; and people who inject drugs. Training has been essential to the expansion of MAT in outpatient specialty clinics (our Hub and Spoke initiatives), obstetrics practices (Drug-Free Moms and Babies programs), and Emergency Departments (Project Engage).

## Overdose reversal efforts: saving lives

STR, SOR, and other federal grants all use the same mechanism for dispensing and tracking to allow for better reporting. The University of Charleston School of Pharmacy received SOR funds to develop a statewide naloxone distribution plan. The rollout will be implemented prior to the end of Year 1 funding.

Naloxone dispensing from pharmacies more than doubled between 2017 to 2018, with 2019 on track to reflect an increase of 2018 numbers.

## Supporting recovery

- To ensure quality of care, WV BBH sponsors periodic training on evidence-based practices. These opportunities are open to all peers in the State to enhance the capacity within the State, by both increasing the number of peers and the skills of these peers to in order to build sustainable systems of care.
- Peer Recovery Coaches are now able to be reimbursed by the Medicaid 1115 SUD Waiver, which allows for sustainability after the initial cost of startup.

## Collaborating with local entities

WV partners with the state Bureau for Public Health and county health departments to implement certified harm reduction programs with STR funds. SOR funding will expand on harm reduction services, including the provision of peer recovery support specialists to encourage linkage to treatment, including MAT. The majority of funding for community-based OUD services is distributed through an open, competitive bid process, inclusive of licensed behavioral health centers, peer recovery groups, FQHCs, and faith-based and other nonprofit organizations. Municipal and county governments are eligible to apply for funds, and often partner with licensed addiction/mental health or medical providers to help assure sustainability beyond grant funding. Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) and Quick Response Team (QRT) grants, for instance, have been awarded to local law enforcement entities who partner with the regional comprehensive behavioral health center for treatment and recovery services.

## Positive outcomes

- 14,435 total visits were reported for the 17 certified harm reduction programs between August 2018 and March 2019
- 699 clients received MAT between May 2018 and April 2019
- 170 of the individuals served were pregnant
- 3,340 individuals received peer support services between May 2018 and April 2019

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For more information, contact Robert Morrison, Executive Director, at [rmorrison@nasadad.org](mailto:rmorrison@nasadad.org), or Shalini Wickramatilake-Templeman, Federal Affairs Manager, at [swickramatilake@nasadad.org](mailto:swickramatilake@nasadad.org).