

Alabama SOR Initiatives

Addressing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse & Use Disorders: The Impact of State Opioid Response (SOR) Grants

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administers the SOR grant program. SOR addresses the opioid overdose crisis by providing resources to states and territories to increase access to Federal Drug Administration-approved medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and to reduce unmet treatment needs and opioid-related overdose deaths with prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery supports. In 2020, SOR expanded to support evidence-based services for stimulant misuse and use disorders (StUD), including cocaine and methamphetamine.

This brief was developed by the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) in collaboration with the Opioid Response Network (ORN) as part of a series of state reports intended to showcase initiatives across the continuum of care that states have implemented with SOR funds. The ORN is a SAMHSA-funded technical assistance and training center that works with states, health professionals, community organizations, the justice system, and individuals in all 50 states and nine territories to support efforts to address the opioid and stimulant crisis.



Single State Agency (SSA): Alabama Department of Mental Health Office of Substance Use Treatment and Prevention (ADMH)

ADMH has received \$99,938,654 in SOR funding from FY18 through FY23. For FY23–FY24, it received \$33,103,861.

The State of Alabama set the following priorities for SOR funding:

1. Prevent and reduce opioid and stimulant misuse in communities with health disparities and improve prevention capacity coordination and infrastructure at state and community levels
2. Increase access to and knowledge of MOUD and treatment of StUD
3. Increase number of specialty populations (e.g., veterans, pregnant and postpartum women, justice-involved populations) receiving treatment and recovery supports
4. Expand peer and recovery support services in rural and urban target areas
5. Improve data collection for opioid use disorder (OUD) and StUD by implementing new data system for ADMH and providers that increases data in the centralized data repository
6. Expand use of harm reduction interventions



Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Alabama has used SOR to support initiatives to raise awareness about the opioid epidemic, provide resources, implement prevention-based programming across schools, and hold drug take-back events.

International Overdose Awareness Day

Alabama used SOR to host a campaign on August 31, 2023, recognized as International Overdose Awareness Day. This campaign aims to raise awareness about overdose—considered one of the world’s most severe public health crises—and to stimulate action and discussion on evidence-based overdose prevention. The annual observance took place at a local university, featuring guest speakers and representatives from local organizations. More than 200 mental health professionals and nursing students attended the event.

School-Based Curriculum

Collaboration with local schools involved educating student athletes about opioid misuse prevention. Prevention staff spoke to student athletes at elementary, middle, and high schools to impart knowledge on opioid misuse and prescription drug safety.

Drug Take-Back Events

Drug take-back events invite the local community to safely dispose of unneeded or expired medications from their homes, serving as a preventive measure against prescription drug misuse and OUD. This initiative aims to reduce overdoses and overdose deaths. Community members are also provided drug disposal kits and medication safety lockboxes to prevent medications from being taken or used by individuals for whom they are not prescribed.

Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

Alabama uses several mechanisms to reduce overdoses, including distribution of overdose reversal agents, general education and training, and first responder training on fentanyl.

Narcan and Fentanyl Test Strip Distribution

ADMH has partnered with the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) to distribute naloxone and fentanyl test strips. JCDH offers online training on naloxone and fentanyl test strip use to individuals statewide, including community members and professionals, such as volunteer fire departments and law enforcement personnel. After completing the online training, individuals can request a mail-order naloxone kit and fentanyl test strip kit. JCDH also conducts onsite community trainings and collaborates with law enforcement, providing free naloxone kits during these sessions. ADMH purchases Narcan to distribute in 66 out of the 67 counties through this initiative. For the remaining county (Jefferson), JCDH handles the Narcan procurement. This approach ensures coverage of all areas identified in the saturation plan developed as part of SOR III.

Under SOR III, JCDH has mailed more than 4,373 kits throughout the state. Additionally, ADMH has purchased 4,000 fentanyl test strips for this initiative.

First Responder Training

First responders provide lifesaving services. They may encounter illicit drugs while performing their duties, necessitating the need for education on these substances. Fentanyl training for first responders was provided to three emergency management services (EMS) departments. These sessions offered valuable information on

necessary precautions when responding to possible overdose calls and encountering fentanyl, opioids, or other stimulants. With this training and enhanced knowledge, EMS personnel are equipped to minimize risks and prevent harmful exposure to illicit drugs.

Increasing Access to Treatment

Alabama has used SOR to facilitate provider trainings on motivational interviewing.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) Training

Increased training and “train-the-trainer” events have been initiated to introduce participants to MI and begin developing core conversation skills through open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflections. There has been high enrollment from SOR III providers. Learning MI skills helps providers develop a person-centered counseling approach that encourages clients to move toward addressing their SUDs using intrinsic motivation.

Supporting Long-Term Recovery

Alabama has used SOR to assist individuals in recovery by providing housing services and peer support.

Recovery Housing Initiative

The ADMH Housing Initiative for individuals with SUD began in response to the opioid crisis. Initially tailored for individuals receiving MOUD with other treatment services, the initiative expanded during the Covid-19 public health emergency. Now, individuals with any SUD may receive housing services. SOR is used to offer housing services to people with OUD or StUD. Recovery houses can apply to provide these services with approval from ADMH.



Furthermore, ADMH established an emergency housing initiative. ADMH-approved recovery houses have the opportunity to receive emergency housing funds. These funds cater to individuals unable to participate in a recovery program while awaiting residential placement due to a living environment that is unsafe or non-conducive to recovery.

The Recovery Organization of Support Specialists (ROSS)

ROSS is a peer-led organization currently situated in six cities across the state, primarily in north and central Alabama. SOR III funding has increased the availability of outreach workers to engage individuals in treatment. Transportation is also provided for individuals entering and leaving residential treatment. Recovery support groups are available seven days a week.

People Engaged in Recovery (PEIR)

PEIR is a peer-led organization currently based in three cities across the state, primarily in south Alabama. SOR III funding has increased the availability of outreach workers. Transportation is provided for individuals entering and leaving residential treatment. Recovery support groups are available seven days a week.

Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Alabama has identified several subpopulations for targeted initiatives, including people experiencing homelessness and justice-involved individuals.

MOUD in County Jail

The Building Bridges Initiative is being implemented through current MOUD services provider, Birmingham Fellowship House, which offers treatment services at the Walker County Jail. Walker County has the highest overdose rate in the state. This initiative aims to provide services within the jail to decrease withdrawals and overdoses. ADMH has collaborated with other agencies to ensure education on opioids, overdose rates, reversal rates, and available resources.

Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness

Through SOR III funding, more individuals without housing have been able to access recovery housing. Housing models include the Alabama Alliance of Recovery Housing (AARR) and Oxford House. AARR is the accredited National Association for Recovery Residences affiliate for the State of Alabama. Its mission is to support people in recovery through an alliance of certified recovery residences upholding a high standard of ethics, promoting best practices, and providing education and advocacy.



About the Opioid Response Network (ORN): ORN is a group of diverse individuals and organizations working collaboratively to address the opioid and stimulant crisis. Funded by SAMHSA's SOR/Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) Technical Assistance (TA) grant, ORN works with states, health professionals, community organizations, the justice system, and individuals in all 50 states and nine territories to provide education and training. **Visit the ORN website [here](#) or request training or TA [here](#).**

Disclaimer: Funding for this initiative was made possible (in part) by grant no. 1H79Tl085588-01 from SAMHSA. The information contained in this brief was provided and verified by the state/jurisdiction. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of SAMHSA or the Department of Health and Human Services.