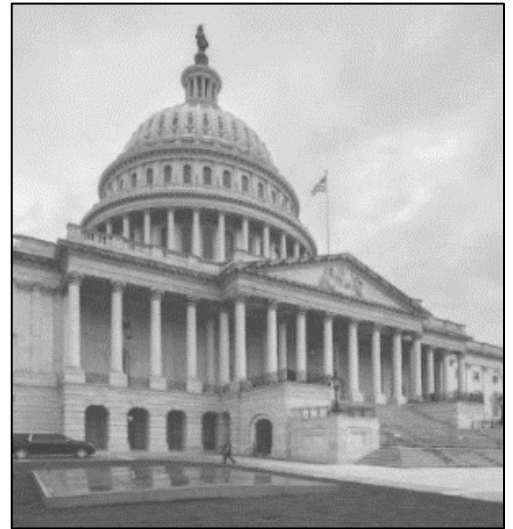


## Alaska SOR Initiatives

### 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): Alaska Department of Health Division of Behavioral Health



From FY18 through FY23, the Alaska Department of Health Division of Behavioral Health received a total of \$26,057,490 through SOR. In FY23–24, the Alaska SSA received \$4,000,000 in SOR funding. The purpose of Alaska's SOR program is to reduce opioid overdose-related deaths and the community impacts of opioid use disorder (OUD) through prevention, treatment, and recovery activities.

Another program objective is continued development and support of Alaska's addiction treatment workforce. As the geographically largest state in the country with the third smallest population, Alaska has many rural communities that may lack access to treatment and recovery resources. To strengthen the workforce, the state has implemented programs to provide both in-person and virtual professional trainings throughout the state.

## Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Alaska has implemented programs that aim to prevent opioid and stimulant misuse.

### Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)

Since 2020, SOR has funded a portion of the state's PDMP. SOR funding covered the purchase of an advanced analytics and compliance module. This allows the state to evaluate providers who have not met mandatory review requirements and also gives providers the ability to view their own compliance. SOR also supported investigator positions, which have opened over 1,500 cases related to inappropriate prescribing and have traveled to several remote communities to promote PDMP utilization and provide technical assistance.

### Outreach and Engagement Media Campaigns

Alaska has used SOR funding to support three outreach and engagement media campaigns: reducing stigma, overdose prevention for young adults and parents, and promoting online training on the opioid crisis and youth substance misuse for parents, professionals, and educators. The anti-stigma campaign included testimonials of parents who had lost a child to overdose and was shared on Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, the State of Alaska website, radio stations, and bus signage. The overdose prevention campaign included bus signage and video instructions on social media for using naloxone and fentanyl test strips.

## Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

The Alaska Department of Health Division of Behavioral Health has used SOR funding to expand access to overdose reversal agents and training to respond to spikes in overdoses.

### Project HOPE (Harm reduction, Opioid Prevention, and Education)

Project HOPE began in February 2017 to provide overdose education and naloxone distribution across the rural state. The project works with community-based organizations to train the general public and equip them, as well as professionals, with opioid overdose rescue kits. Staff or volunteers at the partner organizations deliver the training, including public health and social service agencies, fire departments, law enforcement agencies, faith-based organizations, shelters and transitional housing agencies, and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment centers. In addition to naloxone kits, Project HOPE distributes drug disposal bags to prevent nonmedical prescription opioid and stimulant use.

Since Project HOPE's start in 2017:

- 108 community partners have distributed 24,692 naloxone kits
- Over 371 overdose reversals have been reported
- 25,000 drug disposal bags have been distributed

### Overdose Surge Plan

SOR funding supported an Overdose Spike Workgroup to create a guide for stakeholders on addressing overdose surges. The goal is to utilize the guide, "Responding to an Overdose Spike: A Guide for State Health Departments," to bring together stakeholders across Alaska; develop an actionable and integrated federal, state, and local plan to address overdose spikes; and implement the plan once in place.

## Increasing Access to Treatment

The Alaska SSA has implemented programs to increase health professionals' knowledge of SUD and OUD issues and treatment services, allowing providers to stay abreast of evidence-based treatments.

### Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Conference

SOR funding supported Alaska's MAT Conference, which is a three-day virtual meeting with a breadth of sessions covering topics like MOUD in the judicial system, lived experience with MOUD, SUD screening and assessment for Tribal communities, and MOUD for LGBTQ individuals. The 2023 MAT Conference was attended by 494 people across 28 states. Of those who completed a post-survey, 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their current MOUD and SUD/OUD evidence-based and best practice standards and strategies were increased, and 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they would implement at least one change to improve practice or work activities.



### MAT Guides

SOR funding has supported the first, second, and third editions of the *Medication for Addiction Treatment Guide: Key Components for Delivering Community-Based Medications for Addiction Treatment Services for Opioid Use Disorders in Alaska*. The guide is an Alaska-based primer that promotes understanding of laws and regulations around MOUD, implementation practices, general information on the medications, and information focused on special populations.

### Matrix Model Training

Alaska's Matrix Model Core and Key Supervisor Training serves providers working across the state in the SUD field. The Matrix Model is an integrative treatment model that combines evidence-based therapies to address the needs of people with StUD. The state's training is split into a two-day Core Matrix Training and a one-day Key Supervisor Matrix Training. From FY18 through FY23, approximately 150 Alaskan providers were trained in the Matrix Model.

### Co-Occurring Behavioral Health, Opioid, and Stimulant Use Disorder ECHO

The Alaska SSA has used SOR to fund Project ECHO for providers to learn about co-occurring SUD and mental disorders, OUD, and StUD. SOR has funded three ECHO series, each having about 12 sessions. On average, 170 people attended sessions, with 290 attending in FY23. Sessions covered topics such as how to work with populations with SUD and co-occurring disorders like intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental disorders, and psychiatric conditions.

## Supporting Long-Term Recovery

Alaska has utilized SOR funding for a range of recovery support programs and provider trainings.

### Recovery Residences

The Alaska SSA used SOR funding to support five grantees in providing recovery housing. Over 500 clients have been served in the past five years through the funding. While recovery residences vary greatly in structure, all are centered on peer support and a connection to services that promote long-term recovery. Recovery housing benefits individuals in recovery by reinforcing a substance-free lifestyle and providing direct connections to peers in recovery, as well as services and supports. Many residents live in recovery housing during and/or after outpatient addiction treatment. Length of stay varies but can last from several months to a year or more. Residents often share resources and give one another experiential advice on how to access health care and social services, find employment, budget and manage finances, handle legal problems, and build life skills.

### Peer Support Specialist Program ECHO

Alaska's Peer Support ECHO is a virtual learning network intended to support and connect peer support providers throughout the state. Each 60-minute session includes a brief lecture, de-identified presentations on complex cases, and discussion facilitated by an interdisciplinary team. The Peer Support ECHO session topics included who benefits from peer support and how; supporting youth; homelessness; harm reduction; traumatic brain injuries; supporting the incarcerated; and integrating Tribal, traditional, and cultural perspectives. Between FY21 and FY23, an average of 97 unique attendees joined 29 unique sessions.



### Peer Support Certification Program

SOR funding allowed Alaska to begin a Peer Support Certification Program in 2020. The program offers multi-tiered certification, from a Peer Support Associate to a Peer Support III. The certification provides assurances that Peer Support Specialists have core competencies and skills. Statewide stakeholders identified the importance of incorporating traditional Native healings and culture in peer support, and a specialized Traditional Peer Support certification was created for Alaska Native, Native American, and indigenous peer support professionals. Since its inception, 144 people have received the Peer Support Certification.

## Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

The Alaska SSA has used SOR funding to reach and serve populations of focus, including youth, Alaska Natives, and pregnant women.

### Stay Safe Youth Media Campaign

The Alaska SSA contracts with the state's child welfare agency for a media campaign targeting youth and young adults exiting the foster care system. Content includes opioid risk education, harm reduction, and bloodborne pathogen education.

### Positive Indian Parenting

The Alaska SSA partners with Alaska Children's Trust to support programming for Alaska Native youth, parents, and families. The program aims to prevent opioid use through culturally based education around parenting skills, trauma prevention, and healing.

### Substance-Exposed Newborn Initiative (SENI)

The Alaska Substance-Exposed Newborns Initiative aims to promote universal, verbal prenatal screening using a validated tool for pregnancy called 4P's Plus. SENI screens for all substances, family violence, and depression. SENI offers the screening tool, training, and support to additional hospitals, outpatient facilities, birth centers, and midwifery practices. Partners include community-based health and social services agencies; family, infant, and toddler courts; the Division of Behavioral Health; the Office of Children's Services; Set Free Alaska; Recover Alaska's Alliance; the Alaska Hospital and Healthcare Association; the Alaska Perinatal Quality Collaborative; and national experts in SUD.



**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](#).**

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