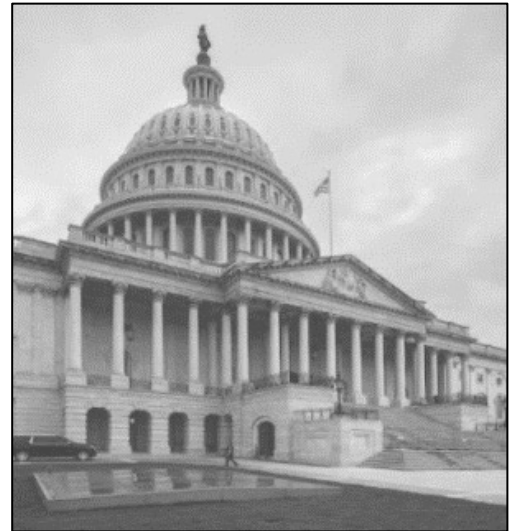


Colorado SOR Initiatives

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): Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)



BHA has received \$142,485,208 in SOR funding from FY18 through FY23. For FY23–FY24, it received \$42,641,202.

Colorado SOR's (CO-SOR) primary objectives have been to expand access to care and to reduce deaths due to opioid overdose. BHA has taken a multifaceted approach toward these goals.

Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Colorado has used SOR to support community prevention campaigns and an anti-stigma campaign.

Community Prevention and Early Intervention

CO-SOR partners with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to administer programs aimed at preventing opioid and stimulant misuse. One prominent program is the Time to Ungrind campaign, targeting college-aged students. Time to Ungrind encourages students to step back from “grind” culture, which may promote the use of illicit substances to meet academic goals.

For teens, CDPHE promotes the Forward Together campaign, which aims to help Colorado youth build healthy friendships and strong community ties. The latest creative iteration of this campaign, Forward Together Campaign Launches Connect More, supports parents, trusted adults, and youth in building supportive relationships essential for youth to stay happy and healthy. Connect More is designed as an adventure, offering support to transform relationship challenges into winning connections.

Lift the Label and Recovery Cards Project

Lift the Label is BHA’s recovery and anti-stigma campaign. The campaign can be seen across various forms of media, including television and social media. Lift the Label is innovative and has demonstrated a wide reach across Colorado. The Recovery Cards Project is a greeting card initiative housed under the Lift the Label campaign. The project features greeting cards with messages of support, inspiration, and solidarity for those with substance use disorder (SUD). The cards’ art and messages are designed by Colorado artists in recovery. These cards are provided free of charge to Colorado organizations and agencies.

Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

Colorado uses several mechanisms to reduce overdoses, including overdose reversal agent distribution and education.

Naloxone Bulk Purchase Fund

CO-SOR supports the Naloxone Bulk Purchase Fund. The bulk fund combines SOR with additional sources to purchase naloxone and distribute the opioid reversal medication to eligible entities.

Naloxone Purchasing Through Managed Service Organizations (MSOs)

CO-SOR partners with Colorado MSOs to purchase naloxone for distribution to MSO subcontractors, including opioid treatment providers (OTPs) and peer organizations. The MSOs also manage the state’s mobile programs, which supply naloxone to their patients.

Implementing Harm Reduction Strategies

Colorado has also used SOR to support allowable harm reduction strategies.

Drug User Health, Office of STI/HIV/Viral Hepatitis

CDPHE’s Office of STI/HIV/Viral Hepatitis engaged in statewide activities and initiatives during the reporting period focused on reducing the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and hepatitis C virus (HCV) in conjunction with SOR efforts. With support from SOR, CDPHE-funded agencies increased screening for STIs/HIV/HCV, outreach, and distribution of risk reduction materials for people who inject drugs at syringe service programs.

Mobile Health Units

The mobile health units (RVs converted into clinics) travel to 32 counties in Colorado and offer MOUD. A nurse, licensed or certified addiction counselor, and peer support specialist travel in each unit. One team travels by SUV in an area with narrow mountain roads. The six mobile health units all provide harm



reduction services, including supplying naloxone and xylazine and/or fentanyl testing strips and referring to syringe access programs when appropriate.

Increasing Access to Treatment

Colorado has used SOR to enhance treatment access for opioid use disorder (OUD), including MOUD, by expanding geographical OTP coverage.

Medication Units

CO-SOR, in partnership with MSOs, awarded funding to three OTPs to open three new medication units (smaller census OTPs), in addition to expanding a clinic that serves its community. The three new clinics have unique approaches or serve specific populations, including serving a mountain county, partnering with a harm reduction agency, and collaborating with a county jail.

Supporting Long-Term Recovery

Colorado has used SOR to assist individuals in recovery by expanding recovery housing and peer support services and training programs.

Recovery Residences

CO-SOR funding is available for any chartered Oxford House or recovery residence certified by the Colorado Association of Recovery Residences. The Colorado legislature provided state funding to support rent without limitation based on the individual's substance use history. SOR assisted more than 800 individuals in establishing stability at a certified recovery residence.



Peer Support Services

SOR funding has made 52 hours of certified peer training available at no cost to anyone in Colorado. These trainings include Recovery Coach Academy (RCA), Ethical Considerations for Recovery Coaches, Suicide Prevention for Non-Clinical Workers, and Mental Health First Aid for Adults or Youth. Additionally, a statewide quarterly Fentanyl Test Strip & Harm Reduction training has been created and offered to the recovery community and SOR peers.

Activities have also included efforts to support the certification and employment of peers. Through 2023, more than 500 individuals have signed up for the five-day RCA. Individuals who complete RCA are offered additional support through a pathway to state certification. The number of certified peers in the state remains constant at 267, and several grant-funded coaches have passed their certification tests during this time. Peer supervisors have also been involved in promoting and educating service providers about peer support, clarifying the scope of work for a peer, and working with policy leaders to further develop and compensate the peer workforce statewide.

Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Colorado has identified several subpopulations for targeted initiatives: pregnant and parenting women, people experiencing homelessness, Tribal/Urban Indian, and people in criminal justice settings.

Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative (CPCQC)

CO-SOR supports CPCQC programming and efforts to assist pregnant and parenting individuals with SUD. The Improve Perinatal Access, Coordination, and Treatment (IMPACT BH) initiative brings together hospitals, primary care providers, and community-based organizations to provide wraparound support and care navigation to pregnant and postpartum individuals and their families. The Maternal Overdose Matters Plus (MOMs+) program supports and prepares birthing hospitals for perinatal patients with SUD. This includes harm reduction and overdose prevention education, initiation or continuation of MOUD, and transition to outpatient recovery with community providers.

Mobile Opioid Treatment Programs (MOTP)

CO-SOR, in partnership with Signal Behavioral Health, awarded two custom-built recreation vehicles and funding to two different Denver-area providers. Denver Health and Hospital Authority (DHHA) operates MOTP, providing methadone treatment on their mobile vehicle. DHHA has two route stops four days a week, visiting their eastside clinic and westside clinic, both federally qualified health centers. Addiction Research and Treatment Services has finalized its operational plans. It will focus on bringing mobile methadone treatment to two different homeless shelters.

Tribal Communities

Denver Indian Health and Family Services is the only Urban Indian health entity in Colorado, and SOR funds are used to ensure that OUD treatment expertise is available within that system of care. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) owns and operates its own health clinic, and SOR funding supports the availability of OUD subject matter expertise. During this reporting period, SUIT added peer outreach to provide harm reduction and overdose awareness to its members. SUIT also has plans for a new intensive outpatient program in the upcoming months.

Additionally, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe owns and operates its own health clinic, and SOR supports OUD treatment expertise and harm reduction and overdose awareness to its members based on needs and readiness assessments. The staff also provided Narcan training for community members and have plans to continue this.

Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC)

CO-SOR supports CDOC with two innovative programs. In late 2023, CDOC hired a peer. This peer was one of the first in the state to be trained as a peer and then became employed at CDOC. They are utilizing their training to work with incarcerated individuals who have a history of SUD. CDOC also provides “to-go” kits to individuals upon release. Each to-go bag given to an individual upon release contains naloxone, along with fentanyl and xylazine test strips. Additionally, a resource card for connections to syringe services programs and peer support is included. These kits also contain other items, such as socks and hygiene items.



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.