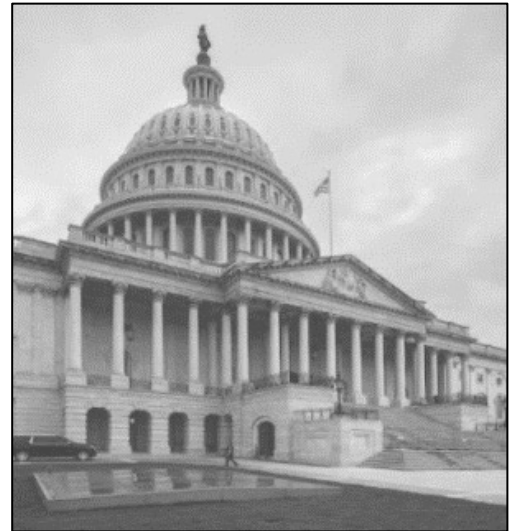


Connecticut SOR Initiatives

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.

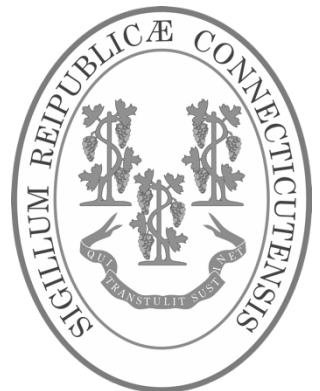
This brief was developed by the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) in collaboration with the Opioid Response Network (ORN) as part of a series of state reports intended to showcase initiatives across the continuum of care that states have implemented with SOR funds. 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): Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

From FY18 through FY23, the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) received \$70,875,426 in SOR funding. For FY23–24, Connecticut received \$14,877,975. Their overarching goals were to reduce overdose deaths in the state and health disparities (e.g., access by underrepresented populations) throughout the general health system (e.g., hospitals, primary care) and other state and local systems (e.g., criminal justice, education). To help achieve these goals, the state:

1. Distributed naloxone to communities, exceeding the state's saturation goal
2. Increased awareness of opioid use dangers through multi-faceted prevention strategies
3. Promoted evidence-based practices like MOUD in treatment settings across the state
4. Increased outreach, engagement, and harm reduction efforts using peer navigators and coaches to reach individuals actively using opioids and not receiving treatment services





5. Provided options for non-clinical recovery support services, including peer support for individuals newly in recovery or seeking recovery from an opioid use disorder (OUD)

Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Connecticut has used SOR for prevention initiatives, including education for healthcare professionals, public media campaigns, school-based programs, and college-based initiatives, which are described below.

Academic Detailing

The state promotes best practices for opioid prescribing and dispensing through implementation of the theory-based Academic Detailing Program (outreach education for healthcare professionals). Community prescribers and pharmacists in four high-burdened health districts were identified for irregular prescribing practices and will participate in the program.

Change the Script Campaign

Change the Script is a statewide public awareness and educational campaign that has been modified over time to increase awareness among the general public about opioid use, misuse, overdose, safe disposal, safe storage, and fentanyl. The campaign has been deployed across billboards, television, radio stations, social media, malls, and public transportation, and at Connecticut's professional and collegiate athletic arenas. Change the Script materials have been customized for prescribers, funeral homes, realtors, libraries, senior citizens, veterans, and construction trades. A mobile library delivers resources directly to communities throughout the state by visiting health fairs, professional conferences, public parks, and other community events. Change the Script materials can be viewed and accessed at drugfreect.org. From 2019 through 2023, the van attended more than 100 events and served over 65,000 people. DMHAS has provided approximately 45 mini-grants per year to community coalitions across the state to disseminate Change the Script materials within their local communities.

Connecticut Healthy Campus Initiative (CHCI)

CHCI serves both state and privately funded schools in urban and suburban settings. Participating campuses received mini-grants that ranged from \$10,000–15,000 per year to implement campus-based public awareness and education events about opioid dangers, fentanyl, xylazine, naloxone administration, living in recovery, safe disposal and storage, stress management, and more. Since 2019, 22 unique college campuses were awarded mini-grants under CHCI and reached around 20,000 students and staff per year.

eBook: A Parent's Guide to Opioid Use Prevention

Connecticut developed hybrid, interactive web-based trainings along with an accompanying user guide on opioid education and awareness. The trainings are intended for parents, employee assistance program staff, and the general public. Research and script development are underway to create a web-based explainer video on polysubstance use, as well as two additional explainer videos highlighting how addiction impacts people involved in the criminal justice system and veterans. The web-based training was also translated into Spanish. Resources developed under SOR can be found at preventiontrainingcenter.org/sor-resources.

Courage to Speak

The state implemented a face-to-face drug prevention education program that helps parents understand and address the impact of substance use on children and youth. The program trains parents in both English and

Spanish on communicating effectively with children on the dangers of drug use. In 2023, Courage to Speak served 140 individuals.

School-Based Education

Connecticut provided support to the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to develop and provide an opioid-related curriculum to school systems. SERC is currently developing a plan and recruited two school district participants. A Youth Prevention Summit and diffusion to five additional K–12 schools are in progress.

Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

Connecticut has utilized SOR for statewide naloxone distribution and training.

Overdose Education and Naloxone Delivery

Connecticut uses Department of Public Health data on overdose reversals by emergency medical services. These data outline how essential and effective naloxone is in saving people’s lives. DMHAS used SOR funding to distribute naloxone kits to hospital emergency departments, service providers, police departments, homeless shelters, sober homes, recovery support providers, local health districts, and communities. DMHAS employs an efficient system of purchasing naloxone from a distributor who mails it directly to the requesting organizations. DMHAS has increased distribution annually since 2019 using braided funding.

DMHAS naloxone distribution by year

2019	11,581
2020	13,162
2021	14,986
2022	29,064
2023*	35,325

**Through September 2023*

Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs) Naloxone Distribution and Training

Connecticut’s five RBHAOs offer free naloxone administration training to the community. From 2019 through 2023, 13,952 people were trained, and over 16,600 naloxone kits were distributed.

Implementing Harm Reduction Strategies

Connecticut has used SOR to implement harm reduction strategies like post-overdose support, low-barrier access to MOUD, and harm reduction drop-in centers, described below.

How Can We Help?

“How Can We Help?” is a recovery support initiative in 11 communities. Recovery coaches partner with first responders in hotspot locations to provide home outreach and follow-up with individuals who have survived an opioid overdose and engage the individual and family members in treatment or recovery support services.



Mobile MOUD

Mobile MOUD vans provide quick and efficient low-barrier access to MOUD and recovery coaching. The state's mobile vans have been successful in helping create community connections with local providers and recovery supports.

Harm Reduction Drop-In Centers

Connecticut has established two harm reduction drop-in centers. These centers provide a space for individuals with OUD or those at risk of overdose to access naloxone, harm reduction information and supplies, recovery support, and connection to treatment. These centers collaborate with shelter providers to ensure all programs have an adequate supply of naloxone, and their staff are fully trained on overdose recognition and response and harm reduction best practices.

Increasing Access to Treatment

Connecticut has used SOR to increase access to MOUD and other services, described below.

Enhanced and Clinic-Based MOUD Programs

Connecticut has a robust system of MOUD providers. The state has 39 methadone maintenance programs and 11 withdrawal management programs. Its enhanced programs are focused on improved access to buprenorphine and naltrexone along with recovery coaching and employment support.

MOUD Programs in Correctional Settings

SOR allowed for the start-up of MOUD programs in the state's correctional settings. Initially, in 2018, four jails were supported via SOR. Additional state funding has allowed the program to grow to 13 facilities. SOR continues to support a major MOUD program in the Hartford Correctional Center.



Supporting Long-Term Recovery

Connecticut has used SOR to fund the range of recovery support programs outlined below.

RBHAO Recovery-Friendly Workplace (RFW) Coordinators

SOR supported hiring five RFW coordinators, one per the five regions of Connecticut. RFW coordinators work with employers to become an RFW-certified workplace, provide resources, and identify peer champions to help navigate the process for employers and employees. To date, 40 businesses have become RFW-certified.

SMART Recovery

DMHAS partners with the Department of Children and Families to provide SMART recovery, alternate peer, and family and friends groups. The Statewide Youth Recovery Support Network increases the involvement of youth and families in addressing substance use disorders in Connecticut, reduces stigma associated with substance use problems, and increases options and access to recovery supports for young people in Connecticut and their families.



Mobile Employment Services

Recovery is supported through Mobile Employment Services (MES). Mobile employment specialists engage people in early recovery with compassionate and practical support to remove the many barriers and challenges they face in seeking employment. This effort is augmented by community outreach to potential employers to establish relationships, while educating them on the benefits of hiring an individual enrolled in MES. MES has joined forces with the state’s RFW initiative to continue to broaden the depth of employers who understand the potential value of hiring individuals in early recovery.

Recovery Coaching

Connecticut has used SOR for recovery support programs with recovery coaches able to assist in the recovery process. These include outreach programs like “How Can We Help?” Recovery coaches also work as a team in most hospital emergency departments and have helped thousands of individuals who may have not otherwise accessed traditional services. DMHAS also promotes recovery coaching in OTPs and court support services.

Treatment Pathway Program (TPP)

In TPP, five recovery specialists collaborate with clinicians in four courts to link individuals recently arrested who are awaiting arraignment directly to treatment when substance use has been identified as contributing factor to their arrest.

Over a 2-year period, 1,030 individuals were supported through TPP, and 597 individuals were connected to clinical treatment.

Early Screening Intervention (ESI)

ESI is a pre-trial diversionary model that provides court-based specialized screening and referral services for forensically involved individuals using court-based resource counselors. Within two years of this project, there were 2,777 cases across 6 locations.

Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Connecticut’s SOR initiatives include programs designed to reach and serve populations of focus, including low-income fathers, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals struggling to maintain housing.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative

DMHAS provides funding to seven agencies within the state that offer services exclusively to low-income, typically underrepresented fathers. The DMHAS funding has supported a part-time case manager in receiving training in the Strategic Prevention Framework and other substance use prevention basics. This staff person implements a variety of prevention strategies with the fathers they serve, including basic drug and alcohol impact education, naloxone training, parenting skills development, and positive parenting experiences with children. Most fathers receiving prevention information and skills are men of color, aged 25–45 years, who are experiencing homelessness, joblessness, and may have been formerly incarcerated or court-involved. As of October 2023, 319 men received services through this program.

Imani Breakthrough

The Imani Breakthrough is a faith-based initiative. The program consists of weekly group-based mutual support and recovery/education classes with individualized wraparound coaching provided by two facilitators/coaches for the first 12 weeks. It’s followed by an additional 10 weeks of group mutual support and wraparound coaching. Imani Breakthrough is a person-centered, culturally informed harm reduction recovery program that takes place in Black and Latino churches in Connecticut.



Housing Vouchers

Connecticut uses SOR to provide sober living housing vouchers to people struggling to maintain stable housing.



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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