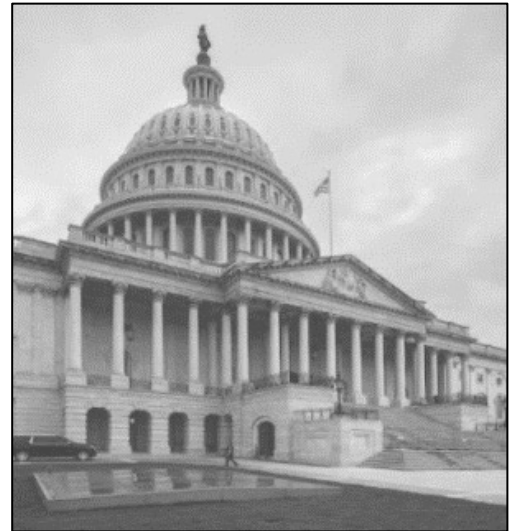


Kentucky SOR Initiatives

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): Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities Division of Substance Use Disorder

From FY 2018 through FY 2023, the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities Division of Substance Use Disorder received \$185,700,000 in SOR funds. For FY 2023-FY2024, they received \$35.9 million.

The **Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE)** seeks to expand and sustain a comprehensive, equitable recovery-oriented system of care to address opioid use disorder (OUD) and StUD for all individuals throughout Kentucky. To achieve this aim, KORE and its partners commit to implementing a trauma- and resilience-informed care approach within a racial equity framework to reduce overdose deaths and increase equitable access to high quality, evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery support services that are culturally responsive. Informed by data on populations most in need, the KORE projects focuses on four primary populations with OUD and/or StUD: 1) Opioid overdose survivors, 2) Pregnant and parenting individuals, 3) Justice-involved individuals, and 4) Black, Indigenous, and other persons of color.





KORE goals are as follows:

Goal 1. Prevent the development of OUD and StUD by implementing evidence-based interventions that address behaviors that may lead to a OUD or overdose.

Goal 2. Reduce overdose fatalities, and other negative impacts of opioid and stimulant use through expansion of harm reduction strategies and principles.

Goal 3. Reduce OUD/StUD, overdose, and related health consequences, by increasing equitable, available and accessible evidence-based treatment that includes the use of FDA-Approved Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD).

Goal 4. Increase the number of individuals with a history of OUD and/or StUD who enter and remain in remission and recovery.

Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Kentucky has utilized SOR funding to implement a range of substance use prevention programs, including school-based programs, workforce development, and media campaigns.

Regional Collaboration Specialists

Collaboration Specialists within Regional Prevention Centers deliver prevention services through schools and local communities. Activities include 1) implementing evidence-based curricula in and after school (Too Good for Drugs) across grades K-12 that empowers students with social-emotional learning and substance use prevention skills; 2) training of educational staff to recognize students at risk of current or future substance use; 3) offering technical assistance to schools to enhance policies and procedures related to SUD; 4) partnering with universities to train prevention specialists to build prevention workforce capacity; 5) providing overdose education and naloxone distribution; and 6) supporting coalition capacity building to implement environmental strategies that reduce access to substances, change community norms around substance use, and engage parents in prevention efforts.

During FY23, Collaboration Specialists engaged with 9,809 partners across the state and reached 215,739 children, adolescents, and transitioned age youth.

Sources of Strength

This universal school-based prevention programs was implemented in 200 middle and high schools statewide. The program builds socio-ecological protective influences among youth by conducting well-defined social messaging activities intended to change peer group norms influencing coping practices and problem behaviors, including drug use, self-harm, and unhealthy sexual practices. Protective factors among students are also enhanced, including seeking support, youth-adult connections, school engagement, and increased likelihood to refer a friend. During FY23, 1,456 new peer leaders and 326 new adult leaders were trained for a total of 10,584 peers and 2,752 adult leaders statewide.

Too Good for Drugs

This universal school-based prevention program for grades K–12 builds life skills, character, values, and resistance skills to negative peer influence and to the use of illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Implementation began with training of prevention providers, school staff, and community partners to deliver



the 10-session curriculum. During FY23, TGFDD was supported in 172 schools, with approximately 112,000 students trained.

Prevention Specialist Workforce Development

This program aims to cultivate prevention professionals who might later return to the field and seek their Certified Prevention Specialist certification. This program offers professional opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students interested in learning more about working in substance use prevention. During FY23, 11 students were hosted, with several hired into permanent prevention positions across the state.

Statewide Anti-stigma Campaign

A statewide public health campaign, Unshame KY, was delivered to reduce stigma against persons with OUD and increase awareness of harm reduction and treatment resources. From April to September 2023, three monthly webinars drew a total of 294 attendees. In addition, testimonials and daily social media posts aimed at reducing stigma and increasing awareness and education around evidence-based practices yielded 7,599,710 total impressions; an average daily reach of 4,180,789; 2,580,329 video views; and 729,031 engagements.

Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

Kentucky has used SOR funding to support its overdose reversal medication distribution and education initiatives.

Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution

In partnership with the Department for Public Health and Kentucky Pharmacists Association, the statewide naloxone distribution program provides naloxone to local health departments, syringe services programs (SSPs), treatment providers, community organizations, and SOR-funded initiatives, and maintains a mobile pharmacy naloxone distribution program.

A total of 96,768 two-dose naloxone units were distributed through this program during FY23.

Regional Prevention Centers – Overdose Prevention and Risk Reduction

During FFY23, 14 Regional Prevention Centers and eight community coalitions provided 91 overdose education and naloxone distribution trainings to 2,368 individuals, including 68 first responders. In addition, they installed 64 naloxoboxes, distributed 7,442 drug-disposal pouches, 3,602 Lock boxes/bags, and completed media campaigns with 1,312,198 impressions.

Funding for Recovery Equity and Expansion (FREE)

FREE is a partnership between the Kentucky Department for Public Health, Office of Health Equity, and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky to provide grants to BIPOC led and/or BIPOC serving organizations with an overall purpose of reducing overdose fatalities. Eleven organizations were awarded these funds to conduct outreach and engagement to minoritized communities in an effort to connect to substance use harm reduction, treatment and recovery services.

Implementing Harm Reduction Strategies

Kentucky has expanded access to allowable harm reduction services through SOR-funded initiatives.

Harm Reduction Expansion Program

In order to expand access to harm reduction services and increase access to prevention and treatment resources, 50 Local Health Departments were funded to establish or expand harm reduction and SSP services such as the purchase of allowable harm reduction supplies (e.g., sharps containers, alcohol swabs), hiring staff to expand operation hours, peer support services onsite, establishing a wound care clinic, and implementing outreach campaigns.

Opioid Stewardship Program

Kentucky operated the Statewide Opioid Stewardship (SOS) program in partnership with the Kentucky Hospital Association. This voluntary certification program focuses on reducing opioid overprescribing, improving safe opioid use, and providing a mechanism for hospitals to demonstrate their actions and commitments to their patients and communities to combat the state's opioid epidemic. Of Kentucky's 127 hospitals, 120 have committed to this goal. During FFY23, 112 hospitals across the state participated in the program. In addition, SOS maintains an outpatient arm of the initiative to train on pain management in primary care settings. More information about the program can be found at <http://www.kentuckysos.com>

Fentanyl Test Strip Distribution

The KY Harm Reduction Coalition oversees FTS distribution alongside education on their use and overdose education and naloxone distribution to agencies, as well as individuals. During FFY23, 779,222 strips were distributed. In June 2023, House Bill 353 went into effect exempting FTS from drug paraphernalia unless they were used as part of an illegal fentanyl manufacturing or sales operation.

Increasing Access to Treatment

Kentucky has utilized SOR funding to support initiatives to increase access to treatment services, including MOUD and contingency management.

Quick Response Teams

Eight Quick Response Teams (QRTs) have been funded to serve 45 counties across the state. Comprised of peer support, public safety, and medical professionals, QRTs provide assertive engagement, naloxone and other harm reduction services, transport to treatment, ongoing follow-up, and family engagement to overdose survivors.

During FY23, 2,505 individuals received QRT services, with 74% receiving referrals to harm reduction and/or treatment services.

Bridge Clinics

Seven of the 10 largest hospitals in Kentucky are engaged in OUD treatment by operating a bridge clinic, inpatient consultation, outpatient treatment, or partnering with substance use/mental health or other community organizations to provide medical care and MOUD. The bridge clinic model provides rapid access to treatment by providing access to MOUD in the hospital as well as on-site engagement with peer support and/or care coordination. Direct linkage to ongoing care through a hospital-run clinic or community partner is provided upon discharge.

Treatment and Methadone Access Program

The Treatment Access Program serves as a “payor of last resort” for same-day access to residential and intensive outpatient treatment for individuals with OUD. The Methadone Access Program serves as a payor of last report to licensed Opioid Treatment Programs to cover the weekly cost of methadone for individuals at risk of leaving or not able to initiate treatment. During FY23, the Treatment Access Program served 2,536 individuals and the Methadone Access Program served 1,108 individuals.

MOUD Treatment Access Expansion

In order to increase access to and utilization of MOUD, reduce unmet treatment need, and reduce overdose deaths, 13 organizations have been awarded support to implement or expand an evidence-based service delivery model using MOUD. Organizations include a hospital provider delivering MOUD services for local rural drug courts, a hospital system training its primary care network in delivering MOUD treatment, and partnerships with community and residential substance use providers and prisons to provide access to MOUD.



Contingency Management

Contingency management is being implemented in a bridge clinic and in outpatient treatment settings to support medication adherence and treatment retention. Kentucky has also employed the use of digital therapeutics for contingency management among persons with a StUD.

Supporting Long-Term Recovery

To help individuals reach and maintain long-term recovery, Kentucky has implemented support services like peer support, mobile outreach, transportation, childcare, employment support, and recovery housing.

Recovery Community Centers

Fourteen Recovery Community Centers (RCCs) have been established to provide centralized resources for community-based recovery supports. Each has developed various support groups previously unavailable in their communities, including medication-friendly mutual aid, peer support, recovery capital and career coaching, community education, advocacy training, overdose education and naloxone distribution, art and yoga groups, and childcare for parents attending support groups. One RCC has established two mobile recovery outreach units. These mobile units provide engagement to recovery services, recovery coaching, mutual aid meetings, overdose response training and naloxone distribution, and assertive linkage to MOUD.

During FY23, an average of 735 individuals per month participated in recovery support services through onsite peer support services, mutual aid meetings, and recovery supportive events.

Access to Recovery Program

The Access to Recovery (ATR) program links individuals to treatment and recovery support and provides support for services that increase recovery capital and for which there is no payor source. Recovery support services can include basic needs, transportation, childcare, employment support, and recovery housing

support. ATR serves high-need regions and has partnered with the state’s Alternative Sentencing Worker program to reduce barriers to treatment access for court-involved individuals with OUD/StUD. During FY23, 504 individuals in recovery received ATR services.

Recovery Housing

In order to support the expansion of recovery residencies, four Oxford House outreach coordinators receive support to provide direct services and technical assistance to existing houses and work in the community to establish new residences. During FY23, 13 new houses were established in Kentucky, bringing the statewide total to 119.

To enhance the quality of recovery housing across the continuum, a recovery housing network has been established to certify housing using Kentucky-adapted National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) standards. The recovery housing network provides technical assistance around recovery residencies and their standardization. During F23, the affiliate certified 20 residences providing 535 beds. Additionally, House Bill 248 was signed into law requiring the certification of recovery houses by July 2024.



Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment (SITE)

The SITE program provides a full array of OUD/SUD training, technical assistance, case management, and support services to assist current employees and people in recovery who are seeking employment and training. For those seeking employment, job entry and retention support specialists assist in procuring job placement with an employer providing transformational employment opportunities. Also, staff educate employers and help in the development of Employer Resource Networks that support the implementation of recovery friendly policies for hiring and retaining employees recovering from SUD and include offering the support of a success coach within the workplace.

During FY23, 4,714 new clients received employment services and 1,392 obtained employment.

Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Informed by data on populations most in need, Kentucky has implemented programs targeted at serving populations of focus including overdose survivors, pregnant and parenting people, justice-involved individuals, and BIPOC communities.

Opioid Overdose Survivors

Addressing the needs of overdose survivors remains a top priority for Kentucky when determining the use of SOR funds. Several programs implemented in Kentucky targeting drug overdose survivors are overdose education and naloxone distribution, syringe service and harm reduction program expansion, emergency department bridge clinics, and quick response teams. In 2022, overall overdose deaths in Kentucky decreased by 5.5% (KIPRC, 2023). While this decrease is significant, Kentucky continues to rank highly for overdose deaths relative to other states.

Pregnant and Parenting Persons

To increase capacity to serve pregnant and parenting women and their families, Kentucky is funding coordinated care models to provide integrated obstetric and substance use treatment. The program model integrates and coordinates obstetric care, MOUD prescribing, nurse care coordination, targeted case management, a neonatologist, and peer support.

Justice-Involved Individuals

The Department of Corrections provides re-entry support to individuals with OUD and/or StUD released from jail-delivered substance use disorder treatment. Jail Care Coordinators complete Medicaid and Social Security applications, obtain identification cards and birth certificates, deliver overdose prevention training and naloxone, complete home placements, conduct pre-release classes, and support linkage to ongoing treatment services and supports across 19 jails. During the reporting period, five jail re-entry coordinators completed 2,641 assessments. Re-entry coordinators also distributed naloxone to everyone released from jail as well as their family members during visitation.

Additionally, buprenorphine access is supported in all state prisons through a partnership with the Kentucky Department of Corrections. Through collaboration with a state agency to lead implementation, the capacity for consistent replication across facilities is supported.

Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color

From 2020 to 2022, Kentucky saw an increase in overdose deaths among Black Kentuckians increase by 47%. As such, all SOR funded programs are tasked with conducting targeted outreach into those communities and are required to disaggregate data by race and ethnicity to utilize for purposes of continuous quality improvement. One program specifically aimed at addressing the need among this population is the Funding for Recovery Equity and Expansion (FREE) program. Through partnership with a statewide foundation, FREE provides low-barrier grants to BIPOC led/serving organizations to conduct outreach and linkage to services. The FREE programs also builds agency capacity to become competitive for state and federal grants/contracts.



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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