

## Rhode Island 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): Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals Division of Behavioral Healthcare

From FY19 through FY23, the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH) Division of Behavioral Healthcare received \$58.6 million in SOR funding. For FY23–FY24, it received \$7.6 million.

BHDDH is committed to creating a full spectrum of substance use services based on the four pillars of the Governor’s Strategic Plan: prevention, rescue, treatment, and recovery. SOR grant funds assist individuals in receiving services they would otherwise be unable to access due to coverage or affordability. Additionally, the state’s Program Sustainability Workgroup, which includes BHDDH, the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner, and Medicaid, explores payment reform to reduce costs for services and ensure programmatic sustainability in the event SOR funds are no longer available.

Prior to SOR, treatment and recovery service delivery areas focused on places with the highest population versus highest need. The City of Providence and surrounding areas have had the majority of available substance use disorder treatment and recovery services, leaving southern and western



Rhode Island with fewer service providers and options. Previous efforts to expand services were hindered due to resources. SOR allows for the opportunity to expand locations' service menus and access via mobile delivery mechanisms.

## Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Rhode Island has used SOR to support prevention initiatives, such as the family task force, prevention coalitions, and school-based curriculums.

### Family Task Force

Through the Governor's Overdose Prevention & Intervention Opioid Overdose Task Force, a Family Task Force was created to bring together family members with a loved one who has experienced a fatal or nonfatal overdose or a family member actively using substances. The group's goals were to provide recovery and support for families and educate the public about available family support services. The task force developed educational resources, and families were given the opportunity to receive naloxone kits.



The provider charged with implementing the task force's recommendations successfully compiled family crisis toolkits, created crisis resource guides, and individualized crisis plan templates. It also facilitated weekly community reinforcement and family training (CRAFT) meetings online throughout the pandemic when distribution of toolkits was temporarily reduced. The Family Task Force used and trained on the evidence-based CRAFT program as it was best suited for assisting families living with individuals with active addiction.

In 2018, 992 toolkits were distributed to families impacted by overdose.

### Prevention Coalitions

Rhode Island's prevention coalitions plan for the implementation of activities in the six Center for Substance Abuse Prevention strategies to address substance use in their communities. BHDDH has used their delegated authority to contract directly with the seven regional prevention coalitions for primary prevention services. Coalitions disseminated funding at the municipal level for activities, such as prescription drug take-back days in conjunction with local pharmacies. Coalitions also provided activities in the six strategies of education, information dissemination, alternative events, and community-based process to address stimulant and opioid use in high school and college youth and young adults. To date, more than 500,000 people have been served and 13,645 pounds of prescriptions have been collected during Drug Take-Back Day events.

### Project Success Expansion

Started in 2018, this initiative incorporates an opioid-specific module in the standard Prevention Education Series lesson plans for seventh- and ninth-grade students, as well as school districts that do not currently offer Project Success. This establishes a statewide footprint of primary prevention education that specifically addresses opioids via evidence-based practices. As of 2022, a total of 27,210 students have been served.

## Increasing Access to Treatment

Rhode Island has used SOR to increase treatment access, including crisis services, MOUD, and contingency management.

### BH Link

BH Link is a comprehensive program serving individuals experiencing SUD or mental health crises. It provides immediate access to services for all Rhode Islanders, emergency responders, and community-based providers.

The two primary components of BH Link are a 24/7 hotline to connect people to appropriate care or direct them to appropriate resources and a 24/7 triage center that is a community-based walk-in/drop-off facility where clinicians can connect people to long-term care and recovery supports. The department has continuously enhanced the program by adding a more fully staffed set of crisis response service teams for greater shift coverage for treatment, recovery supports, psychiatry, and prescribing.

Through 2018,  
9,491 individuals  
have accessed  
BH Link services.

### Safe Landing Program

Rhode Island launched the Safe Landing Program, which provides a warm hand-off from the hospital, the streets, and withdrawal management programs, to a safe, non-toxic environment while individuals await triage to treatment or recovery services. The program includes an assessment for the appropriate level of care, focused peer support, and case management. The Safe Landing team works closely with Rhode Island's OUD Centers of Excellence program for timely MOUD access and a certified National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR) Level IV recovery residence with clinical supports and embedded case management.

### Mobile Induction

Through collaboration with an Opioid Treatment Provider (OTP) and the University of Rhode Island, SOR 2018 funded the "Rhode to Health" van, which provided mobile medical assessments and services, including MOUD induction, to 149 individuals. The original plan for the van was to address rural populations; however, due to lack of use, the van was relocated to urban regions, resulting in greater visibility.

### Contingency Management (CM)

Launched during SOR 2022, adults receiving MOUD in OTPs who also have StUD can receive CM to reinforce positive treatment behaviors and negative urine drug tests. Participants receive incentives, such as gift cards, which are delivered immediately after a stimulant-negative urine test. All staff who implement, administer, and supervise CM interventions have received approved CM-specific training prior to implementation using SOR funds. Through 2022, 59 clients enrolled in CM services.



## Supporting Long-Term Recovery

To help individuals reach and maintain long-term recovery, Rhode Island has implemented recovery support services, such as recovery housing and re-entry programs.

### Recovery-Friendly Workplace

This initiative is endorsed by Rhode Island Governor Dan McKee. It was initially launched at the end of SOR 2020 to promote individual wellness for Rhode Islanders through workplace tools and supports needed for employees recovering from SUD. Through 2022, 93 businesses have been designated as recovery-friendly workplaces.

### Recovery Housing

This initiative began during SOR 2018 and has run continuously through subsequent SOR funding cycles, addressing critical housing needed for individuals in recovery. Beds are available for individuals being stepped down from residential treatment or who are being directly released from emergency departments or prison with an overdose or a history of OUD or StUD. This is a continuation of the initiatives funded by prior STR and block grants, which require recovery housing to become and remain NARR-certified and be operated by individuals trained following NARR standards. Individuals are screened by licensed clinicians to ensure this is the appropriate care level.

Through 2022, 4,445 individuals have been placed in recovery housing.

### Recovery Community Centers (RCCs)

Rhode Island has six RCCs located in Providence, Warwick, Warren, Newport, Woonsocket, and Westerly, and one Teen Recovery Center co-located in one of the Providence sites. RCC services include overdose prevention education, mutual aid support groups, wellness recovery action planning, HIV education and support services, education/resources for all treatment options (including MOUD), referrals to treatment services, recreational activities that provide a recovery alternative to other celebratory events, access to healthcare screenings, harm reduction materials (including naloxone), employment and education support, expungement groups/education, and recovery month activities. They are also responsible for outreach services, including in emergency departments. From late spring 2019 through the end of SOR 2022, 2,246 individuals were served.

## Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Rhode Island has used SOR to reach and serve populations of focus, including pregnant and postpartum women.

### Substance-Exposed Newborn Program

The Substance-Exposed Newborn Program supports family stability, child well-being, reduced opioid overdoses, and increased treatment consistency. The program provided a substance use counselor and peer recovery specialist to assist pregnant and parenting women with SUD to implement plans of safe care. The Governor's Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force's Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome workgroup identified the initiative as a gap in the current system.



**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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