

## Virginia 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): Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)

DBHDS has received \$152,036,399 in SOR funding from FY18 through FY23. For FY23 – FY24, it received \$28,929,334. Virginia's SOR III goals include:

**Prevention:** Provide prevention services to a minimum of 1,000,000 community members. This goal's objectives aim to enhance community responses to opioid misuse and StUD:

1. Strengthen communities' capabilities through mobilization and coalition building
2. Boost awareness through a statewide campaign on opioid/stimulant misuse
3. Increase availability of medication safe storage and disposal units
4. Improve community capacity to address traumatic effects of parental/caregiver addiction on children
5. Expand outreach efforts to high-priority and marginalized populations





**Treatment:** Increase the number of people who receive opioid use disorder (OUD) and StUD treatment by enhancing strategies to improve access to these services. This goal’s objectives focus on improving treatment services for substance use disorders (SUDs):

1. Enhance access to clinically appropriate OUD and StUD treatment by funding 38 Community Services Boards (CSBs)
2. Increase engagement in treatment services for pregnant and postpartum women
3. Train 3,000 individuals in REVIVE! Program and equip them with naloxone for opioid overdose reversal
4. Collaborate with Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) to enroll 300 individuals in treatment and recovery programs
5. Increase the number of people receiving SUD recovery services by implementing a comprehensive strategy across all five DBHDS regions

**Recovery:** Increase the number of people receiving SUD recovery services by implementing a comprehensive strategy across all five DBHDS regions.

1. Increase availability of peer recovery services in Virginia hospital emergency departments
2. Expand access to recovery resources by integrating peer recovery specialists into rural clinics and health departments
3. Bolster jail transition and drug court programs for individuals with SUDs by financing new peer recovery services
4. Raise the number of collegiate recovery programs from five to eight universities
5. Widen access and enhance data tracking and industry standards for recovery community organizations through collaboration with Virginia Association of Recovery Residences
6. Partner with the VADOC to extend peer recovery services to incarcerated individuals and those on probation or parole

## Preventing Opioid and Stimulant Misuse Before It Starts

Virginia has used SOR to support a “Lock and Talk” initiative, multilingual media campaign, and community-based educational materials.

### Lock and Talk: Safety Device Distribution With Drug Education

Lock and Talk is a suicide prevention initiative based in Virginia. It promotes conversation around mental wellness and the safe handling of lethal means, such as firearms and medications. The program has expanded across Virginia in partnership with DBHDS and is embedded in prevention services at community services boards around the state. All 40 public mental health agencies are involved in the initiative, which includes distribution of safety devices, such as medication locking devices, as well as Lock and Talk education aimed at reducing opioid-related overdoses.

Approximately 33,317 lock-boxes have been distributed. Additionally, more than 270 drug take-back events have been held, impacting 1,583,475 people. Disposal kits have been distributed to 117,164 individuals through partnerships with hospitals, health centers, pharmacies, and sheriff’s offices.

### Safe Drug Disposal

Safe disposal efforts include three main strategies: permanent drop boxes, prescription take-back events, and disposal kit distribution. Permanent drop-boxes are available in 19 public mental health agencies, reaching over 2,061,954 Virginians. These efforts are further supported by advertising permanent drop-boxes at annual



prescription take-back events and through media outlets. At take-back events, “Lock and Talk” locking medication boxes are distributed, containing disposal kits with informational tips. This comprehensive approach involves prevention staff from all 40 public health agencies collaborating with their opioid prevention coalition members.

### Media Campaign

This multimedia, multilingual advertising campaign covers multiple cities, specifically targeting communities highly affected by OUD. Advertising occurs through radio, television, and social media, among other platforms. Through the campaign, millions of individuals\* have been reached:

- 46,425,183 by media messaging
- 19,498,526 by media messaging using radio and TV
- 6,410,538 by media messaging using social media or websites
- 889,017 by media messaging through brochures
- 13,572,634 by social marketing messaging
- 46,058 by social norming campaigns
- 1,853,263 by printed safety education on prescription bags or bag stickers

*\*Counts includes those exposed to multiple messages or the same message multiple times.*

### Language Access for Opioid Education Materials

The “One Pill Can Kill” DEA campaign offers an opportunity for the media, parents, teachers, educators, and community organizations to raise awareness about counterfeit prescription drugs. DEA created materials to help participate in raising awareness. Materials have been translated into 10 languages, in addition to English, to ensure accessibility for all Virginians: Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, Pashto, Dari, Korean, Nepali, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Additionally, CSB instructions have been translated into these languages. Lock and Talk has developed pharmacy bag inserts with medication safety tips, translated into six languages. The SAFE Coalition, a community organization relentlessly committed to educating and supporting those affected by SUD, piloted an insert program with the endorsement of the Virginia Pharmacist Association, which has now spread to many pharmacies statewide. All translation projects were developed in collaboration with the Office of New Americans, which has five locations within the state. These offices, along with local coalitions and the 40 public mental health agencies, distribute the materials as needed.

## Overdose Reversal Efforts: Saving Lives

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

### Naloxone Distribution

As of 2023, following a \$2 million naloxone partnership with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), SOR has become the largest funder of naloxone in Virginia. VDH facilitates the purchase and distribution of naloxone to hundreds of sites, including hospitals, jails, ambulances, free clinics, recovery residences, high schools, and other settings. In 2022, 32,408 SOR-funded naloxone doses were distributed. It is expected that this number will increase significantly in 2023 in alignment with the increased award amount.



### Statewide REVIVE! Kit Trainings

REVIVE! is the Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education (OONE) program for Virginia. It provides training on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose emergency using naloxone. CSB provides REVIVE! kit training. Staff at 40 public mental health agencies assist in community education for overdose reversal, distribution of Narcan, and provision of kits to aid individuals during naloxone use. DBHDS offers REVIVE! and Rapid REVIVE! trainings to the public.

REVIVE! kit trainings have resulted in 44,454 people trained in naloxone administration and the distribution of 22,155 naloxone doses, along with 14,919 naloxone kits.

### First Responder Peers Distributing Naloxone

Peer recovery specialists accompany first responders from the Richmond Ambulance Authority, Richmond Police Department, Chesterfield Police Department, and Hanover Police Department, providing naloxone kits, fentanyl test strips, and xylazine test strips to individuals encountered during their shifts. These areas are overdose hotspots, and most individuals served are from underserved populations, including people who are unhoused, justice-involved individuals, racial/ethnic minorities, pregnant and parenting women, veterans, and members of the LGBTQIA community.

### Naloxone Access Boxes

Eight Virginia universities have equipped each floor of their residence halls with naloxone access boxes, available 24/7 to students living on campus. This new program started in 2023.

## Implementing Harm Reduction Strategies

Virginia has used SOR to support allowable harm reduction strategies.

### Rural Comprehensive Harm Reduction Sites

Two comprehensive harm reduction sites in rural southwest Virginia have used SOR to employ peer recovery specialists who provide harm reduction services to individuals.

### Harm Reduction and Hygiene Kit Distribution

A popular harm reduction strategy used by local health departments, mental health agencies, first responders, and free clinics across Virginia is the distribution of harm reduction and hygiene kits to individuals. These kits can include naloxone, fentanyl test strips, xylazine test strips, hand sanitizer, condoms, first aid supplies, dental care products, and resource referral information.

### Fentanyl Test Strips Distribution

In 2023, SOR-funded purchases included 26,304 fentanyl test strips, with 13,935 of them distributed. With an increased investment by SOR, these numbers are expected to noticeably increase during the 2024 grant year.

### Mobile Harm Reduction Programming

The SOR grant has awarded funding for five community mental health agencies to purchase mobile SUD treatment units, which also provide an array of harm reduction resources. Items and services include naloxone doses, fentanyl and/or xylazine test strips, referrals for HIV testing, and medical and dental services. Local mental health agencies operating the vehicles collaborate with community partners like faith-based organizations, local jails, libraries, free clinics, health departments, and community colleges to set up at their locations, all serving priority populations.

## Increasing Access to Treatment

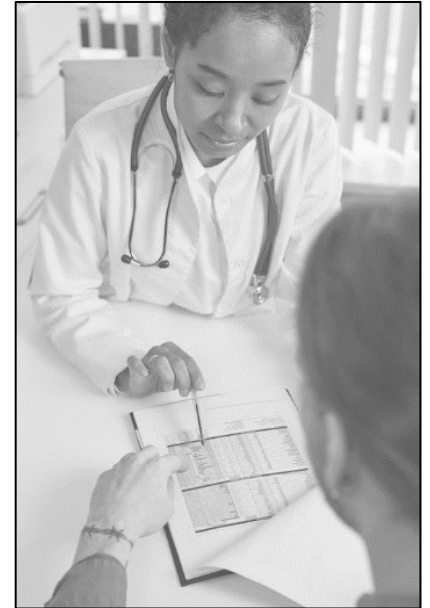
Virginia has used SOR to enhance access to OUD treatment by expanding MOUD services in all 40 of Virginia’s public local mental health agencies and funding mobile MOUD units.

### Mobile MOUD Units

SOR has funded five mobile MOUD vehicles in both rural, resource-desert areas and regions with high rates of overdoses and homelessness. Four mobile units were introduced in 2023. These mobile units, offering MOUD services across Virginia, have significantly increased access to care and eliminated transportation barriers for many individuals previously unable to reach traditional clinical settings. Additionally, the mobile units provide peer recovery and case management services, as well as referrals to medical and dental care.

### MOUD Services

Using SOR, the number of subrecipient public local mental health agencies offering MOUD has more than doubled, from 18 to 40 across the state. In 2023, 6,295 individuals received individual treatment services, 3,143 received group services, 1,400 received intensive outpatient programming, 2,374 participated in contingency management, 49 received residential treatment, and 5,334 received wraparound services. SOR funds have also bolstered the number of MOUD prescribers to 130 prescribers at subrecipient agencies.



## Supporting Long-Term Recovery

Virginia has used SOR to assist an average of 30,000 individuals annually in active recovery by expanding peer support services.

### Peer Recovery Services

SOR is the largest funder of peer recovery specialists in Virginia. They have been hired in CSBs, hospitals, VADOC, and community organizations, increasing access to peer support services in many settings and communities. SOR has also supported Virginia’s Office of Recovery Services in building an online platform that facilitates training registration and certification for individuals seeking to become certified peer recovery specialists.

### Peer Recovery Services at the S.E.E. Center

The S.E.E. Crisis Center offers a variety of recovery-oriented groups and meetings, as well as opportunities to speak with someone about mental health conditions or SUD recovery. The crisis walk-in center employs seven SOR-funded peer recovery specialists to meet with individuals from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

### Hospital Emergency Department Peer Recovery Services

In 2023, 579 individuals received SOR-funded peer recovery services in more than 30 hospital emergency departments. This number has grown significantly since 2018, with more than 30 hospitals now offering peer recovery services either directly or in partnership with a local SUD services provider.

### Peer Support Integrated Across the Continuum of Care

Over the past five years, SOR subgrantees have highlighted numerous ways peer supporters are being integrated into programs and efforts to provide support across the continuum of care. Some examples include participating in prevention activities, such as coalition meetings or drug take-back events; planning community events like recovery month celebrations; attending or co-presenting prevention webinars and trainings; developing programming and resources, such as harm reduction kits; providing REVIVE! training and supporting naloxone distribution; and co-facilitating clinical groups in collaboration with treatment providers.



## Reaching & Serving Populations of Focus

Virginia has identified several subpopulations for targeted initiatives: parenting women, LGBTQI+ communities, Hispanic or Latino/Latina individuals, people experiencing homelessness, people in criminal justice settings, and young adults in higher education.

### Piedmont CSB – Grace House and Pearl Program

Piedmont CSB, located in rural southwest Virginia, has used SOR to open the first recovery residence for women with young children. When it opened in 2021, it was the only one of its kind in the region. Piedmont plans to renovate the home's upstairs next year, adding two additional bedrooms.

### Peter's Place – Virginia's Recovery Residence

In 2021, the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences used SOR to open Virginia's first recovery residence for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The mission of Peter's Place is to provide compassionate and accessible housing, resources, and trauma-informed care to LGBTQIA+ individuals seeking recovery support.

### VADOC Medication-Assisted Treatment Re-Entry Initiative (MATRI)

SOR enabled the piloting of MOUD services in 13 VADOC facilities. The initiative proved so successful that VADOC has absorbed an increasing percentage of its funding each year. In addition to administering MOUD medications like Vivitrol and buprenorphine to participants in MATRI, 1,800 take-home naloxone kits were distributed to individuals re-entering their communities.

### Treatment Services in Justice-Involved Settings

Community organizations are supporting treatment services in justice settings across Virginia. With the support of SOR, 18 CSBs provide treatment services in recovery courts, jails, and some VADOC facilities. As of 2023, 44 programs were established to provide treatment in justice settings. In these settings, 771 individuals received MOUD services and 1,321 received non-MOUD treatment services. Non-MOUD treatment services include group and individual treatment services, intensive outpatient treatment, contingency management, residential treatment, and wraparound services.

### Justice-Involved Peer Recovery Services

Since 2018, the number of SOR-funded peer supporters working in justice system settings (e.g., jails, prisons, drug/recovery courts) across Virginia has increased to 45. Services provided in these settings included

individual support, peer-facilitated groups, connection with resources following release, transportation, and discharge planning. The number of justice-involved individuals receiving peer recovery services has increased every year and totaled 2,142 for the 2022 SOR grant year.

### Behavioral Health Equity Mini-Grants

Each year, the DBHDS Office of Behavioral Health Wellness provides up to \$150,000 for community programs that demonstrate opioid/stimulant misuse prevention for underserved populations. Examples include LGBTQIA+ youth summer programs, a Vietnamese radio program, training peer recovery specialists for a new Hispanic women immigrants program, and Strength in Peers, which assists community members who are homeless and recovering, among others.

### Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs)

SOR enabled “Rams in Recovery,” a model CRP based at Virginia Commonwealth University, to share its success and assist other campuses across Virginia in building their own CRPs. It offers robust support for recovery students, including a recovery scholars’ program, recovery housing, a recovery clubhouse, and weekly recovery meetings on campus. These CRPs provide a welcoming space for students and staff in recovery, as well as community education and outreach on how to be a recovery ally to all campus and community members.

Higher education campuses implementing Rams in Recovery include Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, Radford University, the University of Richmond, Mary Washington University, Longwood University, the University of Lynchburg, Wytheville Community College, and New River Community College.

Over the past five years, CRPs supported nine programs, including 5,498 individual recovery sessions, 4,303 recovery meetings, and 646 events. In 2023, CRPs consistently supported approximately 200 students and conducted 60 Recovery Ally trainings.



**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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