

# ALABAMA

## USE OF STR/SOR GRANT FUNDS TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS

### Background on opioid-specific grants to States

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administers the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis (STR) and State Opioid Response (SOR) grant programs. These grants aim to address the opioid crisis by increasing access to treatment, reducing unmet treatment need, and reducing opioid overdose related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery activities for opioid use disorder (OUD) in the States. States received a total of \$500 million for each of FY 2017 and FY 2018 through STR. Additionally, in FY 2018, States received an additional \$1 billion in new funding through the SOR grants. In FY 2019, States received \$1.5 billion through SOR. Eligible applicants for both STR and SOR are the State alcohol and drug agencies.

### Allocations for Alabama

Alabama received \$7.9 million through STR for each of FY 2017 and 2018, and \$13.7 million through SOR in FY 2018. In FY 2019, Alabama received a total of \$20.8 million through SOR.

### Overview of Alabama's efforts to address the opioid crisis

The State of Alabama set the following priorities for the use of STR/SOR funding:

- 1) Expansion of medication-assisted treatment (MAT), particularly in populations or areas where disparities in access exist or where OUD is most prevalent;
- 2) Outreach to providers to increase the provision of MAT;
- 3) Continuation of prevention efforts from the strategic plan;
- 4) Introduction of publicly funded evidence-based recovery housing; and
- 5) Improvement in the State's coordination efforts and data analytics to better plan and implement its strategic response to the crisis

## Primary prevention: stopping opioid misuse before it starts

- **Collaborating with local coalitions:** The ADMH Opioid Management Team collaborates with State and local jurisdictions to promote, educate, and engage all partners on the STR/SOR project. This includes promotion and education through meetings on the opportunities that are available through the grant funding; hosting events that include raising awareness and education on opioids; as well as training and technical assistance with key partners/stakeholders. The prevention providers continue collaboration efforts at the local level with the implementation of the 6 SAMHSA prevention strategies.

ADMH has identified 10 certified prevention providers to implement the STR/SOR grant within the State in 16 of its 67 counties. The prevention providers collaborate with local coalitions to implement SAMHSA's six strategies, including environmental strategies, education, information dissemination, alternative strategies, problem identification, and community-based processes (CBP). Local coalitions particularly use the CBP strategy to build, strengthen, and retain coalitions, and to engage and strengthen community buy-in.

- The 10 prevention providers are implementing the SAMHSA prevention strategies within high-need areas, reaching communities that serve 5,000 -50,000 individuals.
- Various prevention strategies include:
  - *Environmental:* promotion of prescription drug take-back days, permanent drop boxes, drug incinerators, and changes in college campus policies.
  - *Education:* the utilization of evidence-based curriculums.
  - *Information dissemination:* community health fairs, speaking engagements, media campaigns, and more.
- **Training and technical assistance:** The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) Opioid Management Team works to ensure that the prevention providers and local coalitions receive the training and technical assistance (T/TA) necessary to implement all strategies. This T/TA is provided through partnerships with federal agencies, State agencies, and local community initiatives and networks.

The Alabama Opioid Training Institute is one of the initiatives. It offers Live Educational Events targeting Healthcare Providers and Laypersons

- a. The first of the CME programs were held in Fairhope and Huntsville on June 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and June 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, respectively. ADMH staff were in attendance on each of those days. The attendance numbers are as follows:
  - i. June 18<sup>th</sup> – 57 attendees
  - ii. June 19<sup>th</sup> – 90 attendees

- iii. June 26<sup>th</sup> -- 44 attendees
    - iv. June 27<sup>th</sup> -- 43 attendees
  - b. To date, 238 have attended CME events and 70 have attended community events.
  - c. Registration for events in July/August/September 2019:
    - i. CME – 236 currently registered for these events
    - ii. Community Programs – 343 currently registered for these events
- **Targeting special populations:** Prevention efforts are specifically targeting high-risk youth, college students, and pregnant women. ADMH aims to improve health disparities for the populations of focus by identifying each population's needs, then developing and implementing policies and services for them that align with the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services.

## Increasing access to treatment and recovery services

Alabama is using a variety of methods to increase access to evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorders and to support individuals in recovery:

- **Courage for All:** Media campaign to promote awareness of OUD
  - The campaign's website houses resources designed to educate families, friends, co-workers, and community agencies about opioid misuse and provide strategies for locating services.
  - To date, the Courage for All campaign has reached people at multiple university sporting events. In addition, more than 41 businesses have partnered with ADMH to utilize the Courage for All materials within their establishments.
  - For more information, visit [www.courageforall.com](http://www.courageforall.com)
- **Access to MAT**
  - The use of FDA-approved medication for opioid use disorders was expanded by providing reimbursement for buprenorphine and naltrexone.
  - As a result of STR/SOR funding, 25 agencies have added MAT to their roster of services. This represents 47% of the ADMH certified agencies who had not previously provided MAT.
  - Of ADMH's 21 opioid treatment programs (OTPs), 14 (67%) have received SOR funding. This funding has allowed these OTPs to provide services to individuals who could not previously afford medication.
- **24/7 helpline:** ADMH launched a 24/7 peer-run helpline that is peer run for anyone to call and receive assistance in accessing treatment.
  - The number (1-844-307-1760) is promoted through ADMH's opioid webpage.
  - As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2,907 calls were received by people in counties across Alabama.
  - Of the 2,907 callers, 2,197 of them received referrals or information about treatment resources.

- **Expansion of the recovery workforce:** STR and SOR resources helped ADMH increase the number of full-time Certified Recovery Support Specialists (CRSS) across the State by 64%.

## Overdose reversal efforts: saving lives

STR/SOR funding allowed ADMH to increase availability of naloxone in unserved areas of the State. These kits were distributed to ADMH providers, community-based organizations, and first responders throughout Alabama. To date, over 11,000 kits have been distributed. There have been 34 reported overdose reversals to date.

## Positive outcomes

Alabama has achieved the following outcome measures as reported at the time of admission and at the time of discharge:

- *Employment:* There was an 18% increase in the number of participants that reported having full-time employment.
- *Criminal Justice:* There was a 9% decrease in the number of participants that reported having been arrested.
- *Homelessness:* There was a 33% decrease in the number of participants that reported being homeless.
- *Self-Help Activities:* There was a 41% increase in the number of participants that reported attending self-help activities.

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