

Addressing Opioid Misuse and Disorders: The Impact of State Targeted Response and State Opioid Response Grants

Background on State Targeted Response and State Opioid Response Grants

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. The STR program was designed 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 support activities for opioid use disorder (OUD). Following STR, the SOR program similarly aims to address the opioid crisis by increasing access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) using the three Food and Drug Administration (FDA)–approved medications for treatment of OUD and through the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery activities for OUD. In addition, the SAMHSA SOR program supports evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery support services to address stimulant misuse and use disorders, including for cocaine and methamphetamine.

In FY 2017 and FY 2018, grantees received a total of \$1 billion through STR. From FY 2018 through FY 2020, states, territories, and jurisdictions received a total of \$4 billion in SOR grants.

Single State Agency (SSA): Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Behavioral Health

In FY 2017 and FY 2018, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Behavioral Health received a total of \$4 million in STR funding. From FY 2018 through FY 2020, the state received a total of \$13.4 million in SOR funding.

Overview of Nebraska’s efforts to address opioid misuse and disorders

Nebraska aims to reduce the incidence of prescription and illicit opioid misuse and addiction through ongoing collaboration between practitioners, experts, and leaders across the continuum of care. The state has been focusing on prevention strategies and workforce capacity and development. Through the Nebraska Coalition to Prevention Opioid Abuse, the following strategic initiatives emerged:

- Educate opioid prescribers and dispensers regarding best practices and requirements for Nebraska’s prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP)
- Expand public awareness of opportunities for prescription drug take-back
- Promote awareness of opioid misuse through the statewide Dose of Reality and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Rx Awareness advertising campaigns, school presentations, and other forums
- Educate prescribers and dispensers on comprehensive pain management guidelines

- Expand the number of MAT providers for OUD
- Provide training for health professions students and providers on evidence-based diagnosis and treatment of pain and OUDs
- Reduce barriers for treating OUD in primary care settings
- Expand naloxone availability and training for law enforcement, first responders, and community members

Innovative service delivery models

- MAT expansion
- Physical health, substance use, and mental health care integration
- Naloxone distribution program
- Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes)

Building workforce capacity

Nebraska is conducting prescriber education, including promoting Drug Addiction Treatment Act (DATA) waiver certification. Training and education efforts are focused on integrating physical health, substance use, and mental health to accommodate the number of counties in Nebraska experiencing workforce shortages. Through partnership with the Nebraska Medical Association (NMA), primary care providers are being educated on MAT and waiver certification. The NMA is working to coordinate ongoing prescriber mentorship for these newly certified prescribers.

The state also supports, in partnership with additional funding sources, Addiction Medicine Intensive Training and Service Delivery housed in the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Family Medicine department to support residents in obtaining specialized addiction medicine education and DATA waiver certification. The state also developed an Executive Fellowship also housed at UNMC, which gives practicing providers a 1-month addiction medicine experience with one-on-one training and work toward their DATA waiver certification.

Collaborating with public and private entities

Nebraska’s Behavioral Health System has six regional health authorities (RBHAs) that are responsible for local network prevention, treatment, and recovery initiatives, such as partnering with prevention coalitions and network treatment providers.

Preventing opioid misuse before it starts

The state utilizes several coalitions throughout the six RBHAs to deploy prevention strategies in communities. Nebraska’s prevention efforts consist of implementing evidence-based prevention practices, primary prevention initiatives, naloxone distribution, and overdose education. The state has also held community drug take-back events, which have collected over 4,100 pounds of medication. Funding has also supported the Nebraska MEDS coalition with drug disposal containers. Since September of 2019, over 70,000 pounds of medications have been collected.

Education and public awareness

All RBHAs are participating in awareness campaigns, including the statewide Dose of Reality campaign and the CDC Rx Awareness campaign, through local media outlets. In coordination with the Nebraska

Division of Public Health, coalitions aid in prescriber education on opioid prescribing guidelines. Coalitions are also distributing educational materials and prescription lock boxes.

Nebraska partners with the RBHAs in the distribution of drug deactivation pouches for an additional opportunity for drug disposal. Over 4,200 drug deactivation pouches have been distributed free of charge to organizations and consumers across the state.

Overdose reversal efforts: saving lives

Nebraska has purchased and distributed over 5,000 naloxone kits. In partnership with the Division of Public Health, naloxone kits distributed by law enforcement and first responders are given pre- and post-cards. The pre- and post-cards are an attempt to gather information about when the kits are distributed (pre) and what the outcome of the naloxone use was (post). The Division of Public Health is gathering data from the cards. Additionally, the Division of Public Health is in the process of contracting with ODMAP to track overdose reversal information.

Through a partnership including the RBHAs and the Nebraska Pharmacists Association (NPA), Nebraska's naloxone distribution program distributes naloxone either to consumers at risk themselves or to those who know someone at risk for an opioid overdose, at no cost to the consumer or the pharmacy. The pharmacies sign an agreement with the NPA, participate in pharmacist training related to naloxone, collect and submit eligibility forms from individuals receiving a free kit, and provide education to the individual about opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone. This program has expanded to 16 pharmacies actively distributing naloxone, with an additional 15 pharmacies expected to be distributing in the near future.

Increasing access to treatment

Project ECHO virtual case consultations provide a platform that connects a hub team of experts in pain management and substance misuse with health care providers and other stakeholders across the state. Each ECHO session consists of a 15- to 20-minute didactic education presentation followed by a de-identified case presentation from a participant who then receives consultation from the hub team of experts as well as other providers on the calls. The participant then receives follow-ups on future calls to see if additional consultation is needed. These virtual consultations help to address the behavioral health workforce shortages seen by many rural counties in the state by connecting experts to other practitioners across the state engaged in direct patient care.

Supporting long-term recovery

The Division of Behavioral Health partners with The Addictions Academy for a quarterly OUD training geared toward counselors, therapists, peer support specialists, prevention specialists, community health educators, and other behavioral health workforce leaders. This training assists in reducing stigma and increasing competencies for those who may work with individuals with an OUD on MAT.

The State has a partnership with Oxford House and funds employment for three outreach workers to support OUD populations for connections to recovery housing and education for providers and the community.

Serving special populations

Nebraska is fortunate to have a relatively low rate of fatal opioid overdoses compared with other states. This allows Nebraska to broadly target its services to encompass all disabilities, age groups, income levels, households, and race and ethnic groups in terms of OUD prevention, treatment, and recovery. The state focuses heavily on prevention activities and workforce development in order to safeguard against any spike in opioid overdoses, both fatal and nonfatal.

Demonstrating outcomes for a healthier future

- Over 38,900 individuals have been served through evidence-based individual opioid prevention programming and education. With an increase in opioid awareness media campaigns, there has been an estimated 5 million “impressions” made through TV and radio spots.
- Over 3,300 prescription lock boxes have been distributed along with educational materials. These disposal boxes collected over 70,000 pounds of controlled and noncontrolled medications.
- Over 4,100 pounds of medication have been collected at community drug take-back events.
- Project ECHO held 27 sessions under the STR grant with a total of 614 participants. There were a total of 329 participants in 41 sessions held under SOR funding. An additional 15 sessions are planned through the end of FY 2021. The project is set to continue through FY 2022.
- Nearly 600 individuals have been served with MAT.
- Nebraska has 119 practitioners with their DATA waiver to prescribe buprenorphine for MAT. Through prescriber outreach, Nebraska is estimated to have 97 prescribers who are actively prescribing in their practice.
- Over 5,000 naloxone kits have been distributed.
- Over 4,200 packets of drug deactivation pouches have been distributed.

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