Enhancing Prevention Efforts to Combat the Opioid Epidemic

The 21st Century CURES Act enacted by Congress in December 2016 recognized that states need significant help to combat the opioid epidemic across the nation. It is designed to modernize health care through enhanced innovation, research and communication, leading to better patient outcomes. The Act also makes new funding available to states to combat the prescription opioid and heroin crisis through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA will provide up to $970 million to states and territories over the next two years, beginning in 2017.

As one of the states hit hardest by the opioid epidemic, Ohio is among the largest recipients of grant funding. Over the next two years, Ohio will receive $26 million per year that will focus on several core principles, one of which is the enhancement of prevention efforts targeted at preventing opioid abuse and misuse as well as stigma and trauma related to the opioid crisis. Efforts are focused on the utilization of evidence-based practices, which have demonstrated significant outcomes and often have been chosen as a result of the Strategic Prevention Framework (Figure 1). Ohio has instituted the Strategic Prevention Framework, built on a community-based risk and protective factors approach and a series of guiding principles, to ensure that communities are making data informed decisions regarding prevention programming.

Evidence Based Practices

In Ohio, communities and practitioners often do not have adequate resources to implement and sustain theory-driven, scientific-based interventions. However, with the continued advancement of prevention science the field has seen increased implementation to fidelity, enhanced cost efficiencies and returns on investment, and increased sustainability. Evidence-based practices are designed to elicit behavior and attitude change of participants, whether this is focused on individuals or populations. It is important that prevention providers go through the Strategic Prevention Framework process to identify what the problem is, who their participants will be, and what program they will implement to acquire the desired outcomes. Continued support for prevention evidence-based practices enables Ohio to focus on interventions that create both individual and environmental change that influence conditions that may lead to engagement in risky behaviors that are known antecedents to substance use, abuse, and misuse.

**PAX Good Behavior Game**

Training and technical assistance opportunities will be available statewide in order to promote the PAX Good Behavior Game in Ohio schools. The PAX Good Behavior Game is a universal preventive intervention used by teachers and schools to teach self-regulation, self-management, and self-control in young people. The intervention is designed to create an environment that is conducive to learning, improve academic success, and improve mental health and substance use outcomes later in life.

In collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education and their State Support Teams (SSTs), approximately 48 regional trainings for 1000 new teachers will be offered along with training for about 120 new PAX Partners that will work with these teachers and/or existing PAX schools. There will also be professional development/booster training for 2000 existing PAX teachers which will bring them up to speed on the 4th edition update. All teachers and PAX Partners that are trained will also gain access to a new web-based application for PAX, with instruction on utilization.

**Botvin LifeSkills Training**

Botvin LifeSkills training and technical assistance will be provided statewide and will include both the middle school...
The University has been tasked with receiving training, technical assistance, support, and coaching. Eleven Ohio organizations have been chosen to serve as the recovery supports to coordinate work among partners. Each organization dedicated to guide the work for the group. Backbone organizations and will participate in the Community Collective Impact process. Each backbone organization will receive $20,000 to implement their efforts and will develop a sustainability plan in order to continue their efforts to guide long-term change.

**Expansion of Existing Evidence-Based Practices**

In addition to the statewide expansion of Botvin LifeSkills and the PAX Good Behavior Game, communities will also have the opportunity to expand their existing prevention evidence-based practices that have demonstrated a high return on investment and have shown significant outcomes through national or local evaluation. Numerous communities will be able to take advantage of the opportunity to expand their evidence-based practices and will develop sustainability plans that will enable them to continue the interventions after the funding period.

**Community Collective Impact**

The Collective Impact approach is a proven method to impact complex social issues including substance abuse, by bringing together leaders from private, public, and nonprofit sectors to focus on a common agenda that will impact multiple shared indicators around opioid use, misuse, and overdose death that are critical to Ohio’s success. The collective impact framework calls for communities to come together to develop a shared vision for impact; establish shared measures to track progress; coordinate mutually reinforcing activities across prevention, treatment, and recovery supports; maintain open and continuous communication amongst all partners; and use a backbone organization dedicated to guide the work for the group.

Eleven Ohio organizations have been chosen to serve as the backbone organizations and will participate in the Community Collective Impact process. Each backbone entity will guide the process of a long-term community level effort to improve population level outcomes related to opioid abuse and misuse. Backbone organizations will serve as agents of change while also providing supporting infrastructure to coordinate work among partners. Each backbone organization and their community team will receive training, technical assistance, support, and coaching from Ohio University. Ohio University has been tasked with serving as the Collective Impact State Leadership team and will provide expertise on the collective impact approach and SAMHSA’s Strategic Prevention Framework. Each participating backbone organization will receive $20,000 to implement their efforts and will develop a sustainability plan in order to continue their efforts to guide long-term change.

**Preventing Trauma at the Community Level**

Education and support related to community trauma will be provided to communities participating in the collective impact approach. The program aims to encourage community-wide healing and resilience building to prevent future community trauma. The Prevention Institute will provide training and technical assistance to collective impact backbone organizations and community teams, which will focus on how to mobilize around opioid overdoses and related deaths without creating more trauma. A statewide summit focused on addressing adverse community experiences and how addressing community trauma creates community resilience will be offered in the Spring of 2018.

**Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Stigma Reduction**

The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) has developed a MAT Stigma reduction program and the Prevention Action Alliance will be offering information sessions and opportunities for community coalitions engaged in the Statewide Prevention Coalition Association (SPCA) to participate in additional individualized training and technical assistance around this issue. It is imperative that our communities understand, support and help to decrease the stigma around medication assisted treatment.

**Implementation of a Statewide Drug Take Back Program**

A drug takeback program, aimed at reducing the diversion and misuse of prescription drugs, will be developed in conjunction with the Board of Pharmacy and the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The program enables law enforcement to drop off medication from their drug collection receptacles in the following six counties throughout Ohio: Madison, Franklin, Summit, Wood, Athens, and Guernsey. Pharmaceuticals will be packaged in 55-gallon drums and transported by a contracted vendor to the incineration site with the escort of a trooper. The vendor will complete a witnessed burn of the medications to ensure that there is no diversion.