

New Strategies to Combat the Opiate Crisis in Ohio (2018)

Ohio has one of the nation's most aggressive and comprehensive approaches to combating the ever-changing opiate crisis through law enforcement and state regulations, prevention, expanding access to the opiate overdose reversal drug naloxone, treatment and recovery. Building upon a broad range of [initiatives implemented from 2011-2018](#), Ohio is pursuing new and expanded initiatives in 2018 to combat drug abuse, addiction and overdoses.



Common Sense Reforms to Prevent Pain Medication Abuse – State regulatory boards enacting new rules for prescribing opioids to safely manage pain and prevent pain medication abuse.

New state rules are expected to take effect in November 2018 to support safer and more responsible prescribing of opioids for chronic pain (12+ weeks) and sub-acute pain (6-12 weeks).

Stronger Regulation of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers – More than 500 wholesale pharmaceutical distributors who do business in Ohio will be required to follow new state regulations designed to flag suspicious orders their customers make for prescription opioids and other controlled substances, according to new rules being developed by the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy. Pharmaceutical wholesalers purchase drugs from manufacturers and sell them to 20,000 pharmacies, clinics and hospitals throughout Ohio.

Under the proposed regulations, wholesalers will have to uniformly and electronically report to the Pharmacy Board suspicious orders for controlled substance medications and customers who the wholesaler has refused to sell prescription medications based upon a diversion risk assessment conducted by the wholesaler.

Orders that wholesalers believe to be suspicious must already be reported to the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, and Ohio's new regulations will prohibit wholesalers from shipping suspicious orders without reviewing them to determine whether they pose a diversion risk.

Wholesalers also will be required to learn more about their customers, including conducting questionnaires and reviewing drug utilization reports so that they have deeper data sets to use when evaluating whether or not an order is suspicious.

Increased Penalties for Trafficking in and Possession of Fentanyl-Related Compounds – Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic narcotic that is much more potent than heroin. Illegally produced fentanyl and related street drugs like carfentanil were involved in 71 percent of all unintentional overdose deaths in Ohio in 2017.

Governor John R. Kasich signed legislation into law increasing penalties for drug trafficking violations, drug possession violations, and aggravated funding of drug trafficking when the drug involved in the offense is a fentanyl-related compound.

Expanding Local Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Initiatives – Ohio Department of Health is using a four-year, \$8.2 million federal grant to expand local prescription drug overdose prevention efforts in high-risk counties.

Develop a local coalition of community partners critical to the success of a comprehensive drug overdose prevention program.

Increase the use of Ohio's opioid prescriber guidelines by working with area physicians and hospitals. These guidelines were developed in conjunction with medical professionals to help patients manage their pain while reducing the risk of addiction and overdose, and reducing the number of leftover prescription opioids available for abuse.

Work with area physicians and hospitals to integrate the use of Ohio's prescription drug monitoring program, the web-based Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS), into their clinical practice. Before prescribing an opioid, a prescriber is required to check OARRS to determine what other prescription drugs a patient already may be taking that may put them at risk for abuse or overdose.

Expand access to the opioid overdose reversal drug naloxone to save lives by working with community partners.

Develop systems to connect people at risk of a drug overdose, such as individuals released from jail, with naloxone or other community resources.

Pursuing Scientific Breakthroughs to Battle Drug Abuse and Addiction – The Ohio Third Frontier Commission is using up to \$20 million to help combat the opioid epidemic. It has provided funding for an initiative to identify technologies that hold the promise of treating pain without prescription opioids. It also has launched the “Ohio Opioid Technology Challenge,” looking for new ideas in the battle against drug abuse and addiction.

In September 2018, the Ohio Third Frontier Commission awarded \$2.4 million to support 12 innovative projects that hold promise in diagnosing and preventing opioid addiction and overdose, connecting people to resources, and protecting first responders from exposure.

Expanding Access to Opiate Overdose Reversal Drug Naloxone – Additional state funding to purchase naloxone for first responders (EMS and law enforcement) and Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) programs.

Project DAWN is a community-based program supported by the Ohio Department of Health that offers naloxone kits and education to people who use drugs and their family and friends to administer in the event of an opiate overdose until first responders arrive. Today, there are 98 Project DAWN sites in 60 counties.

The Ohio Department of Health invested an additional \$1.2 million at the end of state fiscal year 2018 in the purchase of naloxone for first responders and Project DAWN programs. This investment was in addition to \$2 million allocated in the 2018-19 state budget to expand access to naloxone through by starting or expanding Project DAWN programs.

Addressing Opioid Impact on Workforce – Striving to improve the health and safety of Ohio’s workforce, the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation (BWC) will launch a pilot program in October 2018 to support employers willing to hire workers struggling to overcome an opioid addiction.

The Opioid Workplace Safety Program will provide up to \$5 million over two years to help employers in Montgomery, Ross and Scioto counties hire, manage and retain workers in recovery from an opioid addiction.

BWC will partner with county Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health boards to coordinate the pilot program. The boards will identify eligible employers and employees, disperse funding and measure results.

BWC will cover reimbursement for pre-employment, random and reasonable suspicion drug testing; training for managers/supervisors to help them better manage a workforce that includes individuals in recovery; and a forum/venue for so-called “second-chance” employers to share success stories that will encourage others to hire workers in recovery.

Expanding Initiatives Addressing Opiate Crisis – The Ohio Department of Health received almost \$5.1 million in federal funding to support the state and local response to Ohio’s opiate crisis.

Develop and implement protocols for best-practice treatment of post-overdose patients in emergency departments, including linkage to opioid use disorder treatment.

Connect individuals newly released from corrections facilities with opioid use disorder treatment and access to naloxone.

Utilize federally qualified health centers to manage outreach, peer navigation and community health workers to connect individuals with opioid use disorder to treatment and other wrap-around services.

Partner with HIV and sexually transmitted disease prevention and early intervention sites to pilot comprehensive harm reduction initiatives and develop systems for referral to treatment and other wrap-around services.

Educate healthcare providers in order to address “compassion fatigue” and reduce the stigma associated with opioid use disorder which may act as a barrier to medication-assisted treatment.

Complete a risk assessment to identify areas of Ohio at risk for HIV or hepatitis C outbreaks associated with injection drug use.

Fund training for Ohio coroners and death scene investigators involving drug overdose cases to conduct comprehensive investigations of overdose fatalities, including gathering more robust information to inform prevention efforts.

21st Century Cures Act Funding to Combat Ohio's Opioid Epidemic – The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is using \$26 million through the federal 21st Century Cures Act to help fight Ohio's opioid epidemic at the state and local levels. The funding is being used to support drug abuse prevention initiatives, medication-assisted treatment, Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment, recovery supports, substance use disorder workforce development, and addressing secondary trauma among first responders to drug overdoses (law enforcement, EMTs, fire personnel, etc.).

Expand the Maternal Opiate Medical Support (MOMs) program to help improve birth and recovery outcomes for women who are pregnant and addicted to opiates.

Fund community-led opiate overdose rapid response teams, which include social workers and peer supporters along with first responders as they respond to overdose emergencies. The teams work to connect people who survive a drug overdose to substance use disorder treatment and other needed community services.

Provide free training for Ohio's teachers on classroom techniques to support student resiliency and other protective factors against drug use.

Develop and distribute resources to support the mental health and resiliency against the effects of secondary trauma of those working on the frontlines of the opiate epidemic.

Enlist non-behavioral health professionals in the fight against opiates by offering opioid prescribers free training on substance use disorder and medication treatment options.

Fund activities aimed at reducing the number of individuals with substance use disorder who are in the criminal justice systems through sequential intercept mapping and educational opportunities for criminal justice professionals.

State Opiate Response Grant Funding to Combat Ohio's Opiate Epidemic –The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is slated to receive \$55 million a year for up to two years in federal funding to expand prevention efforts, expand access to treatment, strengthen family supports and empower communities.

Raise public awareness about the opiate epidemic, providing communities with drug take back bags, and improving medical school opioid prescribing training.

Expand access to treatment by strengthening Ohio's telemedicine programs, growing the number of professionals qualified to provide behavioral health services, embedding peer supporters in a variety of settings across the continuum of care, and investing in treatment provider capacity to attract and retain top talent.

Strengthen family supports by providing services to more women who are pregnant and addicted, equipping foster and kinship caregivers with the knowledge and emotional supports they need to support healthy children, incentivizing the development of family-appropriate recovery housing options, expanding evidence based interventions when a parent is struggling with opiate use disorder, and expanding resources and training for those working with families on the frontlines of the opiate epidemic.

Empower communities through an innovative pilot to help Ohio businesses hire and retain individuals in recovery, increased access to screening and referral throughout the community, and public awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma and increase awareness about local treatment options and resources.