



Introduction to the Community Reference

1



The abuse and misuse of prescription drugs in Colorado is one of the state's major public health crises.

In particular, the misuse of opioid pain medications such as oxycodone (such as Percocet and OxyContin) and hydrocodone (such as Vicodin) has created severe problems for Colorado's citizens and communities, resulting in an increase in substance use disorders and overdose deaths.

Prescription drug abuse is also linked to a rise in heroin use. Heroin is an opioid, and many heroin users first use prescription opioids before becoming addicted to heroin.

The human and economic cost of this crisis is staggering. In Colorado in 2017, 560 people died of overdoses that were linked to prescription opioids or heroin, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). That is up from 504 deaths in 2016, 472 deaths in 2015 – and 110 deaths in 2000.

Colorado's statistics follow national trends. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that in 2017 about 47,000 people died of drug overdoses that involved opioids, which is an average 130 Americans dying every day. The White House's Council of Economic Advisers estimated the true cost of the epidemic was \$504 billion in 2015 when factoring in health care costs, criminal justice spending, and lost productivity.

Colorado's Response

Communities across Colorado are trying to manage this crisis. Data and research show the problem knows no regional, gender, age, income, or other demographic bounds: it is truly an epidemic. As a result, medical providers, law enforcement, lawmakers, public health experts, concerned citizens, and many more have joined together to develop policies, programs, and partnerships to limit and repair the damage.

The state government is responding with a number of initiatives and campaigns. In 2013, then Gov. John Hickenlooper's administration created the *Colorado Plan to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse* to guide the fight against opioid abuse. The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention (Consortium) was established that year to help coordinate the state's response. In 2017, the Legislature formed the Opioid

and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Study Committee, a bipartisan committee that works with experts to understand the crisis and create legislation that has led to new funding, programs, and regulations. The committee's work resulted in several bills that were enacted in 2018 and 2019, and it will meet again during the summer of 2019.

State agencies are heavily involved. The Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Education, and the Department of Regulatory Agencies are all supporting programs that target the opioid crisis through prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.



Examples of statewide initiatives include OBH's Lift the Label public awareness campaign, which strives to reduce the stigma which prevents people from seeking treatment for opioid use disorder, and CDPHE's Take Meds Back medication disposal program. Former Attorney General John Suthers supported and funded the Take Meds Seriously public awareness campaign, and former Attorney General Cynthia Coffman launched the Naloxone for Life initiative, which supplies law enforcement agencies throughout Colorado with life-saving medication that can reverse opioid overdoses.

The Community Reference – A Tool for Local Efforts

The response has not been limited to federal and state initiatives. Community coalitions are forming and accomplishing important work at the grassroots level.

Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention: A Colorado Community Reference (Community Reference) was created by the Consortium and OBH with coalitions in mind, serving as a reference and resource guide for communities to use in support of new and established initiatives that fight prescription drug misuse and abuse. The information and guidance in this reference have been developed by federal public and behavioral health agencies, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); state agencies including OBH and the CDPHE; the Consortium; and community coalitions, nonprofits, and businesses.

As Colorado communities identify which aspects of the issue they want to address, they can select from resources that are already available to take action quickly and economically. Each community is unique, and so it is important to view the *Community Reference* as a menu of choices and not as a prescribed roadmap. Each community should put together a set of activities that are the right fit based on available resources, the community sectors engaged in the effort, political support, and local conditions. Those living or working in a community know what is best suited to their needs.

The *Community Reference* is meant to encompass the activities of many different organizations that work on various aspects of the opioid crisis. Some sections are informative and are meant to explain what is being done currently to prevent and fight misuse and abuse. Some sections contain the latest statewide data and links to other data sources that can be used to understand the scope of the crisis, create educational materials, and identify who might be at risk. Other sections contain campaign and communications materials that have been developed as part of public awareness campaigns and can be downloaded and distributed. These materials often have been tested and researched at great expense and may be more cost-effective and efficient than creating a local campaign.

Material in the *Community Reference* is, in general, free to use and distribute for noncommercial purposes. If you have questions about anything in this guide or how best to use the information, please contact the Consortium at info@corxconsortium.org.



Where to Start

You will find information and links to additional resources organized by topic throughout the *Community Reference*. Below is a list of resources that should be useful to almost every community. These are some of the state and national resources that provide easy-to-use introductory information.

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

The Consortium was established in 2013 to help coordinate the state's response to the prescription drug misuse and abuse epidemic and is a good starting point if you have questions or need support. The Consortium is a collection of hundreds of engaged stakeholders addressing all the areas described in this *Community Reference*. This includes community members, regulators, researchers, prescribers, funders, local, regional, and state law enforcement, as well as treatment and prevention providers. The Consortium operates from the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and

Pharmaceutical Sciences at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora.

More detailed information on the Consortium is available in Chapter Two. As you begin or continue this important work in your community, please reach out to info@corxconsortium.org with any questions. View the Consortium's website at www.corxconsortium.org.

The Office of Behavioral Health

OBH is highly involved in efforts related to the opioid crisis. The office has created a website explaining its role and linking to research and resources. There you will find everything from treatment locators and payment options to training resources and policy briefings. For more information, please visit www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/opioid-crisis-colorado-office-behavioral-healths-role-research-and-resources.

The Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Substance Abuse Prevention Project

Funded by OBH, the Statewide Training and Technical

Assistance Substance Abuse Prevention Project is a partnership with the OMNI Institute. It provides training and technical assistance to groups across the state working on substance abuse prevention. They have regionally located prevention coordinators who cover the entire state and are subject matter experts on local activities and substance abuse prevention. You may reach the OMNI Institute by emailing Ailala Kay, Director of Learning and Development, at akay@omni.com or calling 303-839-9422. View its website or find more information at www.obhpreventionservices.org.

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs)

The U.S. Congress created the national Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program in 1971 as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The AHECs were created to link the resources of university health science centers with local planning, educational, and clinical resources. Today, this network of health-related institutions provides multidisciplinary educational services to students, faculty, and local practitioners, ultimately improving health care delivery in medically underserved areas throughout our nation.

The Colorado AHEC program office (Aurora) and the six regional AHEC offices (Denver, Greeley, Pueblo, Alamosa, Durango, and Grand Junction) serve as liaisons between the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and local communities to offer planning, educational, and clinical resources resulting in local outreach and support systems. The Colorado AHECs are involved in the prescription drug misuse and abuse crisis within their regions and are a good resource. The AHEC website can be found by visiting www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/ahec/Pages/index.aspx.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.



SAMHSA has created a number of useful resources, including:

- The SAMHSA website about substance use treatment, including prescription drug misuse, is at www.samhsa.gov/topics/prescription-drug-misuse-abuse.
- SAMHSA's page about opioid overdoses and medication-assisted treatment is at www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/treatment/opioid-overdose.
- SAMHSA's Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit is online at www.store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services focused on protecting the health of Americans. The CDC considers opioid misuse to be a major public health issue and has created informative resources. The CDC website about opioid misuse is www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html.



National Institute on Drug Abuse

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is the branch of the National Institutes of Health dedicated to advancing scientific research on drug abuse and addiction. The NIDA website about opioids is www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids.

Treatment Resources

While the *Community Reference* discusses some treatment programs, it is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to treatment options. If you are looking for an Opioid Treatment Program, OBH has

created a list you can view at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/opioid-treatment-programs-otps.

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health has developed a database called LADDERS with information about substance use and mental health treatment providers. The database can be found at www.colorado.gov/ladders.

If you are having an emergency and need immediate support, contact Colorado Crisis Services. Its 24-hour hotline is 1-844-493-TALK (8255), and its website is www.coloradocrisisservices.org.

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Disclaimer

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