

Ohio's actions to address the opioid crisis

Kimberly Hall

TAKEAWAYS

State and local agencies must work together in a collaborative and integrated way to combat the opioid crisis.



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In Ohio, opioid misuse is a public health crisis; each day 13

Ohioans die from unintentional overdose.¹ The crisis affects not just individuals, but also families; when parents are unable to safely care for their children for any reason, including substance misuse, those children may be placed in foster care. The number of Ohio children in foster care has risen from about 12,800 in 2013 to nearly 16,000 in 2018.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine created the RecoveryOhio initiative, a statewide effort to address opioid misuse, with three goals: to offer direction for the state's prevention and education efforts; make treatment available to Ohioans in need; and provide support services for those in recovery and their families. RecoveryOhio uses a collaborative approach, with partners across state government, in the criminal justice system, and throughout communities. As part of this initiative, Governor DeWine created The RecoveryOhio Advisory Council, composed of stakeholders from across the state. The Governor asked the council to provide recommendations to improve mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in Ohio. In 2019, the council released an initial report that offered recommendations in a variety of areas including prevention, treatment and recovery supports, reducing stigma, and workforce development.² The council is continuing to meet and form solutions that address its recommendations. Examples of the council's recommendations include:

- Coordinating statewide prevention activities;
- Commissioning a statewide campaign to address stigma against people with mental illness and substance use disorders;
- Ensuring that each patient's treatment activities are determined by a qualified clinical professional;
- Promoting insurance coverage of medically necessary services; and
- Creating a comprehensive plan for safe, affordable, and high-quality housing for individuals with mental health issues and substance use disorders.

The council expects that the recommendations will serve as a framework for implementing a new continuum of care that includes prevention, treatment, and support services (see text box).

RecoveryOhio seeks to streamline and build on the many statewide initiatives that are already in place to address the opioid crisis. These include:

- **Take Charge Ohio**—designed to educate Ohioans about the risks of taking prescription opioids;
- **Start Talking**—gives parents, guardians, and educators the tools to start conversations with children and young adults about living healthy, drug-free lives;
- **Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone)**—provides free take-home kits containing Naloxone (also

Prevention	Early Intervention	Crisis Services	Treatment	Recovery Supports	Sustained Recovery
Interventions to help individuals develop the skills to act in a healthy manner and to create environments that support healthy behavior.	Screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment for individuals exhibiting symptoms of a mental health or substance use disorder.	Services for individuals who experience an emergency including drug overdose, psychosis, or a suicide attempt.	Outpatient, residential, and other services for individuals with a mental health or substance use disorder.	Services to help individuals who have completed treatment to rebuild their lives, including assistance with housing, family reunification, and employment.	Support to help individuals maintain wellness and recovery, including peer support and workforce development.

known as Narcan), a medication that blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and thus can temporarily reverse an overdose;

- **Ohio’s Automated Rx Reporting System**—tracks the dispensing of all controlled prescription drugs to patients to help avoid potentially life-threatening drug interactions, and also to identify those who are fraudulently obtaining prescription drugs from multiple providers; and
- **Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma)**—a family-centered early intervention program for families struggling with substance use disorder aimed at ensuring that more children can remain safely in their home, increasing rates of reunification for children placed in out-of-home care, and reducing the recurrence of child maltreatment.

In addition to these programmatic efforts, money has been allocated in the state budget to:

- Fund a public awareness education campaign;
- Create school prevention curricula and provide professional development for school personnel;
- Increase capacity in treatment centers;
- Expand specialized drug courts that provide supervision, drug and alcohol testing, treatment services, and immediate sanctions and incentives;
- Create the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center, a specialized criminal intelligence unit supporting local law enforcement in drug trafficking investigations; and
- Invest in Drug Task Forces.

Finally, the Department of Job and Family Services has several workforce initiatives aimed at expanding the number of workers in careers that address the effects of the crisis and promote economic growth and employment. This effort is supported by two grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide support to both employers and individuals. The first, the Trade and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker grant, will permit Ohio’s 16 participating counties to provide training and career services to dislocated workers seeking reentry into the workforce. The second, the National Health Emergency Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker grant, provides disaster-relief jobs and employment services to individuals in Ohio affected by the health and economic effects of widespread opioid use, addiction, and overdose. Collectively, these initiatives will help Ohio address the opioid crisis. ■

Kimberly Hall is Director of the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

¹Ohio Department of Health, “2017 Drug Overdose Report,” September 28, 2018, available at: https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/5deb684e-4667-4836-862b-cb5eb59acbd3/2017_OhioDrugOverdoseReport.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIKoNoJOooQO9DDDDM3000-5deb684e-4667-4836-862b-cb5eb59acbd3-moxPbu6

²RecoveryOhio Advisory Council Initial Report, March 2019, available at: https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/243a2827-052c-40e0-8b4f-fbd638add11a/RecoveryOhio_062019.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIKoNoJOooQO9DDDDM3000-243a2827-052c-40e0-8b4f-fbd638add11a-mJT5EDP