

Prescription drug and opioid misuse prevention

Program overview

Washington Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA's DBHR) and partnering agencies support opioid and prescription medication prevention strategies that align with the Washington State Opioid and Overdose Response Plan. Plans addressing the opioid crisis in Washington State were updated by HCA and partner agencies and organizations in 2021.

Prescription drug/opioid misuse is a critical health issue. Young adults ages 18-25 are the largest group misusing opioid pain relievers and other medications. Opioid misuse can lead to opioid use disorder and an increased risk of death from overdose. Most young people who misuse prescription drugs are taking medications prescribed to others, often friends or family members. Prescription medications continue to remain in private homes when they are no longer needed. Often these medications are not stored securely, which provides easy access to young people and others seeking medications.

HCA's DBHR is leading efforts to address the risks misusing opioids, illicit opioids, and prescription drugs. DBHR is implementing a collaborative, strategic plan with prevention campaign messaging, evidence-based and culturally attuned prevention education, prescriber education, and promoting increased utilization of the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP).

Prevention projects

Strategic plan development and opioid prevention workgroup

Prevention campaigns begin with workgroups of experts who create and evaluate a coordinated strategic plan among state agency partners to prevent prescription drug and opioid use.

DBHR staff are key members and leads of the Opioid Prevention Workgroup implementing the following goals and strategies of the Washington State Opioid Response Plan:

- Engaging our community to implement strategies to prevent opioid misuse, especially among youth
- Training and supporting health care providers to use best practices when prescribing opioids
- Increasing the use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program among health care providers to coordinate care
- Educating the public about the risks of opioid use, including overdose, through public education campaigns, such as the Starts with One campaign: www.getthefactsrx.com and www.watribalopioidsolutions.com
- HCA's DBHR partners with all Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) hospitals and clinics by providing opioid misuse prevention campaign materials to their prescribers.
- Promoting safe home storage and implementing a statewide drug-take back system
- Collaborating with law enforcement and stakeholders to decrease supply of illegal opioids

Evidence-based prevention education

Evidence-based education is proven to prevent prescription drug and opioid misuse, particularly among youth and young adults. These education activities are targeted for communities with the highest risk for opioid use disorder. Intentional, relevant, and evidence-based learning should reduce the number of youth and young adults using prescription pain relievers recreationally or using prescription drugs not prescribed to them.

Safe storage and disposal of medications

Promoting safe home storage and appropriate disposal options of prescription medications is shown to prevent misuse. Through expanding prevention campaign messaging with a keen focus on awareness of prescription drug misuse issues,

including disposal, health care settings and communities with higher risk for opioid use disorder can be safer and better informed. Objectives of this education campaign are to increase the number of adults who report safely and securely storing medication in the home and know how to properly return unused medications.

Prescriber education

Best practices among health care providers for prescribing opioids is promoted by expanding prescriber and public education in various healthcare settings and increasing the utilization of the PMP. Doing so will likely reduce the number of opioid prescriptions prescribed to youth and young adults and increase the utilization of the PMP.

Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI) coalitions and community-based organizations

Evidence-based education programs and drug take back events are implemented at the community level through Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI) and Community Based Organization (CBO) sites. In 2020, DBHR was awarded the SOR II grant to continue this work with 23 CPWI sites and 10 CBO grantees. In 2022, DBHR was awarded the SOR III grant to continue this work with 22 CPWI sites and eight CBO grantees. DBHR has applied for SOR IV which is a three-year grant from 2024 – 2027.

Each CPWI community has a Student Assistance Professional through the Student Assistance Prevention and Intervention Services Program. These professionals help support students through prevention, intervention, and referral services.

Eligibility requirements

CPWI coalitions, community-based organizations, and state agency partners who have demonstrated needs are eligible. Key leaders in turn demonstrate readiness and support to implement a project.

Authority

HCA is authorized as the single state agency to receive grants that focus on comprehensive opioid prevention strategies.

Budget

The SOR III grant provides close to \$5 million per year, 2022-2024, to continue this work.

The SPF Rx grant provides \$384k per year and is grant funded from 2021-2026.

The SABG grant provides support to the opioid prevention campaigns at \$614,000 per year.

All other prevention education and awareness efforts are unfunded and implemented with existing staff and resources.

People served

During the second year of the SOR III grant (2023-24), each month an average of approximately 2.5 million people were reached through information dissemination efforts and more than 15,000 youth and families received prevention services.

During the first three years of the SPF Rx grant (2021-23), all Washington State hospitals and clinics received guidance and materials on safe prescribing and information on safe storage and disposal of prescription medications to share with their patients.

Partners

This coordinated opioid prevention work continues through ongoing partnerships with the Washington State Department of Health, Labor and Industries; University of Washington; Washington State University; Washington State Hospital Association; Washington State Medical Association; Washington State Poison Center; and several other state agencies and local community-based organizations and providers supporting the goals of the Washington State Opioid Response Plan.

Oversight

Internal: HCA's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery

External: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/ Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

For more information

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<https://theathenaforum.org/prevention-priorities/opioid-misuse-prevention>