

Collaborating to Address the Opioid Crisis

Webinar Summary:

Collaborating to Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse and Overdose: A State-Level Perspective

Webinar Recording: <https://youtu.be/x9QY1IHnJ6I>

Effective collaboration is an evolving process influenced by ever-changing priorities, players, and demands. This webinar from SAMHSA's CAPT examines the value of collaborating with diverse partners as a strategy for expanding the reach, and deepening the impact, of activities to prevent prescription drug misuse and overdose. We also explore what "next-level" collaboration looks like for states and tribes, and hear from experts in the field who have successfully leveraged collaborations to strengthen their prevention outcomes.

For more information, visit the [webinar resource page](#) on the SAMHSA's website.

Exploring State-Level Collaborations

Substance use and misuse-related problems are increasingly complex and addressing them requires collaboration across multiple sectors—many of whom have not worked together historically. Some of the new partners that states are collaborating with to address prescription drug misuse and overdose, include:

- Treatment providers
- Recovery community
- Mental health providers
- Other state agencies
- Harm reduction programs
- Universities/colleges
- Law enforcement
- Active users
- Bystanders
- First responders
- Medical and pharmacy associations and schools

Essentials of facilitating new collaborations:

- **Balancing power.** Recognize the power differentials around the table, understanding the balance between those at the state level and those on the ground.
- **Building trust.** It is important to build trust when working with new partners—but this can take time. New collaborators may have different opinions about substance misuse and strategies for addressing it. Engage in frequent discussions and listen to each other’s perspectives.
- **Understanding how change occurs.** Understand how a partner’s organizational culture and internal policies impact change (e.g. culture change may come from the top or the ground up depending on the setting).

Goals of state-level collaborations:

- **Develop and maintain strong prevention work groups.** It’s important to bring all voices to the table and ensure the sustainability of state epidemiology workgroups, evidence-based work groups, and advisory councils.
- **Obtain, use, and share Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) data** to identify prevention priorities and better target prevention efforts.
- **Strengthen and enforce regulatory approaches to preventing non-medical use of prescription drugs (NMUPD) and prescription drug overdose (PDO).** These approaches require structural supports at the state level and necessitate collaboration with state partners.
- **Create multiple naloxone distribution channels.** It’s important to have an organized and coordinated approach to distributing naloxone. State-level partners can play an important role in this, acting as a “light house” for prevention efforts on the ground.
- **Provide appropriate workforce development opportunities related to NMUPD/PDO prevention.** Prescription drug misuse and overdose may be unfamiliar topics for many practitioners, but it is critical that the prevention workforce be prepared to address these emerging challenges.
- **Improve relationships with state-level provider/prescriber organizations.** This requires building trust and open communication between state-level provider organizations and prevention practitioners.

The Interplay Between State- and Community-Level Collaboration

Prevention practitioners often find innovative collaborations beginning at the community level, and then influencing state-level players to follow suit. However, state-level partners can also play an important role in helping to facilitate community-level collaborations.

For example, **Massachusetts' Door Knock Program**, a local-level collaboration between first responders and providers to follow up on opioid overdoses, received early opioid overdose prevention funding from the state. This funding encouraged local-level collaborations to support naloxone distribution efforts, leading to the implementation of the state-sanctioned Door Knock Program in several communities around Massachusetts.

“Next-Level” Collaborations

Partnerships can vary in levels of involvement ranging from networking to full collaboration. To stem the current opioid crisis, however, prevention practitioners may need to think beyond their traditional approach to collaboration—from changing their ways of working with existing partners to identifying new stakeholders to involve in their prevention efforts.

“Next-level” collaborations involve...

- Creating mutually beneficial partnerships that adapt based on emerging needs
- Leveraging relationships toward individual and/or common goals
- Sustaining relationships that deepen over time
- Institutionalizing collaborations through a formal agreement (e.g., Memorandum of Agreement)
- Expanding to encompass a network of connected partners

Every collaborative partner comes with its own unique needs and priorities. In order to create a successful “next-level” collaboration, prevention practitioners must establish clear goals, expectations, and responsibilities with their partners; put the time in to build relationships and trust; and foster a sense of collective purpose, making explicit how each of the partners involved can benefit from working together.

Panel Discussion: Examples from the Field

Harm Reduction Coalition

Presenter: Bill Matthews, RPA-C

The Harm Reduction Coalition is national advocacy and capacity-building organization that promotes the health and dignity of individuals and communities impacted by drug use. They have worked on a number of naloxone distribution initiatives requiring collaboration with state partners as well as community organizations. Most recently, they partnered with the New York Department of Corrections and the State Department of Health on an initiative to distribute naloxone rescue kits to inmates and to train them on how to use naloxone in the event of an overdose. A key takeaway from this experience was the importance of finding a prevention champion—as the initiative would not have been successful without the involvement of a prison superintendent who became interested in naloxone and understood how to navigate the prison system in order to get the program off the ground.

Norfolk District Attorney's Office (Norfolk County, MA)

Presenter: David Morgan, R.Ph

The Norfolk District Attorney's Office has been working to reduce opioid overdose deaths in the community and has initiated collaboration with pharmacists in order to get them to: connect with local police chiefs; use the state's prescription drug monitoring program; start conversations with prescribers about doctor shopping; and stock, sell, and promote naloxone at their pharmacies. The District Attorney's Office also hosts quarterly meetings of the Prescription Drug Task Force, which brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including boards of registration for nursing, pharmacy, and medicine; representatives from the Department of Public Health; as well as local police and fire chiefs, parent groups, schools, and hospitals.

Resources:

- **[Prevention Collaboration in Action Toolkit](#)**. This online toolkit showcases stories of practitioners working together to prevent substance misuse, along with 30+ tools and worksheets to help communities collaborate. A few collaboration stories of particular interest include the following:
 - » [Kentucky Partnership Brings PDMP Data to the Forefront of Prevention](#)
 - » [Cross-Sector Collaboration Key to Prescriber Alert Success in North Carolina](#)
 - » [Established Partnerships Help Scott County Address Emerging Problems in Rural Indiana](#)
 - » [Innovative Funding Model Facilitates Prevention Collaboration in Massachusetts](#)