

Testimony
House Bill No. 1447
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman
February 8, 2023

Chairman Weisz, and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Behavioral Health Executive Director with the Department of Health and Human Services. I appear before you in support of House Bill 1447.

On January 6, 2023 Governor Burgum, through executive order, created the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee as recommended by the North Dakota Attorney General's Office after Attorney General Drew Wrigley signed the settlement agreements.

The committee consists of six voting members appointed and a non-voting chairperson designated by the governor, with equal representation from the state and local governments.

The following individuals were recommended and appointed as members by both the Governor's Office and Attorney General's Office:

- Pamela Sagness, director of the Behavioral Health Division in the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services;
- Col. Brandon Solberg, Superintendent of the North Dakota Highway Patrol;
- Jonathan Holth, managing director, Office of Recovery Reinvented;
- Aaron Birst, executive director, North Dakota Association of Counties;
- Mary Korsmo, executive director, North Dakota State Association of City and County Health Officials;

- Stephanie Dassinger Engebretson, deputy director and staff attorney, North Dakota League of Cities.
- Lt. Governor Tammy Miller, Chair

The first meeting of the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee is scheduled for tomorrow at 3:00. The key agenda items include a briefing on the settlements including allowable uses, discussion of legislative action related to opioids, and development of an engagement strategy to include public listening sessions to provide communities, businesses, family members, or individuals an opportunity to share with the committee the impact of the opioid epidemic.

The opioid settlement funds are designed to provide treatment, prevention, education, and support directly to individuals. The Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division has received several federal grants over the past decade specifically related to addressing opioid addiction and preventing opioid overdose. We have experience administering many of the programs identified as allowable uses in the settlement. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the Legislature, Governor's Office, and Office of the Attorney General in order to ensure funds are distributed efficiently to have maximum impact and to avoid duplication of effort.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions. Thank you.

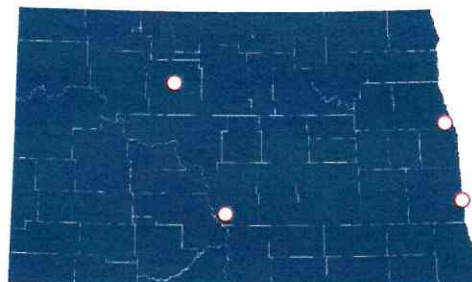
The Department of Health & Human Services, Behavioral Health Division Policy Team is designated as the state opioid treatment authority and charged with ensuring adherence of Opioid Treatment Programs and Medication Units to state and federal regulations as identified in North Dakota Century Code 50-31.

Licensing of Opioid Treatment Programs and Medication Units



- + Opioid Treatment Programs provide medication for opioid use disorder in conjunction with counseling, and supportive services to treat individuals suffering from an opioid use disorder.
- + Medication Units are a satellite of an Opioid Treatment Program that provide remote dispensing of FDA approved medication for opioid use disorder.
- + Programs are reviewed on an annual basis for compliance with North Dakota Administrative Code Article 75-09.1, and applicable federal regulation.
- + Programs are monitored for the health and safety of the clients served and to establish quality assurance-standards for the licensure of programs, services, and facilities.

North Dakota has **4** licensed Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP) in the state

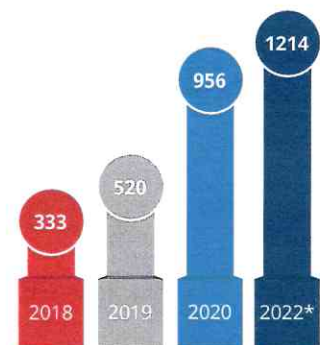


There are currently **828** individuals actively receiving services from an OTP.*

On average individuals travel **15** miles one way to an OTP for their services.*

There are currently no licensed Medication Units in the state.

Unique individuals served by OTPs.



*Data as of November 25, 2022

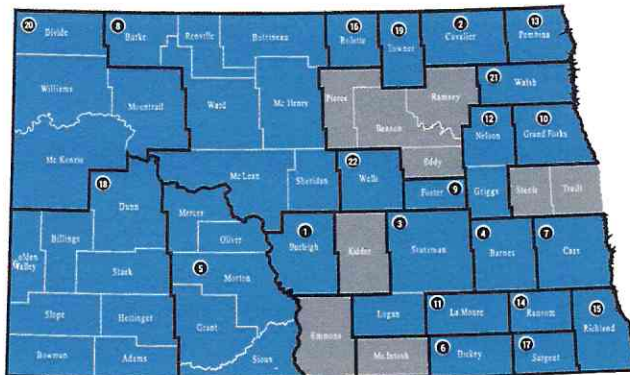
NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIVISION

EFFORTS ADDRESSING OPIOIDS

IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The Behavioral Health Division implements a range of evidence-based strategies across the behavioral health continuum of care both enhancing services and capacity statewide and community specific



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Unit | 12. Nelson-Griggs District Health Unit |
| 2. Cavalier County Health District | 13. Pembina County |
| 3. Central Valley Health District | 14. Ransom County Public Health |
| 4. City-County Health District | 15. Richland County Health Department |
| 5. Custer Health | 16. Rolette County Public Health District |
| 6. Dickey County Health District | 17. Sargent County District Health Unit |
| 7. Fargo Cass Public Health | 18. Southwestern District Health Unit |
| 8. First District Health Unit | 19. Townier County Public Health |
| 9. Foster County Public Health | 20. Upper Missouri District Health Unit |
| 10. Grand Forks Public Health | 21. Walsh County Health Department |
| 11. LaMoure County Public Health Dept. | 22. Wells County District Health Unit |

A community level opioid response is possible due to contracts with 22 Local Public Health Units (LPHU) and 2 tribes. Funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) State Opioid Response (SOR) grant supports community level strategy implementation.

The Divisions also partners with several entities for state-wide efforts funded by either the SAMHSA SOR grant or the SAMHSA SAPT Block grant.

PREVENTION: STOPPING OPIOID MISUSE BEFORE IT STARTS

Prevention activities are aimed at the general population as well as those at highest risk for opioid misuse and overdose

PARENTS LEAD – Parents Lead is an evidenced-based prevention program developed in and for North Dakota that proves parents and caregivers with a wide variety of tools and resources to support them in creating a safe environment for their children that promotes behavioral health while preventing substance use

- 16 LPHUs are promoting Parents Lead locally
- The Division contracts with a social media firm to promote Parents Lead statewide
- From October 2021 – September 2022, **2,286,887 people were reached**

OPIOIDS: FILL WITH CARE – Opioids: Fill with Care is a campaign that provides education and increases awareness surrounding safe use of medications, proper disposal methods, risks and signs of overdose and the effective response to an overdose

- 15 LPHUS and 1 tribe are promoting Parents Lead locally
- The Division contracts with a social media firm to promote Opioids: Fill with Care statewide
- From October 2021 – September 2022, **9,038,186 people were reached**

SAFE MEDICATION DISPOSAL – The Division purchases and distributes 2 safe medication disposal products: DisposeRX and Detera bags. These products are distributed by LPHUs and pharmacies in an effort to increase proper at home disposal of medications. LPHUs also host Take Back events and promote Take Back locations to increase opportunities for proper medication disposal.

- 20 LPHUS and 1 tribe are distributing safe medication disposal products, hosting take back events, or providing education through messaging
- From October 2021 – September 2022
 - **5,187 Detera bags were distributed**
 - **10,100 DisposeRX packets were distributed**

NDSU ONE PROGRAM – The Division contracts with the North Dakota State University School of Pharmacy and supports the implementation of the ONE Program. The ONE Program is an innovative approach to ensure patients receiving opioid prescriptions are provided detailed education based on their personal need. Pharmacists in the program receive tools to screen for risk of opioid use disorder or accidental overdose and after identifying patient needs, are able to provide counseling and resources to safely use prescribed opioids. The program began in 2018 and has since expanded the safe medication use and opioids use disorder risk screening processes into home health visits and community jails.

- There are currently **66 pharmacies** actively participating in the program
- From October 2021 – September 2022, **3,454** individuals were screened (Pharmacy and home health)

NARXCARE – The Division provides funding to the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy for the NarxCare enhancement to the state’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).

HARM REDUCTION: OVERDOSE REVERSAL EFFORTS AND SAVING LIVES

NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION – 22 LPHUs completed a Naloxone Distribution Assessment to ensure those at highest risk of witnessing or experiencing an overdose will have Naloxone available.

- From October 2021 – September 2022
 - **15,481 Naloxone two-dose kits** were distributed in North Dakota through state-wide Naloxone distribution by BHD, community distribution by LPHUS, and pharmacy distribution
 - **1,631** known doses of Naloxone were administered
 - **948** known successful overdose reversals using Naloxone occurred

SYRINGE SERVICE PROGRAMS – The Division currently partners with the Public Health Division and LPHUs to enhance the availability of Syringe Service Programs (SSP) and lifesaving resources

- 5 LPHUs operate a SSP
 - To reduce the harm associated with using substances, SSPs offer Fentanyl Test Strips
- 10 LPHUs are either promoting existing nearby SSP, providing transportation to a SSP, contracting with an existing SSP, or exploring the start-up of a SSP

INCREASE ACCESS TO EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT

DOCR MOUD PROGRAM – The Division entered into contract with the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to continue efforts to purchase FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) to support residents of DOCR who suffer from moderate and severe Opioid Use Disorder, especially prior to release. DOCR also provides individuals with linkages to community resources upon release.

- From October 2021 – September 2022, DOCR was able to provide MOUD to **55** individuals

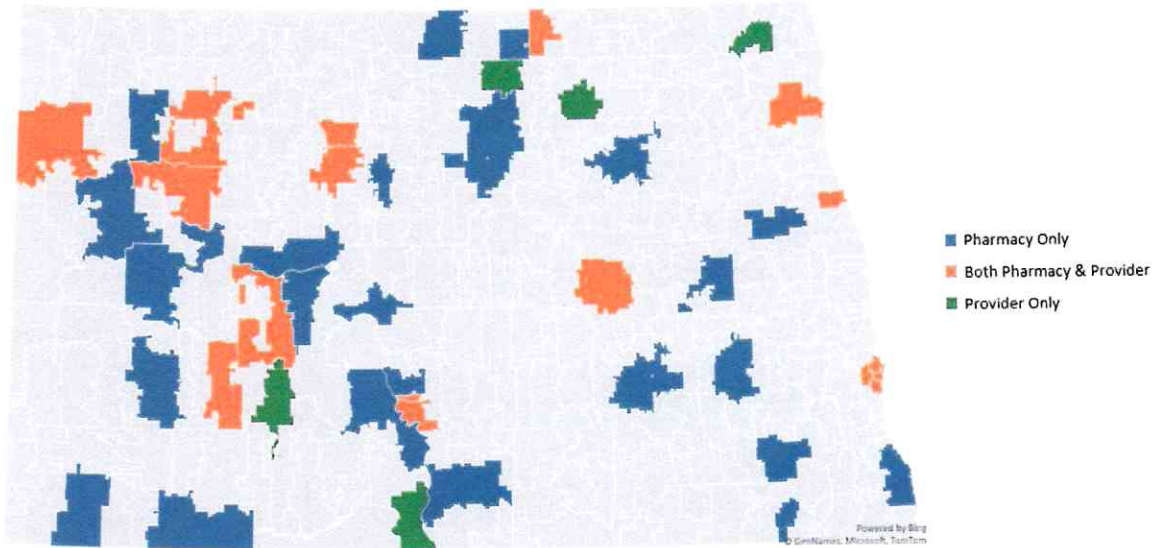
COMMUNITY STRATEGIES – 16 LPHUs are improving the access to treatment for opioid use disorder by providing transportation, reducing stigma through messaging, working to reduce local barriers or providing funding for providers to implement contingency management

TRIBAL STRATEGIES – 2 tribes in North Dakota are utilizing SOR funding to purchase Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) for eligible enrolled tribal members.

LICENSED OPIOID TREATMENT CENTERS – There are four licensed Opioid Treatment Centers (OTPs) in North Dakota: Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot, and Bismarck. As of 1/30/2023, there were **923** active participants. The North Dakota Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Voucher program was able to assist **104** individuals access Methadone from January 2022 – December 2022.

OFFICE-BASED OPIOID TREATMENT – The Division partnered with NDSU for the completion of a Buprenorphine Prescriber Environmental Scan. At the time of the scan (Fall 2021) there were 91 data-waivered prescribers listed on the SAMHSA Buprenorphine Practitioner Location website. Of those 91 providers, 54 were actively prescribing. Of the 54 actively prescribing practitioners, 45 were accepting new patients. NDSU is currently working on an updated scan. Below is a map identifying the locations with a buprenorphine prescribers and pharmacies that carry buprenorphine.

BUP/NX Treatment Availability



LIGHTHOUSE CENTRAL REGISTRY – The Division contracted with Lighthouse Central Registry to connect ND OTPs in order to prevent dual enrollments, to assist in emergency communications and build comprehensive data collection processes.

During state blizzards, the State Opioid Treatment Authority, in collaboration with SAMHSA’s Division of Pharmacologic Therapies granted emergency exception requests to patients of the Opioid Treatment Programs prior to this severe winter weather, allowing most patients to receive their medication before the storm. Through the Central Registry, some patients were able to receive their medication at a different location without barriers.

INCREASE ACCESS TO SUPPORTIVE RECOVERY SERVICES

RECOVERY HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – Launched in May 2022, the Recovery Housing Assistance Program (RHAP) decreased barriers to individuals accessing recovering housing, including those with an opioid use disorder. RHAP providers are required to allow residents to utilize Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

- 50% of RHAP program participants reported a history of using opioids

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES – 13 LPHUS are utilizing SOR funding to increase Peer Support Specialist integration into communities, using messaging to decrease stigma, or increase access to recovery services by providing transportation or childcare.

PEER SUPPORT IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT – The Division has partnered with Sanford Fargo to implement a pilot program utilizing Peer Support Specialists in the Emergency Department

ADDITIONAL RECOVERY SUPPORT ACTIVITIES – Additional state funded programs to help individuals in recovery from an opioid use disorder include:

- Peer Support Specialist Certification
- Free Through Recovery
- Community Connect
- Recovery Talk
- Call Kay