The Opioid Crisis in Rural America

The prevalence of substance use disorders in the United States has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2019, opioids were involved in 28,848 deaths, becoming the leading cause of unintentional injury death. 

200% Rate of increase in overdose deaths involving opioids since 2000. 

586 thousand Americans age 12+ with a heroin use disorder. 

1.9 million Americans age 12+ with pain reliever disorder. 

The rate of opioid overdose death is 45% higher in rural areas than urban areas. 

Urban

Rural

There is a scarcity of services for substance use treatment in rural areas. 

25% of the U.S. population lives in rural/non-metropolitan areas. 

Opportunities for Medicaid agencies and safety net providers to collaborate to achieve shared goals in servicing rural populations struggling with opioid use. 

Opportunity 1

Extending access to naloxone to first responders and bystanders

47 states have recently passed laws to increase naloxone access to naloxone. 

41 states have enacted Good Samaritan laws to protect those seeking or administering naloxone during an overdose. 

Opportunity 2

Extending access to treatments for opioid use disorders, including Medication-assisted Treatment (MAT)

As of May 2013, in at least 28 states, Medicaid covers all three FDA-approved medications to treat opioid use disorder.

Buprenorphine

Naltrexone

Naltrexone

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA) restricted prescribing and dispersing authority to nurse practitioners and physicians’ assistants licensed under state law. 

Teledhealth

New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming specifically require substance abuse or addiction specialist renders services. 

Medicaid Program Support

Through the Medicaid Innovation Accelerator Program (MIP), states have been approved to test 2 states to improve systems for SUD service delivery. Through this work, Pennsylvania is developing a health home program for pregnant women with SUD and may develop a health home program for broader populations with SUD in the future. 

Focus Enrollment

Medicaid enrollment efforts should be focused on populations and substance use disorders to aid in facilitating connections to treatment. 

Sources: 


5. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ). National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), March 2018 data. 


13. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ). National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), March 2018 data. 


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