

Umatilla County Chosen to Lead Regional Opioid Fight

Umatilla County Health Department recently received funding from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) through the Federal Government's State Targeted Response funding (STR) intended to target high-impact states. The funds will be used to coordinate regional efforts in Eastern Oregon to respond to the nation's current opioid epidemic. Based upon statistics related to opioid prescription and use, the four counties of Umatilla, Union, Baker and Malheur have been identified by the OHA as priority. Umatilla County Health department was chosen by OHA to coordinate efforts across the four counties.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of opioid overdose deaths nationally has quadrupled since 1999. In Oregon alone, similar data shows between 2012 and 2013 5 percent of the state's population has self-reported misusing opioid medication. Furthermore, Eastern Oregon reveals higher rates per capita of both opioid prescription fills, and dosages than the rest of the state. Additionally, The National Center for Health Statistics has indicated that rural communities are now seeing more overdose deaths per capita than large metro areas, a measurement that was unheard of in the past. The rural regions of Eastern Oregon targeted by the project pose a unique challenge because these four counties encompass an area the size of New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, and Rhode Island combined. Yet, the region contains some of the most sparsely populated counties in the country, making access to treatment more difficult. Often, local resources are not properly equipped or prepared to respond to an opioid overdose or treatment request.

Aside from raising community awareness and engagement, early goals for the project are to increase participation in Oregon's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). The PDMP is a database that gives pharmacies and physicians the ability to document and monitor the prescriptions of patients, allowing them to spot potential opioid abuse and respond accordingly. Another target for the region is to increase the training and usage of the life-saving opioid antidote, Naloxone, sold under the brand name Narcan. Narcan's ability to be administered nasally makes it an ideal option for emergency responders as well as friends and family members of opioid abusers.

For more information regarding the project and Umatilla County and Oregon's response to the Opioid epidemic, please contact Mike Stensrud, Project Coordinator, at the Umatilla County Health Department at [541-278-5432](tel:541-278-5432); mike.stensrud@umatillacounty.net or Jim Setzer, Umatilla County health Department Director at [541-278-5432](tel:541-278-5432); james.setzer@umatillacounty.net