

CONSORTIUM CHRONICLE

NEWSLETTER

ICYMI: Voices for Non-Opioid Choices Webinar Now Available on YouTube

On June 25, the Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium hosted a virtual Opioid Education Series event focused on the evolving landscape of federal pain management policy. As we continue our work to mitigate the overdose crisis, expanding access to safe, non-addictive pain management alternatives remains a critical prevention strategy.



This insightful session featured subject matter expert Chris Fox, from Voices for Non-Opioid Choices and highlighted current federal legislative efforts aimed at removing barriers to non-opioid treatments, preventing addiction, and supporting recovery.

If you were not able to join us live, the full recording is now available to stream on the WellLink Health Alliance [YouTube](#) channel.



WellLink Represents Northeast Ohio at CDC's Overdose Data to Action Meeting

On June 18, 2026, Rachael Sommer, LISW, MSSA, represented WellLink Health Alliance at the 2026 Overdose Data to Action Recipient Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Hosted by the CDC, this national gathering brings together public health leaders and overdose

prevention experts to share innovative strategies and data-driven solutions.

Rachael led a poster presentation highlighting the Viddy Award-winning documentary, *Igniting Compassion*. The film was created to reduce the deep-rooted stigma surrounding substance use disorders by elevating real stories of treatment, recovery, and hope. To help other public health leaders spark these vital conversations in their own communities, Rachael distributed *Igniting Compassion* conversation cards to attendees, providing them with actionable tools to engage their audiences.

To watch the award-winning film and share it with your network, you can [view the Igniting Compassion documentary on YouTube](#) and read more about the project on the [WellLink Blog](#).

State / Local Updates



Campaign Launch: #KnowTheSigns (Cuyahoga County)

The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office has launched **Signs of OD**, a public awareness campaign running through **September 13, 2026**. This initiative addresses vital shifts in the local overdose crisis—notably that **cocaine is now**

the leading cause of drug overdose deaths locally, due to the sharp decrease in fentanyl-related overdose deaths over the past two years.

- **The Reality:** 23% of recent local overdose deaths involved a mix of cocaine and fentanyl. Overdoses are occurring even when individuals use their "usual amount" or buy from their "usual supply".
- **Free Local Tools:** The campaign connects residents to free, confidential resources at signsofOD.org, including zip-code-specific drug checking data, free Narcan®/fentanyl test strips, and the *Never Use Alone* helpline (1-800-484-3731).

Partner Action Item: Partners can help promote vital, safety-focused materials. In addition to the assets available on the campaign site, there are **branded campaign images available featuring the Cuyahoga County logo**. Please reach out directly to **Manreet Bhullar** at mbhullar@cuyahogacounty.gov to request these branded graphics for your organization's outreach channels.



Spotlighting the Epidemic: New Film *Union County* Highlights Recovery in Rural Ohio

A new drama film, *Union County*, offers a deeply authentic look at the opioid epidemic and the difficult road to recovery in rural Ohio. Directed by Adam Meeks, the film follows two brothers navigating a court-mandated drug rehabilitation program. While it is a narrative feature rather than a documentary, it takes a highly realistic approach.

The cast features real-life members of Ohio treatment centers and local drug courts, including individuals with lived experience and active recovery counselors. The film also avoids sensationalized tropes, focusing instead on the quiet, everyday battle of staying sober and the community support systems that sustain recovery. Importantly, it underscores the specific hurdles—such as limited economic opportunities—faced by individuals navigating the opioid crisis outside of major cities.

Set to hit theaters on August 14, *Union County* promises to be an empathetic and highly relevant portrait for those of us working in Ohio's recovery space.

[Read the full article about the film here](#)

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Operation BRIDGE Day

Lakewood Womens Pavilion

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2026

2:00pm--6:00PM



Building Community Partnerships

The Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) in collaboration with other state, local and private entities are driving statewide community outreach days called Operation BRIDGE Days. BRIDGE (Bridging Recovery Interdiction Data Gathering Enforcement), combines the law enforcement & substance use treatment resources in a coordinated effort focusing on the reduction of supply and demand, simultaneously prioritizing treatment for those who qualify. Operation BRIDGE Days will be a collaborative effort to identify resources and build partnerships between law enforcement and outreach within the community.

Operation BRIDGE Days Goals

- Deflection/Quick Response Teams focus on their outreach by conducting door knocks, social media contacts, and pop-up informational tents.
- Those without Deflection Teams can participate by making connections to the community's prevention, treatment and/or recovery centers to raise awareness of resources in their area.

We Hope You Will Join Us!

Consider participating in Operation BRIDGE Days by:

- **HOSTING** a community outreach event
- **CONNECTING** with local Department of Healths and ADAMH boards
- **DISTRIBUTING** Naloxone and other harm reduction resources

To participate or for more information, please email nkyle@westshorebureauoh.gov or call 440.336.2371



Department of
Public Safety
Operation BRIDGE

RecoveryOhio



To participate or for more information, please email nkyle@westshorebureauoh.gov or call 440-336.2371.

Policy & News Updates



Monthly Policy Watch! We are sharing our second policy segment from WellLink Health Alliance's Daniel Lettenberger-Klein. Each month, Daniel breaks down the latest legislative trends and explains exactly what they mean for our local behavioral health community.

This month Daniel highlights one of the most significant issues currently under discussion which involves Medicaid eligibility reforms and community engagement requirements. He also touches on prior authorization, behavioral health workforce development, healthcare worker safety and more. Read the full update on [our blog](#) below.

[Read Blog Here](#)

Federal Policy Tracker: Mental Health and Substance Use Updates

KFF recently published a policy tracker detailing federal administrative actions regarding mental health, substance use disorders (SUD), and behavioral health infrastructure since 2025. The brief provides an objective look at recent shifts in funding distribution, federal guidance, and structural priorities.

Here is a brief overview of key policy updates for behavioral health organizations to monitor:

Substance Use & Harm Reduction

- **Federal Funding Parameters:** Recent SAMHSA guidance outlines that federal funds cannot be used for sterile syringes or substance test kits (such as fentanyl and xylazine test strips). Funds remain available for overdose reversal medications like naloxone.
- **OD Treatment Guidance:** SAMHSA issued directives encouraging comprehensive SUD treatment models and provided guidance on using funds to train providers on the tapering and discontinuation of OD medications.
- **Marijuana Reclassification:** Following a 2025 Executive Order, the DOJ and DEA reclassified medical and FDA-approved marijuana products from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act.

Mental Health & Community Infrastructure

- **School-Based Funding:** In 2025, the Department of Education halted the distribution of \$1 billion previously allocated for School-Based Mental Health Services and Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration grants.
- **Psychiatric Prescribing:** SAMHSA launched an initiative to study patterns of psychiatric medication prescribing, particularly among youth, while encouraging the exploration of non-pharmacological treatment options.
- **CCBHC Expansion:** HHS selected 10 additional states to join the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Medicaid Demonstration Program, which uses a prospective payment system for comprehensive care.
- **Housing and Civil Commitment:** A July 2025 Executive Order directed federal agencies to prioritize treatment-contingent housing models over "housing-first" approaches and encouraged the expanded use of civil commitments for individuals with serious mental illnesses or SUDs experiencing homelessness.

[Read the full KFF policy tracker here.](#)

SAMHSA Announces \$281 Million in Behavioral Health Grants

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has announced more than \$281 million in grant funding opportunities spanning 15 programs. These grants are designed to address addiction, overdose, and mental illness, as well as to promote community recovery services.

Funding Focus Areas:

- **Treatment Expansion:** The largest single funding opportunity provides \$68.2 million to expand access to medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder.
- **Community and Youth Support:** Grants will fund trauma care for children, school-based mental health services, and suicide prevention initiatives, including specialized programs on college campuses.
- **First Responders and Healthcare Integration:** Resources are allocated for overdose response training for first responders, community overdose prevention efforts, and the integration of physical and behavioral healthcare.

- **Recovery and Education:** Additional funding will support ongoing recovery services and educational initiatives focused on federal behavioral health privacy regulations.

[Read the full SAMHSA press announcement here](#)

Grant Opportunity: MAT-PDOA Funding

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is offering up to \$68.25 million in funding (NOFO: TI-26-008) to expand access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD). The goal is to increase treatment and recovery support while reducing illicit opioid use and overdoses. Up to 91 awards of \$750,000 per year (for up to 5 years) will be granted to eligible public and private non-profits.

- **Application Deadline:** July 27, 2026
- [Read the full grant details here.](#)

Training Opportunities

[July 21 | Reinforcing Recovery: A Practical Introduction to Contingency Management](#)

9-10:30 am ET | Virtual Course

Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Cnslr: 1.5

LPN: 1.5

RN: 1.5

SW: 1.5

OCDP: (C1) 1.0, (C2) 0.5

Nursing Contact Hrs: 1.5

Contingency Management (CM) is a well-established, evidence-based intervention for treating a range of substance use disorders, supported by decades of rigorous research. It is the most effective behavioral treatment available for stimulant use disorders—a growing clinical and public health concern in the United States (HHS, 2023). In Ohio, this concern is particularly urgent, with 66.1% of overdose deaths in 2024 involving at least one stimulant (CDC SUDORS, 2024). Despite its strong empirical support, CM remains

significantly underutilized due to common misconceptions, implementation challenges, and systems-level barriers.

This training provides a comprehensive overview of CM, including its behavioral foundations in operant conditioning, the neurobiological mechanisms that explain its effectiveness, and practical strategies for implementing CM across varied treatment settings. Participants will examine current research reinforcing CM as a first-line, evidence-based approach and will learn how to address common barriers related to cost, ethics, and clinical integration. Designed for clinicians, supervisors, and administrators, this training offers a foundation for expanding person-centered, outcomes-driven care. [Sign up here.](#)

Upcoming Training: Xylazine & Medetomidine

Join CompDrug for a training on the clinical impacts of xylazine and medetomidine—two highly potent, non-opioid veterinary sedatives increasingly found in the local drug supply. This session will cover:

- **Current Trends:** Understanding the rapid rise and extreme potency of these central nervous system depressants.
- **Overdose Response:** Why naloxone does not reverse sedation from these drugs, and how to prioritize airway support and rescue breathing.
- **Wound Care:** Specialized strategies to manage the severe, slow-healing skin wounds associated with these substances.

Dates: July 30 & August 27

- [Register for the training here.](#)

WellLink SPEAK Bureau

Substance Use Prevention, Education, Advocacy & Knowledge (SPEAK) Bureau is a collaborative training and technical assistance network facilitated by Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium. Our mission is to connect organizations across Northeast Ohio with leading local experts to expand knowledge, enhance skills, and improve service delivery on complex and emerging issues in polysubstance use and substance use disorder treatment and recovery. We serve as a centralized resource for organizations seeking customized, expert-led education to better address the challenges of substance use in our community. The types of groups and organizations we hope to connect to this form of education include hospitals, clinics, social service agencies, nonprofits and more. Access the SPEAK Bureau [here](#).



ASAM Practice Pearls features in-depth discussions on addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery. This series explores the latest evidence-based approaches to addiction medicine. Listen to interviews with leading experts as they delve into critical topics and share practical tools you can use to improve patient care and promote public health.

Access at: [ASAM Practice Pearls](#) | [ASAM Education](#)

Listen to ASAM Practice Pearls':

[Listen Here](#)

Enhancing Addiction Care through Care Touchpoints

Stephen M. Taylor MD, MPH, DFAPA, DFASAM

Michael Fingerhood, MD, FACP, DFASAM

In support of improving patient care, ASAM is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

SUD COE Corner

The [Ohio Substance Use Disorders Center of Excellence](#) (SUD COE) at Case Western Reserve University's Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences invites practitioners to deepen their understanding of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. We are pleased to offer a series of training programs designed to equip professionals with the latest and most effective strategies in SUD treatment. Also, check out the SUD COE website for [free trainings](#) (with CEUs!), as well as a wealth of [other resources](#)"

Clinical QuickNotes on Substance Use Disorders

The Ohio Substance Use Disorders Center of Excellence (SUD COE) has developed "Clinical QuickNotes on Substance Use Disorders" as a tool to provide busy treatment providers with quick overviews of clinically relevant topics. These QuickNotes are designed to be easily digestible, offering essential information that can be reviewed in just a few minutes. Check out each topic below!

- [Cannabis and Mental Health: Navigating Clinical Realities in Ohio](#)

- [Treating Opioid Use Disorder During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period](#)
- [Medications for Opioid Use Disorder \(MOUD\) in Adolescents and Young Adults](#)
- [What's Happened with Alcohol Use Disorder?](#)
- [Ohio Medical Board Amends Rules for Medication Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders](#)
- [Responding to Provider Trauma, Grief, and Loss Following Unintentional Lethal Overdose](#)
- [Family Grief and Loss Experiences Following Unintentional Lethal Overdose](#)

The **Opioid Response Network's (ORN)** mission is to reduce overdoses and address opioid and stimulant use disorders, and play a key role in tackling the current epidemic. For more information, go to www.OpioidResponseNetwork.org and learn how you and your organization can make a request for free training and education.

- [Hot Topics - On-Demand - AOAAM Learning Portal](#)

Other Resources

Educational Resources Available from WellLink

- [Igniting Compassion Documentary](#)
- [Igniting Compassion Shorts](#)
- [Opioid Consortium Education](#)
- [Naloxone Toolkit](#)
- [A Clinician's Guide: Dental Consequences of MOUD + Solutions](#)
- [Clinicians Guide: on Xylazine Wound Management](#)
- [A Clinician's Guide: The Intersection of Human Trafficking and Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [NEO Opioid Consortium - Beyond Narcan: Treating Opioid Use Disorder in the Field](#)
- [Opioid Roundtable: Using Collaboration to Address the Opioid Crisis in Northeast Ohio](#)
- [NEO Opioid Consortium Education Series: Effective Communication with Individuals with SUD](#)

- [NEO Opioid Consortium Education Series: Appreciative Approach: From Medical Dominancy to Relational Recovery](#)
- [NEO Opioid Education Series: Demystifying Buprenorphine Treatment in the Outpatient Clinic Setting](#)
- [NEO Opioid Education Series: Harnessing Health IT to Strengthen Opioid Stewardship](#)
- [Previous Issues of The Consortium Chronicle Newsletter](#)
- [NEO Opioid Education Series: The Future of Pain Management: Cutting-Edge, Non-Opioid Solutions](#)
- [NEO Opioid Consortium Education Series - Chronic Pain: Bridging Clinical Insight & Lived Experience](#)
- [NEO Opioid Consortium Education Series: SUD Understanding Addiction, Treatment & Recovery](#)
- [Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium Education Series: Human Trafficking, SUD, and Emerging Drug Trends](#)
- [Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium Education Series: Stimulant Use & Heart Health](#)
- [Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium Education Series: The Primary Practice Physician Program for Chronic Pain \(4PCP\)](#)
- [Northeast Ohio Opioid Education Series: Voices for Non-Opioid Choices](#)



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1226 Huron Road East, Cleveland, OH 44115