

CONSORTIUM CHRONICLE

NEWSLETTER



Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium
EDUCATION SERIES

WEBINAR

Access to Non-Opioid Pain Management

Join the Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium for our next 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 is a critical prevention strategy. This session will feature presentations from three experts highlighting current federal legislative efforts aimed at removing barriers to non-opioid treatments and preventing addiction and supporting recovery.

Join Us Online
JUN 25

12:00PM - 1:30PM

Virtual: Microsoft Teams

Join us NEXT THURSDAY, June 25, 2026 for our next Opioid Education Series Event. This event is focused on the evolving landscape of federal pain management policy.

Meet Our Presenters

Christopher Fox, Voices for Non-Opioid Choices

About Christopher: Christopher Fox is the **Executive Director of Voices for Non-Opioid Choices**, a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing opioid addiction by promoting access to safe, evidence-based, non-addictive pain management options. Based in Washington, D.C., the coalition works to ensure that patients—especially vulnerable groups like seniors and veterans—have meaningful choices in managing pain without resorting to opioids.

U.S. Representative Greg Landsman

Ohio's 1st Congressional District

About Rep. Landsman: Rep. Landsman serves as the U.S. Representative for Ohio's First Congressional District. With a background as a former public-school teacher, nonprofit leader, and Cincinnati City Councilman, he has dedicated his career to advocating for families and communities. He is a driving force behind current pain management policy as a key sponsor of the **NOPAIN for Veterans Act**, demonstrating his strong commitment to ensuring our nation's veterans have safe, reliable access to FDA-approved non-opioid pain management options through the VA.

Key Federal Legislative Efforts We Will Cover

NOPAIN Act: Signed into law in 2022 and taking effect in 2025, this foundational law directs Medicare to provide separate reimbursement for non-opioid treatments for outpatient post-operative pain, successfully removing financial barriers for doctors and their patients.

Alternatives to PAIN Act: Currently advancing with robust bipartisan support in Congress, this legislation aims to build on the success of the NOPAIN Act. It ensures Medicare Part D beneficiaries have reliable access to non-opioid treatments by placing them on the lowest cost-sharing tier and eliminating step-therapy requirements.

NOPAIN for Veterans Act: Introduced with the support of Ohio's Rep. Greg Landsman, this bill aims to increase veterans' access to non-opioid pain management by requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to cover FDA-approved alternatives, aiming to prevent addiction before it starts.

[Register Here](#)

State / Local Updates

The Cuyahoga County Pilot Drug checking program has released a new infographic highlighting the trends associated with Medetomodine and Xylazine being identified in the syringes tested through the program (infographic below). Additional reports and infographics can be found at: [Cuyahoga County's Drug Checking Program](#).

EMERGING DRUGS

This program has tested **1087** syringes, and we wanted to highlight two commonly tested substances and their effects

XYLAZINE

Xylazine, also called, “tranq” or “tranq dope” is a non-opioid sedative, used as an animal tranquilizer in veterinary medicine causing painful skin/muscle **wounds**.

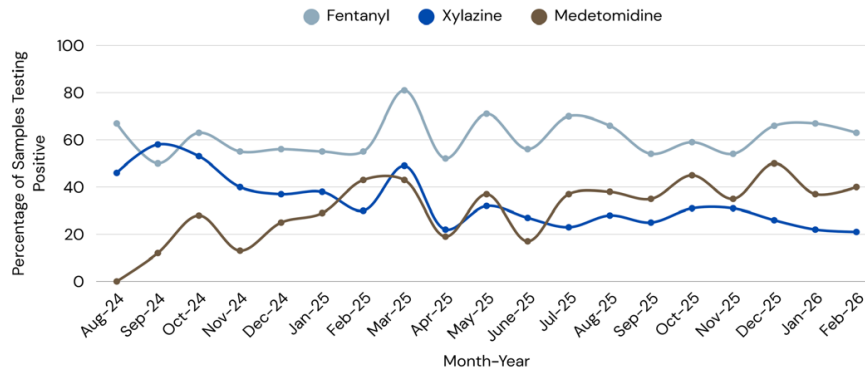
MEDETOMIDINE

Medetomidine or “rhino-traq” is a veterinary sedative, similar to Xylazine, that is 100 – 200 times more potent than xylazine resulting in **prolonged withdrawal symptoms**.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Commonly present with fentanyl
- Can slow down the brain and breathing
- Can lower blood pressure

XYLAZINE AND MEDETOMIDINE DETECTION PER MONTH



OVERDOSE RESPONSE

1. Administer Naloxone
2. Restore Stable Breathing



WHERE TO GET RESOURCES?



Study On Crisis Response Services in Cuyahoga County

Your voice matters!



Have you experienced a behavioral health crisis in Cuyahoga County?

Do you work with or care for people experiencing behavioral health crises?

A crisis may occur when a person sees a situation as hard to manage. They may feel stress that overwhelms them. It reduces their ability to care for themselves. It may make people feel unsafe. The crisis may be due to mental health or substance use concerns.

Share with us!



Scan the QR Code for more information.

The **Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education** at Case Western Reserve University is conducting a **comprehensive mapping of county crisis response services** on behalf of the **Cuyahoga County Department of Public Safety and Justice Services**. We are seeking people with lived and professional experiences of mental health or substance use crisis to join community advisory groups and participate in model building in a series of interactive workshops scheduled in May – August 2026.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel
School of Applied Social Sciences
Begun Center for Violence Prevention
Research and Education



CUYAHOGA COUNTY, *Ohio*

Department of Public Safety
and Justice Services

The Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University is conducting a comprehensive study of county crisis response services on behalf of the Cuyahoga County Department of Public Safety and Justice Services. This study will help map the current availability and response of crisis services in Cuyahoga County. We are seeking people with lived and professional experiences of mental health or substance use crisis to join community advisory groups to participate in a series of interactive workshops. These workshops will help us develop a model of the current crisis response system and help us identify strengths and areas of opportunity. These workshops are scheduled from June to August 2026. Please scan the QR code

above or [click here](#) to register for an upcoming workshop. If you have any questions, please email crisismap@case.edu.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Cleveland Department of Health Seeking Participants for Spatial Video Geonarratives



A **spatial video geonarrative** (SVG) is a GPS-encoded video of a neighborhood where an interviewee provides commentary during the recording. CDPH is recruiting community partners to be interviewed.

This method highlights important locations and experiences, allowing the interviewee to share their knowledge of the community's challenges and history.

Community partners are ideal participants due to their detailed, spatial understanding of Cleveland neighborhoods, including patterns related to incidents like overdoses.

Your participation can help shape better responses to community health concerns.

By documenting your insights, we can enrich existing data with qualitative context, helping CDPH and community stakeholders develop more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

You will ride around with CDPH epidemiologists, choosing the route we take and sharing your experiences working in the neighborhoods.

We do not collect any personal data about you, like your name or position. You are helping us as an unnamed community partner so don't worry about holding back what you think is important. You pick the route, you decide what you want to talk about. This is your story!



Cleveland Department of Public Health's Office of Epidemiology and Population Health is asking for volunteers willing to share their story around living with addiction or working with those impacted by substance use within the City of Cleveland. The Spatial Video Geonarrative is an informal interview conducted during a drive through specific neighborhoods to map real-world experiences directly to the physical environment. The goal is to enrich our quantitative data with ground-level context to help us build more effective intervention strategies. They are looking to recruit community partners who live or work within the city of Cleveland.

The rides are 100% anonymous and the participant completely controls the route and the conversation. If you are interested or know someone who might be please call **Trae Gulgin** at (216) 664-6298 or email him at tgulgin@clevelandohio.gov.

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.



New to the Newsletter: Monthly Policy Watch! We are excited to introduce a [new monthly segment](#) from WellLink Health Alliance's Daniel Lettenberger-Klein. Each month, Daniel will break down the latest legislative trends and explain exactly what they mean for our local behavioral health community.

In his inaugural update, Daniel unpacks the growing congressional debates around Medicaid eligibility and work requirements, the push for prior authorization reform, and critical efforts to expand and protect our behavioral health workforce.

[Read Blog Here](#)

DEA finalizes the removal of waiver for prescribing medication for opioid use disorder treatment

The Drug Enforcement Administration released a [final rule](#) implementing provisions from the Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022, which passed as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, eliminating the need for a separate waiver for qualified practitioners to dispense certain types of controlled substances for medications for opioid use disorder treatment, or MOUD. While the original requirements were amended by the SUPPORT Act of 2018 and changes were implemented in an interim final rule in 2020, the 2022 legislation struck the amended section from regulation, thus requiring DEA to respond to public comments on the interim final rule and update regulatory language accordingly.

Pain in the Nation 2026: A Fragile Turning Point in Alcohol, Drug, and Suicide Deaths

The Trust for America's Health (TFAH) recently released its *Pain in the Nation 2026* report, highlighting a critical turning point for the United States. After two decades of rising mortality, the combined age-adjusted rate of deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide declined by **16% in 2024** (building on a 4% decrease in 2023).

However, the report warns that this progress is extremely fragile. Recent leadership upheaval, funding disruptions, and drastic workforce reductions at the federal level—specifically within SAMHSA and the CDC's Injury Center—threaten

to undermine these recent public health gains.

Key Statistical Findings:

- **Drug Overdoses:** Overdose rates dropped by **26%** in 2024, marking the second consecutive year of decline. Notably, there were massive decreases among youth and young adults ages 0–34 (-34%) and Black Americans (-31%). Synthetic opioids saw the highest decrease in mortality rates (-36%), though they still remain the deadliest substance category.
- **Alcohol-Induced Deaths:** Dropped by **4%** in 2024, marking the third consecutive year of decline after two decades of increases.
- **Suicide Deaths:** Dropped by **3%** in 2024. However, firearm suicides continue to make up more than half of all suicide deaths, and that specific rate remained stagnant.

Key Recommendations for Policymakers: To sustain this positive momentum, TFAH urges the administration, Congress, and federal agencies to act on the following priorities:

1. **Invest in Prevention:** Spend behavioral health funds as directed by Congress, fully fund the CDC’s Injury Center, and support programs that reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma.
2. **Reduce Access to Lethal Means:** Support policies that reduce bloodborne infections, expand overdose prevention, and promote the safe storage of medications and firearms to prevent suicides.
3. **Transform Prevention Systems:** Halt budget rescissions, restore critical SAMHSA and CDC workforces, bolster the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and restore Medicaid funding to prevent gaps in mental health and substance use care.

LEARN MORE [HERE](#)



FORE’s Latest Impact Report: Changing Systems to Change Lives

The Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) recently released its 2025 Impact Report, emphasizing that ending the opioid and overdose crisis requires more than just expanding services—it requires fundamentally changing the systems that shape how care is delivered.

The report highlights how FORE-supported organizations across the country are moving the field from isolated solutions toward lasting, structural change.

Key Highlights from the Report:

- **Addressing Structural Barriers:** Grantees are actively tackling the systemic beliefs, policies, and workforce limitations that determine whether individuals can access and remain connected to necessary care.
- **Overcoming Hidden Obstacles:** The report showcases targeted efforts to dismantle barriers to recovery that are often hidden from public view, such as deep-rooted stigma and complex legal challenges.
- **Focusing on Youth:** Several initiatives featured in the report are pioneering new methods to address and prevent adolescent substance use.
- **Empowering the Workforce:** FORE grantees are working to expand and elevate the essential roles of peer recovery supporters and paraprofessionals in the continuum of care.

"The report captures the real-world impact of organizations across the country that are responding to the opioid and overdose crisis with compassion and evidence-based strategies that reach communities that have been most impacted. It's exciting to see how they are helping move the field from isolated solutions toward lasting change." — **Karen A. Scott, MD, MPH, President of FORE**

Read the Full Report [HERE](#)

Training Opportunities

WellLink Launches 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 and Earn 0.5 CEs

Kratom and 7-OH: What Clinicians Need to Know

Experts: Kirsten Smith, PhD, LMSW and Katie Hill, MPH

[Listen Here](#)

Navigating Cannabis and Cannabinoid Use in Today's Clinical Practice

Expert: Takeo Toyoshima, MD

[Listen Here](#)

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 \(4PCP\)](#)



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