

Statewide Emergency Department Needs Assessment for Addressing Opioid Misuse and Addiction in Alaska



Alaska's 24 hospital emergency departments (ED) serve on the front lines caring for patients with opioid use disorder (OUD).

To support EDs and these patients, the Alaska Office of Substance Misuse & Addiction Prevention conducted a statewide ED needs assessment using a strategic framework.

Alaska's EDs are embedded in a variety of hospital systems and serve diverse communities; a phased approach to build systemic strategies and consistent policies for standard of care levels is advised.

Phase One includes **core strategies** applicable for most Alaska ED settings.

Phase Two includes **enhanced strategies** for EDs with expanded access to resources, advanced system capacities, and organizational support for continuous quality improvement.

Strategic Framework & Phase One Recommendations

Upstream Prevention

- Prioritize trauma-informed care training for professional and ED activities

Reducing Substance Misuse & Addiction

- Support non-opioid pain management for public and health plan reimbursement
- Improve Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) – Electronic Health Record (EHR) integration for ease of use and utility
- Support safe prescribing and diversion policies and provider education
- Ensure safe prescribing practices and monitor these practices of pain management specialists and primary care providers
- Provide patients, families, & caregivers education with accessible materials specific to opioid use and local community services

Harm Reduction

- Develop naloxone distribution policies that reflect ED's position on distribution and provides clear guidance to staff
- Ensure HIV/HCV screening and processes when IV drug use is suspected

Screening, Treatment Referral & Substance Use Care Coordination

- Expand Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)/Buprenorphine-waivered services in EDs & community treatment clinics and providers
- Improve MAT coordination statewide, particularly between Anchorage MAT providers and rural care
- Implement SBIRT screening as standard ED protocol with adapted EHR capacities to include screening tools and results in real time.
- Prioritize full development of referral management systems in hospital EHRs
- Care coordination with primary care physician, behavioral health providers, and Alaska Department of Corrections
- Optimize full integration of ED EHR statewide with primary care and behavioral health providers

Relapse Prevention

- Enhance standardized screening to identify previous dependence or addiction

Surveillance & Information Exchange

- Improve OUD diagnostic coding with provider training and medical coding specialists
- Ensure Health Facilities Data Reporting (HFDR) timely data submission

2,088

Annual average opioid-related ED discharges, or 0.7% of all ED discharges (2016-2018)

\$23 million

Total opioid-related ED billing charges or 0.8% of all ED billing charges (2016-2018)

Role of Needs Assessment:

- ❖ Learn from 59 subject matter experts and key stakeholders representing the full spectrum of prevention and treatment services
- ❖ Assess gaps in interventions between Alaska ED providers, patients, and community organizations
- ❖ Identify effective policies and procedures to improve the OUD continuum of care in Alaska



Phase Two Recommendations

Upstream Prevention

- Expand coordination of trauma screening data and implement screening protocols

Harm Reduction

- Expand community syringe programs and encourage EDs to education and inform IV drug users about such resources
- Reduce stigma through staff training and patient-centered, relationship-based approaches to care
- Ensure appropriate care of minors, including care coordination with Children's Services

Screening, Treatment Referral & Substance Use Care Coordination

- Support ongoing training and technical assistance to outpatient MAT providers, and encourage providers to provide ongoing medical management and monitoring for drug diversion
- Develop treatment infrastructure, including bridge programs, residential treatment, and peer support linkages to care

Relapse Prevention

- Build mental health capacity at the community level and reduce barriers to timely access
- Expand PDMP reporting to include methadone and buprenorphine from outpatient treatment programs

Surveillance & Information Exchange

- Develop ED process measures and data analytics capacities with technical assistance and training

EDs throughout Alaska are working to address the consequences of opioid misuse and provide quality care to those impacted. Below are snapshot examples of collaborative approaches and effective strategies in Alaska's EDs.

Changing ED Culture, Practice, & Connections

Juneau's Bartlett Regional Hospital ED has dedicated resources to changing ED culture and capacity, and advancing patient-centered care to better serve patients OUD. It has prioritized networking with community resources and actively bridging to the next steps of care.

Improving Prescribing Practices

Nome's Norton Sound Regional Hospital ED has a robust approach to monitoring and improving provider prescribing practices. Opioid prescriptions are down about 75% from previous levels.

Improving ED Collaboration with Alaska Department of Corrections

Alaska's Department of Corrections (DOC) serves a dynamic population with health problems, including OUD. Five years ago, 25% of DOC deaths were from OUD. While no policy mandates ED coordination with DOC, Alaska's EDs and DOC are collaborating to better meet the OUD treatment needs of individuals in jail or prison. DOC changes in policy and practice have advanced care coordination with EDs and significantly reduced overdose deaths while incarcerated. There is a concerted effort to provide a compendium of care, including MAT for inmates with OUD. EDs meet a critical need in this treatment effort.

Want to know more?

Please find *Statewide Emergency Department Needs Assessment for Addressing Alaska's Opioid Epidemic, Part One: Needs Assessment and Part Two: Policy Review* prepared by McDowell Group Inc. at opioids.alaska.gov

Next steps?

For more information on the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention, contact osmap@alaska.gov