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# PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

## A NATIVE-LED PROGRAM ON THE WHITE EARTH RESERVATION IS REWRITING THE RULES ON OPIOID TREATMENT FOR PARENTS

For almost 10 years, the Maternal Outreach and Mitigation Services Program (MOMS) in Minnesota has helped dozens of women and their partners rebuild their lives, stay sober, and thrive as parents. Experts say its lessons could help other communities struggling with opioid abuse. Opioid addiction has wracked many communities in Minnesota but none more so than the Native community. In 2023, Native Americans in Minnesota were at least 22 times more likely to die from opioid overdoses than white people.



Photo by Sheila Mulrooney Eldred

## LEGAL KIOSKS OPEN NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ELY, NEVADA



Nevada residents in rural communities like Ely now have expanded access to vital legal resources with the Nevada Legal Kiosk program, which brings free and accessible legal information to libraries across the state. The Nevada Legal Kiosk program provides free, user-friendly access points for individuals facing civil legal challenges. By visiting one of these kiosks, people in Ely and other communities can find free legal information, download forms, and learn about local legal aid and community resources. They can also join online meetings and remote court hearings.

## A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF STIGMA TOWARDS OPIOID USERS AMONG RURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN TENNESSEE

The U.S. opioid crisis, resulting in nearly 500,000 deaths from 1999 to 2019, has been exacerbated by persistent stigma which hinders treatment and recovery efforts. This stigma, whether structural, social, or self-imposed, challenges overdose prevention and recovery. This study aimed to assess and compare levels of stigma towards opioid users among rural law enforcement officers (LEOs) and community members in Tennessee, highlighting rural community-level attitudes.



## **MEDICATIONS FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER AND OTHER EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICE OFFERINGS IN FAITH-AFFILIATED TREATMENT CENTERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS**

Amidst an ongoing surge of opioid use disorder (OUD) incidence, clinicians and policymakers are seeking partnerships with faith communities - including faith-affiliated treatment centers (FATCs) - to expand access to evidence-based OUD treatment. However, little is known whether FATCs differentially offer such evidence-based treatment services, particularly medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and co-occurring mental health care. In this study, the authors use the 2021 National Substance Use and Mental Health Services Survey (N-SUMHSS) to examine differences in the provision of several OUD services, including MOUD, psychological treatments, mental health services, medical services, recovery support services, and services related to treatment accessibility, between self-identified FATCs and non-FATCs.

# RESEARCH & REPORTS

## **ROADBLOCKS TO REPORTING: EXAMINING BARRIERS THAT DETER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM-SURVIVORS FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF PENNSYLVANIA**

This report expands upon research efforts conducted through the Center for Rural Pennsylvania focusing on domestic violence. It examines the barriers that prevent or dissuade survivors of Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence from reporting their victimization to law enforcement and the differences between rural and urban reporting. Further, this report examines the experiences that survivors have with law enforcement when they do choose to report their victimization and the outcomes that may result from these experiences, such as barriers to accessing victim services.

## **RECEIPT OF MEDICATIONS FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER AMONG RURAL AND URBAN VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION PATIENTS**

This study examines differences in overall and medication-specific MOUD receipt between rural versus urban military veteran patients to address the limitations of prior work that focused on differences between rural and urban facilities and work that examined MOUD generally rather than specific medication types. Study findings reveal that rural patients have a lower likelihood of receiving methadone for OUD treatment but are more likely to receive buprenorphine. Continued work is needed to ensure that rural Veterans have equitable access to the most appropriate medication for their healthcare needs.

## RURAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE

Rural communities face unique challenges that impact their ability to deliver fair and equitable justice. Despite these challenges, rural communities rely on their many strengths to address the needs of their residents.

The National Center for State Courts, in partnership with Rulo Strategies, launched the [Rural Justice Collaborative \(RJC\)](#) to showcase the strengths of rural communities and highlight the cross-sector collaboration that is a hallmark of rural justice systems.

The work under the RJC is supported by a cross-sector advisory council composed of rural judges along with additional stakeholders in the justice, child welfare, and behavioral health systems. The advisory council guides and identifies innovative programs and practices.

# ARTICLES

## A STATE OF MIND: CONFRONTING OUR MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

The Mountain West is in the grips of a full-blown mental health crisis, and Wyoming is ground zero. Stigma in isolated rural communities prevents people from seeking help but with addiction, suicide, and PTSD devastating the state, it is time to start a conversation. This [documentary series](#) traces patient journeys, weaving expert interviews and man-on-the-street commentary to examine solutions to Wyoming's mental health crisis.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND PROGRESS ON LEVERAGING EMS IN OVERDOSE RESPONSE AMONG FIVE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE STATES

The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, in partnership with the National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials (NASEMSO), supported five states—Kentucky, Ohio, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin—in developing and implementing action plans to expand the role of EMS to help prevent overdose events and support individuals with substance use disorders. States undertook initiatives such as pilot programs for EMS-initiated buprenorphine, development of statewide naloxone leave-behind programs, and changes to EMS protocols that enable agencies and clinicians to use evidence-informed best and promising practices that utilize harm reduction strategies and provide opportunities for linkages to treatment.

# PRESENTATION & PODCAST

## INSTITUTIONALIZING LGBTQ+ JUSTICE: CULTURALLY SPECIFIC APPROACHES IN RURAL QUEER COMMUNITIES

Creating safe and supportive environments for LGBTQIA+ communities is an integral part of sexual and intimate partner violence prevention and Health Equity. According to the Centers for Disease Control, LGBTQIA+ youth experience higher rates of sexual and dating violence than their cisgender and heterosexual peers. Additionally, homophobic bullying at a young age has been linked to sexual and intimate partner violence prevention at a later age. In this webinar, culturally specific LGBTQIA+ advocates will discuss the unique needs of queer people in rural and indigenous communities, and how they are building safe spaces for queer people in their communities. (History of two-spirit people at 13:55, the queer south at 42:47, advise for creating a protective environment at 1:03:03, dream for rural communities? at 1:14:05, and what someone should know when entering a rural community to enact change at 1:18:35.) The slide presentation can be found [here](#).



## ON THE REBOUND (STORIES FROM RECOVERY COURT)

At one point years ago, the town of Galax, in Southwest Virginia, was number four in the nation per capita, where pharmacies pumped millions of prescription opioids into the region. Galax was also the only town with a hospital that served thousands of rural families who needed help for loved ones with addiction. The town became a location for an in-patient rehabilitation program that serves people mostly from Virginia's metro areas. So, for the size of this little country town, they've been saddled with a heavy burden and have risen to the challenge. This series aims to tell the stories of people in the [Fit for Recovery Court](#) in their own words. Full-length interviews with people you've heard throughout the series are also available as part of that mission.



# RESOURCES

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE STIGMA-FREE TOOLKITS: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND RURAL RESIDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health challenges can impact anyone, yet many people, including youth and rural residents, often face barriers to accessing the support they need. That's where the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society comes in. Our charity is proud to offer no-cost toolkits designed to empower individuals and communities: the [Student Mental Health Toolkit](#) and the [Rural Mental Wellness Toolkit](#). Each toolkit is packed with resources to reduce stigma, promote well-being, and equip users with the tools to take charge of their mental health.



## EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDE: SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR UNDERSERVED YOUTH

This evidence-based guide provides strategies and insights specific to at-risk groups to support interventions and help prevent suicides. The guide highlights existing research; discusses barriers that hinder youth's access to prevention and intervention services; and offers guidance on selecting, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based prevention programs. It also highlights programs that are making strides in addressing suicidal thoughts and behaviors in young people from underserved communities.



## INTERIM STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

In recent years, communities across the United States—including urban, suburban, and rural places—have seen a rapid and alarming rise in unsheltered homelessness with more people sleeping in public spaces. The strategies in this document represent an explanation, not an endorsement, of how communities might respond in these situations. Examples such as non-congregate shelters, safe parking sites, tiny homes, and self-governed supported encampments are explored.

