Addressing the Opioid Crisis in Small and Rural Communities in Western Massachusetts

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Based on Massachusetts Health Policy Forum Issue Brief by Robert Bohler, MPH, Michael Doonan, PhD, and Constance Horgan, ScD

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We Join in Thanking the Funders of This Forum
OVERVIEW

Extent of the Opioid Crisis in Western Massachusetts

Unique Challenges in Western Massachusetts

Best Practices and Innovative Programs

Recommendations
Issue Brief: Approach and Themes

Approach

- Extensive literature search
- Publicly available data and secondary data analysis
- 24 semi-structured interviews with five key stakeholder groups: providers, community coalitions, criminal justice, government officials, and harm reduction specialists

Themes

- Importance of community collaboration
- Rehabilitative role of the criminal justice system
- Need to engage more people on medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Expansion of harm reduction and recovery support services
The Problem: Epidemiology
MA Opioid Overdose Death Rate Significantly Higher than National Average

Source: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2019)
Opioid Overdoses are Increasing in Western Mass

Unadjusted Opioid-Related Death Rates for Counties in Western Massachusetts 2012-2018

Source: Massachusetts DPH and U.S. Census

*Per 100,000 People
Fentanyl is Increasing in Western MA

Presence of Fentanyl in Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths

Source: Brandeis/IBH team. Data obtained through contract with Massachusetts DPH for 2015-2017. *2017 data is preliminary

*2018 WMA data point is preliminary from Northwest DA Office; 2018 MA data point is preliminary state-level fentanyl percentage in opioid OD's
County-level Prevalence of Opioid Use Disorder

Berkshire County
Franklin County
Hampden County
Hampshire County

Source: Barocas et al. (2018)
### Opioid Prescribing Higher in Western Mass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>% of Population Receiving Schedule II Opioid Rx</th>
<th>Total Number of Dosage Units Per Capita</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire County</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampden County</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Massachusetts DPH (2019) – 1st Quarter of 2019
Who is at Greatest Risk?

- History of nonfatal overdose
- Diagnosed mental illness
- Low socioeconomic status*
- Recently incarcerated
- Mothers with opioid use disorder
- Homelessness
- Those prescribed opioids >3 months
- History of trauma*

Source: Massachusetts DPH, Chapter 55 Report  
* - Denotes from Interviews
The Problem: Costs and Consequences
Economic Impact

Cost of Opioid Crisis in MA:

$15.2 billion (2017)

$9.7 billion = Productivity losses
$4.5 billion = Health care costs
$500 million = Criminal justice costs
$550 million = Public safety costs
Industry-Specific Impacts

Source: Massachusetts DPH (2018)
Intergenerational and Community Impact

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

Foster Care System

Grandparents

Criminal Justice System
Unique Challenges in Western Massachusetts
Unique Challenges in Western Massachusetts

Access to Treatment

• Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

• Transportation

• Rural Isolation
Unique Challenges in Western Massachusetts

Upstream Factors

- Socioeconomic Distress
- Trauma
- Housing
Unique Challenges in Western Massachusetts

Stigma

- General public
- People in recovery
- Medical professionals
- MOUD
Best Practices and Innovative Models in Western MA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEST PRACTICES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recovery Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm Reduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Collaboration

Best Practices

- Different types of coalitions
- Aligned leadership

Innovative Models

- Hampshire HOPE
- Opioid Task Force
- Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative
- Hampden County Addiction Taskforce
Prevention

Best Practices

• Use of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)
• Academic detailing
• Education on safe storage and disposal
• Prevention coalitions

Innovative Models

• Young Adult Empowerment Collaborative
• Franklin Family Drug Court
Early Intervention

Best Practices

• Models targeting high-risk populations

• Integration of addiction services in primary care

Innovative Models

• Drug and Addiction Recovery Team (DART)

• Engaging Mothers for Positive Outcomes with Early Referrals (EMPOWER)
Treatment

Best Practices

- Providing MOUD
- Increasing touchpoints for initiating MOUD
- Access to entire treatment and recovery continuum of care

Innovative Models

- Franklin County Sheriff’s Office
- After Incarceration Support Systems (AISS)
Recovery

Best Practices

• Recovery community organizations
• Support for all pathways of recovery
• Recovery support services

Innovative Models

• Recovery support centers (8 in Western Mass)
Harm Reduction

Best Practices

- Syringe service programs (SSPs)
- Naloxone distribution
- Safety education

Innovative Models

- Tapestry
- Harm Reduction Hedgehogs
Recommendations
Recommendations

1. Increase and improve treatment workforce regarding trauma-informed care and physiology of addiction
2. Support and expand municipal-based coalitions and strengthen county-based coalitions
3. Continue interventions that lead to cautious opioid prescribing practices
4. Increase capacity of MOUD and increase MOUD initiation at vital touchpoints
5. Increase treatment role of the criminal justice system
6. Provide a robust and comprehensive treatment and recovery continuum of care that is supported by payors
7. Use low bandwidth technology as a cost-effective way to deliver services to underserved areas
8. Support the increased distribution of naloxone and other harm reduction strategies
9. Provide funding that is sustainable for the entire continuum of care
10. Address upstream factors related to OUD
Unique Challenges in Western Mass

*but also*

Unique Opportunity to Come Together

- Communities/Leaders
- Health Care Systems and Other Organizations
- Task forces and Coalitions
- Academics
Thank you!