Online Tool Informs a Comprehensive Community Response to the Opioid Crisis

The opioid overdose crisis continues to escalate as preliminary evidence shows more than 106,000 overdose deaths occurred in a 12-month period ending in November 2021, with the vast majority involving opioids. To respond effectively, communities must adopt policies and programs that prevent and treat opioid addiction, minimize harm from opioid use, and support those in recovery. Existing and proposed federal, state, and private grant programs, along with opioid litigation settlements and judgments, are now making significant funds available to support communities in their efforts.

To assist stakeholders in mounting a comprehensive response to the opioid crisis, the Brandeis Opioid Resource Connector, a project of the Opioid Policy Research Collaborative at Brandeis University, has developed an online tool, the Community Response Checklist. Within each major component of the continuum of care – prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery – the checklist presents effective policies and programs that communities have implemented, using examples drawn from our extensive library of program models. Using the checklist, stakeholders can see which approaches to add to their response portfolio. The checklist now includes over 50 program and policy response categories:

- *Prevention*: 20 policy/program categories, e.g., promoting opioid prescribing guidelines, optimizing utilization of PDMPs, school-based education on opioid misuse.
- *Treatment:* 12 categories, e.g., increasing the availability of medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), encouraging "warm handoff" to treatment, adopting pre-arrest diversion programs.
- *Harm Reduction*: 9 categories, e.g., distributing naloxone, opening syringe exchanges, checking drugs for fentanyl using test strips.
- *Recovery*: 10 categories, e.g., peer-led outreach programs, drop-in centers, housing and employment assistance.

The checklist can be filtered by type of stakeholder (e.g., policy maker, clinician, educator), allowing users to view the most relevant policies and programs given their role in the continuum of care.

We continue to add material on interventions to address the opioid crisis, including over 180 program models and 800 additional resources. As always, we encourage your feedback on promising opioid programs and policies and additional approaches not yet included in the Checklist.

The Brandeis Opioid Resource Connector Team