

ASTHO Inventory of State/Territorial Action: Prescription Drug Abuse & Overdose

MASSACHUSETTS

BACKGROUND

In June 2014, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) administered a survey to collect information across all states and territories in order to generate an inventory of activities and policies to prevent prescription opioid abuse and overdose. This assessment was created based on recommendations from both the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. State and territorial health agencies may use their profiles to better understand the scope of this public health issue, characterize state and community responses, assess partnerships, and explore cross-agency collaboration.

The survey contained 32 questions across the following five topic areas:

- 1. Expand and Strengthen Prevention Strategies**
- 2. Improve Access to and Use of Effective Treatment and Recovery Support**
- 3. Improve Monitoring and Surveillance**
- 4. Expand and Strengthen Control and Enforcement**
- 5. Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)**

The 2014 ASTHO Prescription Drug Inventory offers a snapshot of how states are responding to the challenge of prescription drug abuse and overdose and what role, if any, the state health department is playing in coordinating these efforts. The results of this survey are intended to provide an understanding of the current environment of state activities to address prescription drug abuse, ranging from prevention strategies to surveillance and monitoring (PDMPs), law enforcement, and treatment and recovery.

Every participating state and territory's results will be posted to www.astho.org. There, ASTHO members can use the profiles as a tool to explore variations in policies and practices among state and territorial health agencies. They may also be used to determine how to strengthen resource sharing, collaborations, and partnerships between states. States may want to share these results with other stakeholders in their own jurisdiction, or wish to reach out to colleagues in other states to learn more about their results.

We welcome your feedback on this survey and your state's individual profile. Please feel free to provide comments and suggestions on our survey scope and questions or what future analyses would be most valuable to you.

RESULTS

Within each section, the results are organized by three types of questions: **policy-related**, **state or organizational activities**, and **general information**. For each question, respondents indicated the degree to which their state or territory had taken action on a specific issue related to prescription drug abuse and overdose. Respondents also had the option to indicate “I don’t know” or “Other” and provide a free text response. The responses are color-coded in the results tables below such that green indicates a “yes” response to a question and yellow indicates a “no” response. The light green shade represents intermediate responses indicating that the answer based on the question criteria is “no, but there is some degree of action or the action is voluntary.” **Figure 1** describes the response options appearing in Sections 1-5 and shows the corresponding color-coded scheme.

Figure 1. Response Key

Yes
No, but there is some degree of action OR the action (e.g., policy) is voluntary
No, and there is no action within the state or territory
Other/I don't know

The right-hand column displays the total sum of all “yes” responses for each survey question for all states and territories participating in the survey (n= 51). This count provides an estimate of activities occurring nationwide and is intended to illustrate areas where there are uniform trends of action.

Section 1: Expand and Strengthen Prevention Strategies		States Reporting "Yes"
Does your state or territory have a policy requiring...		
Prescribers to receive training on responsible opioid prescribing before obtaining DEA registration to prescribe controlled substances?	Yes	8
Prescribers to obtain continuing education in pain management prior to license renewal?	Yes	18
EDs and/or acute care facilities follow protocols for prescribing opioid analgesics?	No, some action	9
Are there any agencies or organizations in your state or territory...		
Implementing evidence-based public awareness campaigns on preventing prescription drug abuse?	Yes	36
Funding effective primary prevention targeting substance abuse?	Yes	47
<i>Massachusetts DPH funds all of these types of programs.</i>		
Implementing Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)?	Yes	43
<i>Massachusetts DPH funds SBIRT Center for Excellence.</i>		
General Information		
Do health professions licensing boards impose pre-service curricular requirements for training in substance abuse/addiction?	Other	4
<i>The boards do not impose requirements but nurses, dentists and pharmacists take classes in substance abuse/addiction as part of the curriculum in school.</i>		
Are controlled substance disposal options available to the public on a permanent, ongoing basis?	Yes	40

Section 2: Improve Access to and Use of Effective Treatment and Recovery Support		States Reporting "Yes"
Are there any agencies or organizations in your state or territory...		
Implementing training programs on how to administer naloxone?	Yes	32
Collecting data about overdose reversals as a result of naloxone distribution programs?	Yes	19
Evaluating laws that address overdose prevention and/or education?	Yes	29
Working to reduce stigma associated with receiving treatment for opioid dependence?	Yes	36
Reporting on performance measures for opioid treatment programs (OTPs)?	Yes	28
General Information		
Is there an active, statewide task force addressing treatment for opioid dependence?	Yes	33

Section 3: Improve Monitoring and Surveillance		States Reporting "Yes"
Does your state or territory have a policy authorizing...		
Multiple state agencies to share prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data for statistical, public health research, and/or educational purposes?	No, some action	32
Are there any agencies or organizations in your state or territory...		
Conducting epidemiological analyses to document opioid abuse?	No, some action	36
Using PDMP data to implement interventions that target "high risk" populations/regions?	Yes	26
Using health IT to support principles of SBIRT?	Yes	19
<i>We have a federal grant from SAMHSA to integrate PMP with EHRs. Several priorities have built screening questions into EHRs. Few have developed registry to follow up with patients.</i>		19
Using PDMP data to identify special populations more vulnerable to healthcare disparities?	No, no action	10
General Information		
Does your state's PDMP link with other health IT systems?	No, some action	19

Section 4: Expand and Strengthen Control and Enforcement		States Reporting "Yes"
Does your state or territory have a policy for...		
Exercising disciplinary action against prescribers in violation of safe and appropriate prescribing practices? <i>Boards responsible for prescribers (medicine, pharmacy, podiatry, dental, nursing, and physician assistants) have regulations for disciplinary actions when standards of practice are in question.</i>	Other	42
Specifying general procedures for licensing pain management clinics?	No, no action	12
Are there any agencies or organizations in your state or territory...		
Using PDMP data to identify potential <i>criminal prescribers</i> and/or <i>clinics</i> based on outlier prescribing patterns, "red flags," or other indicators? <i>Even outlier patterns found in PMP data cannot identify criminal behavior. PMP data is useful as a tool for investigations. PMP data is sometimes helpful in locating the actual prescriptions in question. PMP data is not evidence.</i>	Other	28
Using PDMP to identify potential "doctor shoppers" based on criteria for identifying questionable activity and/or intent to receive multiple prescriptions? <i>Electronic alerts are issued using a threshold or criteria that has been reviewed and approved by the PMP Medical Review Group. Email notifications are sent to prescribers; prescribers must have an active MA Online PMP end-user account. The notification includes computer generated random identification number that the recipient uses to retrieve the patient specific records. Electronic alert notifications for pharmacists are being developed.</i>	Other	33
Evaluating Patient Review and Restriction (PRR) programs?	Other MassHealth	27
Evaluating laws to prevent and/or mitigate diversion of controlled substances?	Yes	25
Providing training for law enforcement officials on the prevention and/or treatment of substance abuse?	Yes	37
Actively partnering with High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs)?	Yes	31
General Information		
Does your state health agency collaborate with law enforcement to support prevention and control statutes?	No, some action	37

Section 5: Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal/Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)		States Reporting "Yes"
Does your state or territory have a policy for...		
Requiring hospitals to notify the department of health when an infant diagnosed with NAS is born?	Yes	8
"Safe Harbor" conditions for pregnant women who access prenatal care and addiction treatment?	Yes	6
General Information		
Is there a statewide plan to address NAS?	No, some action	3