



Opioid
Response
Network

Opioid Response Network Convenes on Opioid Epidemic and National Public Health Priorities in Rhode Island

Representatives from Region 5 Take New Strategies and Innovations Back Home

Providence, RI – July 7, 2023 – The [Opioid Response Network](#) (ORN), a coalition of national organizations led by the Rhode Island-based [American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry](#) and funded through the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA), hosted 150 public health leaders for a summit in Providence, RI from May 16-18, 2023. The hallmark event showcased best practices and advances made in the prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction of opioid and stimulant use disorders. It also highlighted innovations and emerging topics in the substance use field.

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse provided welcoming remarks via video for participants from the 46 national professional organizations that make up the *Opioid Response Network*, alongside Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, Tom Coderre. Session topics included health equity, emerging topics in recovery, national Naloxone/Narcan saturation, harm reduction, and priority areas for opioid litigation funding.

Representatives from the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison presented data highlighting trends in the region and in-demand resources individuals working in the field need to support them as they address the crisis locally.

“We are seeing great need across prevention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction, and have built up sizeable pool of consultants that can provide free education and training across this spectrum of care. We are also seeing an increased need for strategies to support individuals that are pregnant or parenting and living with a substance use disorder.” – Adrijana Pusnik, Technology Transfer Specialist

“Substance use disorders continue to be highly stigmatized, creating barriers to critical treatment and recovery resources for people with opioid use disorders and other behavioral health issues. It’s critical we turn the tide. The only way we are going to make change is by coming together, sharing, not competing, and taking advantage of our collective strengths and opportunities. This is the foundation and promise of the Opioid Response Network.” – Kathryn Cates Wessel, CEO, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry and Principal Investigator and Co-project Director, Opioid Response Network.

Panel discussions during the summit focused on health equity and culturally responsive education and training strategies. Harm reduction was a primary topic, and participants shared best practices on Naloxone/Narcan distribution and reducing infectious disease transmission among people who use drugs.

The *Opioid Response Network* provides consultants to deliver no-cost training and education on these topics and more to address the opioid crisis in Region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI). For more information, visit OpioidResponseNetwork.org.



Opioid Response Network collaborators donated toiletries, socks, blankets, first-aid kits and more to Rhode Island's CODAC Behavioral Healthcare Mobile Unit treatment facility. This effort was enhanced significantly through a large donation from Rhode Island-based retailer, Ocean State Job Lot.