



COLORADO
CONSORTIUM
for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



About the Consortium

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention coordinates Colorado's response to the misuse of medications such as opioids, stimulants, and sedatives. The Consortium's mission is to reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse in Colorado by developing policies, programs, and partnerships with the many Colorado agencies, organizations, and community coalitions addressing one of the state's major public health crises.

The Consortium is part of the Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention at the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, located at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

Mission

Reduce prescription drug misuse in Colorado by developing policies, programs, and partnerships

Vision

Eradicate prescription drug misuse in Colorado

Values

- *Transparency, Inclusivity, and Openness*
- *Driven by Data and Evidence*
- *Seek Consensus Based on Collective Impact Organizational Model*

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Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

SKAGGS SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

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- **Tracey Ritter**, Advocates for Recovery Colorado
- **Sarah Werner**

Benzodiazepine Action

- **D. E. Foster**, host, Benzo-Free podcast
- **Alexis Ritvo**, University of Colorado School of Medicine

Harm Reduction

- **Sam Bourdon**, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- **Maggie Seldeen**, High Rockies Harm Reduction

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

- **Jason Hoppe**, UC Health and University of Colorado School of Medicine
- **Dmitry Kunin**, Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies

Provider Education

- **Josh Blum**, Denver Health
- **Kaylin Klie**, University of Colorado School of Medicine

Public Awareness

- **Heather Link-Bergman**, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- **Kent McLennan**, Rise Above Colorado
- **Maria Livingston**, *Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment*

Recovery

- **Rica Rodriguez**, Promotores de Esperanza
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Recovery Friendly Workplaces

- **Dave Secunda**, Avid 4 Adventure
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Safe Disposal

- **Sunny Linnebur**, University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy
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Treatment

- **Angela Bonaguidi**, University of Colorado Addiction Research and Treatment Services
- **Tyler Cole**, University of Colorado Addiction Research and Treatment Services
- **Steven Young**, Colorado Treatment Services

Name in italics indicates the co-chair left their position mid-year

A Note of Thanks

We at the Consortium are grateful for the hard work and expertise that our members, peers, and supporters provide. Nearly 1,500 individuals representing dozens of organizations have joined Consortium work groups. Many more people have attended events or used material created by the Consortium. And of course, we are grateful for the countless others who are working in their own ways to end prescription drug misuse and the overdose epidemic.

We are especially thankful for the co-chairs of our work groups, who volunteer their time and provide guidance and subject matter expertise. Thanks also goes to the members of our Coordinating Committee, who help us set goals and strategies. Without their dedication and leadership, we would not have accomplished what we have in our 11-year history.

If you would like to know more about the Consortium, please visit our website, www.corxconsortium.org. There you can find more information about our mission, individual work groups, and the many projects we have led or supported.

If you are interested in joining or working with the Consortium, please use the form at www.corxconsortium.org/contact-us, where you can ask questions and join a work group. If you would like to request a speaker, please visit www.corxconsortium.org/contact-us/speaker-request.

Thank you again for your support!

HIGHLIGHTS



For the Consortium, 2023 was a year in which we developed new partnerships, programs, and policies to combat the opioid and overdose crises. Reducing fentanyl's impact and preventing overdose deaths remained a priority, even as we participated in dozens of initiatives to reduce overdose deaths, prevent substance use disorders, and support Colorado's treatment, recovery, and harm reduction programs.

Once again, we worked with dozens of community groups and organizations across the state. We continue to help organizations in Colorado find the support they need, whether directly from the Consortium, its partners, or through the grant writing assistance program. We also assisted state leaders as they developed new strategies and systems.

We continued to support medication-assisted treatment programs, expanded a fentanyl

overdose prevention campaign, created new educational opportunities for medical providers, and developed tools peers can use to support each other.

Our staff, peers in other organizations, coalition leaders, and community members worked countless hours in 2023 and accomplished many great things. Here are some of our most notable achievements.

Finding Sustainable Funding For Our Partners

One of our missions is to support nonprofits and local governments, especially those that are small or newly formed. Our grant writing assistance program connects these groups to experienced grant writers. This program has helped local public health and human services departments, sober living transitional services, recovery organizations, harm reduction centers, sheriff's offices, the Regional Opioid Abatement Councils, and others successfully find and win federal and state grants.

The program's return on investment has been phenomenal. In 2023, 15 organizations won 18 grants totaling \$8.8 million, a 67:1 return on the \$132,090 spent by the program. Since 2019, 54 organizations have won grants totaling \$30 million, a 46:1 return on investment.

These funds help vital prevention, harm reduction, intervention, treatment, and recovery programs across Colorado.

2023 / Cumulative Total

Number of organizations awarded grants: 15 / 54

Number of grants awarded: 18 / 106

Total money awarded: \$8.8M / \$30M

Organizations assisted: 38 / 131

Total spent by the program: \$132,090 / \$647,986

Return on investment: 67:1 / 46:1

Helping Harm Reductionists Clarify Good Sam Law

Bridging the gap between the grassroots and lawmakers is one of the Consortium's vital roles. The Harm Reduction Work Group's work with the legislature during the 2023 session is an illustration of the importance of our ability to connect.

Harm reduction professionals and members of the work group uncovered a conflict between the state's Good Samaritan law, which protects people who call 911 to report an overdose from prosecution even if they have drugs with them, and the 2022 Fentanyl Accountability and Prevention Act. The conflict appeared to expose drug users to significant jail time after

reporting an overdose that involved fentanyl, even if they only carried a small amount or inadvertently had drugs contaminated with trace amounts.

After identifying the conflict, the Consortium worked with the legislature to find a policy solution to resolve the conflict. Their work resulted in the Reporting of Emergency Overdose Events Act, which re-established Good Samaritan protections.

The work group also kept stakeholders aware of the new laws and prepared communications about xylazine, a new drug being mixed with fentanyl that can cause severe adverse effects.



Sarah Werner (left) and Tracey Ritter recording the Veteran's Voice podcast. Sarah and Tracey are co-chairs of the Affected Families and Friends Work Group.



Giving Voice to Affected Families and Friends

Few people know the impact of the overdose crisis better than families who have lost loved ones. The Affected Families and Friends Work Group spent 2023 giving voice to those families. In the spring, the work group co-chairs joined the [Veteran's Voice podcast](#) for a three-part series about how families are affected by substance use disorders. The work group also helped bring the [INTO LIGHT art exhibit](#) to Denver, which tells the stories of overdose victims using one-of-a-kind portraits.

The work group also helped the Attorney General's Office organize meetings in which affected family members could share their experiences with the Attorney General to make sure the personal effect of the epidemic is remembered.

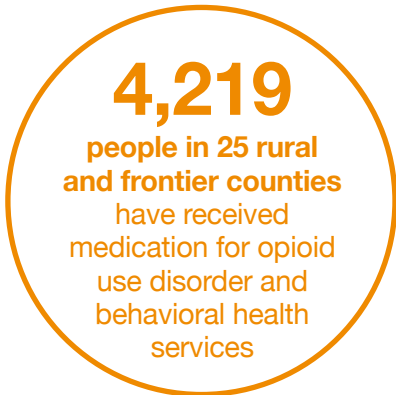


Improving Access to Medication-Assisted Treatment

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is an evidence-based treatment essential for treating opioid use disorder. Expanding access to MAT, especially in rural and frontier areas, is a state priority backed by funds from the legislature. Since 2017, the Consortium has worked with the University of Colorado College of Nursing and the School of Medicine to achieve this goal.

In September, the Consortium began the fourth cycle of the program. Currently, four organizations in 21 counties receive funds from the program.

All told, the expansion program has provided medications for opioid use disorder and behavioral health services to 4,219 people in 25 rural and frontier counties.



Measuring Treatment Outcomes to Improve Lives

Effective treatment for opioid use disorders could stop overdoses and help thousands of people maintain their recovery. To understand how Colorado's treatment system is working and measure progress, the Consortium partnered with Pew Charitable Trusts and the Center for Improving the Value in Health Care to compile and analyze data related to core measures for OUD treatment.

This project aimed at pinpointing strengths and weaknesses along various points in the treatment system so policymakers know where improvements are needed. Colorado's policymakers and other stakeholders can track outcomes to strengthen policies and change practices to help more people access medications for OUD remain in treatment and recover.

For those with opioid use disorder, a stronger OUD detection and treatment system would translate into fewer overdose deaths, higher rates of recovery, and more stable families.

Assisting Jails With New Treatment Mandates

In 2022, the legislature passed a law requiring jails to provide substance use assessments, withdrawal management, treatment with medications for opioid use disorder, and continuity of care upon release. To help jails meet the new requirements, the Consortium engaged County Sheriffs of Colorado and the Colorado Jail Association to understand their issues and look at new practices. We also worked with the BHA's Jail-based Behavioral Health Services program and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.



Helping Bring Recovery To Workplaces

2023 was a big year for the Recovery Friendly Workplaces Initiative. Partners at the Colorado School of Public Health's Center for Health, Work, and Environment and members of our Recovery Friendly Workplaces Work Group began working with business leaders to promote the initiative and the Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit. The initiative helps businesses create workplaces that support workers with common behavioral health

conditions, including substance use disorder. Leaders met with or presented to local Chambers of Commerce, worked with 34 employers from several industries as part of the Peer Learning Series, and provided 23 advising sessions.

Next year could be even bigger – the initiative plans to continue the project's roll out and seek funding from the Legislature.



Finding New Ways to Fight Fentanyl Overdoses

Keep the Party Safe, the Consortium’s award-winning fentanyl overdose prevention campaign, launched on International Overdose Awareness Day in 2022 with digital and out-of-home ads educating people 18 to 44 about their vulnerability to fentanyl overdoses. The campaign capitalized on its momentum to expand in 2023, developing new partnerships and innovative tactics.

Working with the CDPHE, the campaign created Spotify advertisements targeting music lovers aged 18 to 24. We also formed a groundbreaking partnership with AEG Presents, one of the largest concert promotion companies in the world, to advertise and place overdose rescue kits in its Colorado venues and distribute naloxone and information at concerts.

Along with partners including the CU School of Pharmacy, Mile High Behavioral Health Care, and the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment, Keep the Party Safe distributed more than 7,500 doses of naloxone and nearly 2,000 fentanyl test strips at more than a dozen community events. That included the Global Dance Festival and Billy Strings’ Renewal festival, two of the largest concerts in Colorado.

We also distributed several thousand palm cards, rack cards, and posters to 32 organizations for their use.

Coordinating a Response to Fentanyl

A problem as big as fentanyl requires collaboration toward a common goal. This year, the Consortium and the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area began conducting quarterly stakeholder meetings to share information and foster future partnerships. Subjects included law enforcement approaches, drug interdiction, harm reduction, public awareness, and ways to document fentanyl-related deaths.



Effectively Educating Providers

Provider education is one of the Consortium's longest running and most successful programs. In 2023, the Provider Education Work Group hosted 24 live training sessions for more than 1,000 providers. It also expanded the number of free, on-demand Continuing Medical Education courses to 31 online modules; 4,634 participants registered for the courses.

This year we worked with the Evaluation Center at CU Denver to evaluate the program and whether five of our core modules were effective. A survey of 2,138 respondents showed that providers felt a significant increase in their confidence that they could follow opioid prescribing guidelines.

More than 90% of trainees (n=1,289) reported their knowledge increased; they were confident they could apply what they learned; and they intended to apply what they learned.



Work group co-chairs help lead the Consortium and are vital to our success. We would like to thank four co-chairs who have been with us for 10 years.

At our annual meeting, we honored Sunny Linnebur (Safe Disposal), Josh Blum (Harm Reduction and Provider Education), Kent MacLennan (Public Awareness), and Jason Hoppe (Prescription Drug Monitoring Program).

Sunny, Josh, and Kent joined us at our annual meeting. Here they are with Consortium director José Esquibel, who is on the right.

Helping Leaders in the Black Community Fight Substance Use

Opioids, overdoses, and substance use disorders do not discriminate, and historic inequities and health disparities often worsen their impact on certain communities. This is true in Colorado's Black communities.

This year, the Consortium engaged with leaders in the Black community who seek to address their unique challenges. The Consortium helped support the formation of the Black Advisory Committee on Substance Use in Colorado, which will develop

a state plan for fighting substance use disorders and the opioid crisis in their community. This will also help community leaders find resources from state departments, such as access to naloxone and information about billing for Medicaid-eligible services.

The Consortium worked with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Office of Health Equity and the Behavioral Health Administration to support this work.

Helping Lawmakers Develop New Policies

Each legislative session, Colorado's elected leaders rely on the Consortium to help identify problems and potential policy solutions for the Legislature to consider. The Consortium also is a source of subject matter expertise that is nonpartisan and trusted, and we engage experts and stakeholders across many fields.

Some years are especially busy; and 2023 was one of them. This summer we helped prepare the Study Committee on Opioids and Other Substance Use Disorders for the 2024 session. To help the committee identify issues and priorities, the Consortium conducted a survey to gather feedback about 15 bills written by the committee and passed by the legislature in

2018, 2019, and 2020. A total of 86 policy items were under consideration.

In addition, work groups identified potential policy solutions that would enhance the implementation of strategies related to prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery, which were shared at committee hearings. We also found subject experts to provide testimony for the committee and participated in stakeholder engagement for developing draft policies.

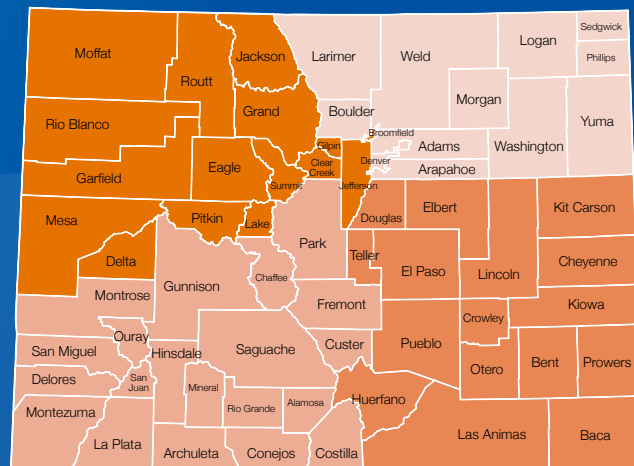
As a result, the committee drafted four bills related to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. The General Assembly will consider the bills in the 2024 session.

Supporting Communities

The members of our external relations team support community members and organizations across the state, whether they are in urban, rural, or frontier communities. They share resources and best practices with our local partners and elevate the voice of local communities to state policymakers and funders.

Our four staff members provide technical assistance and share information about funding opportunities, possible grants, new services and programs, and help educate local stakeholders. Highlights from 2023 include:

- Creating an opioid overdose education and response training presentation and facilitator guide. The slides and guide are for a general audience and are updated with current, accurate, and timely information throughout the year.
- Collaborating with the Colorado Department of Education, School Nurses Department on a naloxone education program. The program will help nurses educate teachers, staff, and parents about overdose prevention and response. More than 50 school nurses attended a training in November and are using the information to build capacity of training across the state.



The external relations staff has four members assigned to each quadrant of the state in order to improve assistance based on regional and local needs.

- Helping build relationships to enhance opioid overdose prevention through harm reduction, the naloxone bulk purchase fund, naloxone kiosks, funding opportunities, new agencies, and work groups.
- Engaging counties and businesses in the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative and helping to provide technical assistance through partnerships to build RFW across the county as a systems level change.
- Providing technical assistance for the Regional Opioid Abatement Councils (ROACs) as they develop programs funded by money from opioid settlements.

PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND WORKGROUPS

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention's staff and members work closely with an array of stakeholders to strengthen systems to prevent prescription drug misuse, stop overdoses, and promote harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.

Our partners include healthcare professionals, community coalitions and grassroots organizations, nonprofits, businesses, academic institutions, concerned individuals, and more. We also work closely with state and local elected leaders, such as the Attorney General, the General Assembly, and County Commissioners. State agencies such as the Colorado Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Administration, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment are among our allies.

A key feature of the Consortium is our ability to bring these partners together through our 10 active work groups. Each group is led by co-chairs with years of experience in their fields. Along with the members of the Consortium's coordinating committee, they set our priorities and determine the course of some of our most important programs and projects.

Our team of program managers work with work group co-chairs to help each group succeed.



The Consortium collaborated with the University of Denver to bring the INTO LIGHT exhibition to Colorado.

These are some of the most impactful projects and programs Consortium staff and work groups worked on in 2023.

Making Medication Disposal Easier

The Consortium helped the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment launch a new phase of the Take Meds Back public awareness campaign that focuses on how safe medication disposal protects families. The Safe Disposal Work Group also helped add a disposal site finder to the MyColorado smartphone app.



Breakthroughs on Benzodiazepines

It is not well understood why some people experience severe adverse effects from benzodiazepines, even if they were prescribed by a doctor. Members of the Benzodiazepine Action Work Group have studied the matter for years, and in 2023 published a paper in the peer-reviewed journal PLOS-ONE to help define benzodiazepine-induced neurological dysfunction as a condition.

Remembering Who We've Lost and Encouraging Recovery

Each year, organizations across Colorado hold events in August as part of International Overdose Awareness Day and in September for National Recovery Month. The Consortium once again helped these organizations organize and promote their events.

2023 MAJOR WORK GROUP PROJECTS

Affected Families and Friends Work Group

- Worked with the Veteran's Voice podcast to create a three-part series about how substance use disorder affects military members, veterans, and their families
- Sponsored and supported the INTO LIGHT exhibition, which uses portraits and individual stories to show the impact of overdose deaths
- Participated in the Anonymous Sister documentary discussion panel

Benzodiazepine Action Work Group

- Published research paper on benzodiazepine-induced neurological dysfunction (BIND) in the peer-reviewed journal PLOS-ONE
- Conducted first peer training class as part of its new benzodiazepine peer-training program
- Created train-the-trainer classes for the peer training program
- Created provider education modules about safe benzo use and BIND

Black Advisory Committee for Substance Use in Colorado

- Established work group and began holding regular meetings
- Held listening sessions with large turnout and strong engagement, with community members sharing their lived experience and young people voicing interest in being included

Criminal Justice Work Group

- Convened stakeholders on assisting jails in meeting the new mandates of HB22-1326.
- Partnered with Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area on convening Fentanyl Response Stakeholder meetings to coordinate efforts in the state

Harm Reduction Work Group

- Helped the legislature revise the Good Samaritan Law to resolve conflicting provisions
- Communicated with stakeholders about revisions to the Good Samaritan Law
- Identified harm reduction policy issues for the Study Committee on Opioids and Other SUDs, which could be used to create new laws and policies in 2024
- Helped educate partners about xylazine, a new drug being mixed with fentanyl
- Reviewed and informed the messaging of the Keep the Party Safe fentanyl public awareness campaign

Provider Education Work Group

- Provided 24 live training sessions for more than 1,000 providers
- Expanded online Continuing Education Program to 31 online modules, for which 4,634 people registered
- Completed an in-depth evaluation of the five modules, which showed a statistically significant increase in how confident providers were that they understood opioid prescribing guidelines

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Work Group

- Hosted, along with the Department of Regulatory Affairs, three webinars about new legislation that expands when the PDMP must be used
- Informed and reviewed the PDMP Annual Report

Public Awareness Work Group

- Launched new phases of the Keep the Party Safe fentanyl overdose prevention campaign, which included ads for social media and Spotify
- Started partnership with AEG Presents to place Keep the Party Safe messages in its music venues around Denver
- Distributed more than 7,500 doses of naloxone to concertgoers at three major music festivals and eight concerts, including the Global Dance Festival and concerts at Red Rocks

Recovery Work Group

- Hosted or co-hosted in-person symposia for peer support professionals in La Junta, Monte Vista, and Glenwood Springs and one virtual symposium
- Reviewed Colorado's Recovery Strategic Plan to find areas which need additional attention and work
- Surveyed peer support professionals about recovery capital data tracking

Recovery Friendly Workplaces Work Group

- Launched the work group
- Developed timeline for roll-out of RFW designation, proposing corresponding bill language to the Colorado Legislature for consideration in the 2024 legislative session.
- Promoted the Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit, including meetings with and presentations to several local Chambers of Commerce

Safe Disposal Work Group

- Supported the Colorado Department of Public Health's relaunch of the Take Meds Back public awareness campaign
- Created educational material about safe medication storage and disposal for the general population
- Helped create feature on myColorado app that shows locations of medication disposal sites
- Collected 62,289 pounds of medication from 174 takeback sites

Treatment Work Group

- Focused on treatment of adolescents with Substance Use Disorder
- Engaged providers on the importance of and how to use medications for opioid use disorder (MOUDs) in jails
- Explored use of a web-based app that enables remote methadone dosing observation

2023 Consortium Funding

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention accomplished its mission with funds from a variety of sources. As we are the community engagement arm of the University of Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, grants are allocated to the Center.

Below is a summary of funders and activities for 2023. The periods for funding allocations vary.

In SB21-137, the Behavioral Health Recovery Act of 2021, the Colorado legislature **appropriated \$1,000,000 from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** to the Center for:

- Training and education for healthcare, behavioral healthcare, and public healthcare professionals;
- Further promoting the use of evidence-based models of care for treatment of pain and substance use disorders;
- Grant writing assistance for non-profit organizations and local public health;
- Strengthening recovery support programs and services

During fiscal year 2023, \$241,829 remained to be used for these activities.

\$3,000,000 was allocated from state funds to **continue the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Expansion Program in rural and frontier counties**. The program is a collaboration between the Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, CU's College of Nursing, and the Practice Innovation Program at CU's School of Medicine. The program began as a pilot in 2017 and was expanded with ongoing state funding in 2021. The ongoing funds were provided through SB21-137.

Funds are appropriated annually and divided between the Center and College of Nursing. **The Center is responsible for \$2,605,064**; the majority of these funds were distributed to MAT clinics and providers in 22 counties.

Also, **\$1,250,000 was allocated from state funds** to the Center for:

- Continuing education designed to help prescribers of pain medication to safely and effectively manage patients with pain;
- Continuing statewide public awareness campaigns about the safe use, storage, and disposal of opioids and the availability of drugs to prevent overdose;
- Community engagement activities to address substance use prevention, harm reduction, criminal justice system response, treatment, and recovery.

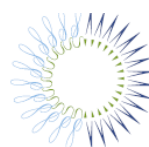
2023 Funders



COLORADO
Behavioral Health
Administration



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



THE
PEW
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) **provided the Center with \$463,753 from State Opioid Response (SOR) funds** to coordinate the efforts of existing statewide work with the goal of avoiding duplication of activities. This funding also supported Consortium efforts to provide technical assistance, resources, and planning to community partners addressing prescription drug abuse.

The BHA also **contracted with the Center for \$279,860 for the Grant Writing Assistance Program** to assist eligible entities in preparing applications for dollars from HB22-1281 (Behavioral Health-care Continuum Gap Grant Program) and SB22-196 (Health Needs of Persons in Criminal Justice System) to address an expansion in behavioral health services (inclusive of mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders), and SB22-181 to increase the peer support professional workforce.

Under the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Overdose Data to Action grant (OD2A), the Consortium **received \$175,707 to provide technical assistance and prevention resources** to OD2A grantees and Colorado communities. Funds also supported the Colorado Naloxone Project, a project to distribute naloxone to at-risk patients prior to discharge from the emergency department.

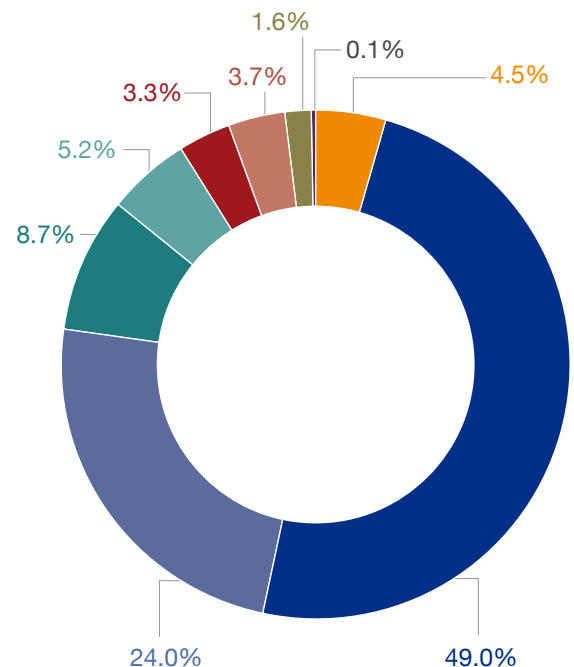
\$200,000 was provided to the Center from CDPHE to **expand the fentanyl overdose prevention campaign** to targeted audiences.

CoBank’s grant funded the **development and delivery of provider education curricula about a variety of topics**, such as pain management, safe opioid and benzodiazepine prescribing, and non-opioid pain management. Funds were fully spent in 2023.

PEW Charitable Trusts supported the Center with a grant for **\$87,729 to support Colorado’s efforts to collect and report on seven Core Opioid Treatment Measures**.

Consortium Funding Sources 2023

Funder	Funding Period	Amount
State ARPA	7/1/22 – 6/30/23	\$241,829
State MAT Expansion	7/1/22 – 6/30/23	\$2,605,064
State Center Appropriation	7/1/22– 6/30/23	\$1,250,000
Behavioral Health Administration State Opioid Response	9/30/22 – 9/29/23	\$463,753
Behavioral Health Administration for Grant Writing Assistance Program	1/19/23- 12/31/23	\$279,860
CDPHE Overdose Data to Action	9/1/22-8/31/23	\$175,707
CDPHE Fentanyl Accountability Bill	1/19/23-6/30/23	\$200,000
PEW Charitable Trusts	5/1/23-4/30/24	\$87,729
General Gift Fund/Donations		\$6,085
TOTAL		\$5,310,027



Looking Forward

Greetings,

As we continue to contend with the opioid crisis in Colorado, the damage caused by fentanyl has taken the spotlight. However, we must keep in mind that underlying the demand for illicit drugs is addiction. Addiction is a disease, and Colorado is making incremental progress in improving ways to assist people with a substance use disorder. We have increasingly effective overdose prevention and harm reduction programs to keep people with SUD alive. We are strengthening medication-assisted treatment services and reducing the stigma against drug addiction, which encourages people to enter evidence-based treatment programs. We also are supporting people when they begin their recovery process.

This assistance is occurring through state legislative policies and funding, as well as federal funding administered by state departments. This has allowed Colorado to expand harm reduction services, increase access to medication-assisted treatment, expand peer support services, and increase the number of peer recovery professionals. Great appreciation is extended to those who provide services in the areas of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.

The recent availability of opioid settlement funds administered through 19 Regional Opioid Abatement Councils, as well as by municipalities and the Colorado Office of the Attorney General, will help expand our statewide effort.

We are fortunate to have a sustained, comprehensive, and coordinated response to the opioid crisis at the state level and in regions and communities across Colorado. The Consortium remains committed to convening subject matter experts from various disciplines to continue to identify and promote evidence-based strategies, practices, and policies that further enhance response efforts at the state level and in communities. The majority of this work is accomplished through the efforts of 10 Consortium work groups, led by subject matter experts and supported by Consortium staff. Consortium staff will also continue to provide subject matter expertise for local groups that are responding to the opioid crisis.

In the upcoming year, we will also give attention to:

- ongoing public awareness efforts, especially related to fentanyl, including coordination with other public awareness campaigns in the state;
- ongoing provider education about opioid prescribing, pain management, and treatment using medications for opioid use disorder;
- further assisting jails in treating people with an opioid or other substance use disorder;
- enhancing continuity of care between jails and community-based services for individuals with an opioid or other SUDs released from incarceration;
- assisting the Black Advisory Committee for Substance Use In Colorado as they complete an state plan for addressing opioid and other SUDs among the Black population in Colorado;
- outreach to local medical providers for ongoing training about decreasing benzodiazepine prescribing and on evidence-based tapering to avoid suicidality, and linking providers and patients with trained peers;
- expanding the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative among employers; and
- enhancing and expanding care for patients with an opioid or other SUD in acute care hospitals.

We invite any interested individuals to participate in one or more Consortium work group to share their expertise, to contribute to advancing evidence-based practices and policies, and to generate solutions to challenging issues in mitigating and reversing the opioid crisis in Colorado.

We look forward to working with you in 2024.

Sincerely



José Esquibel

Director, Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Associate Director, Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention



Center for Prescription Drug
Abuse Prevention

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