



Opioids: Strategies to Address the Epidemic

The grip of opioid addiction takes its toll both on individuals and society. Westat supports efforts to prevent, reduce, and treat substance abuse and addiction through our work on surveillance systems, health services research, and program and policy development and evaluation.

Westat supports client efforts to tailor solutions for this epidemic in communities across the country. The following projects illustrate some of the strategies and approaches we use in our work to address the opioid epidemic.

SELECTED PROJECTS

Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN)

Westat re-established the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) DAWN project, a nationwide public health surveillance system to improve emergency department monitoring of substance use crises, including those related to opioids. Authorized by the 21st Century Cures Act, this program

What We Do

Evaluation

- Process, outcome, and impact
- Program certification

Health care service delivery

- Payment
- Innovation

Data collection

- Management
- Analysis
- Dissemination

is necessary for effective response to the opioid and addiction crisis and to identify emerging substance use trends. Westat will collect emergency department data from a sample of hospitals while focusing on identifying sentinel drug events. We will design the surveillance reporting system, develop the data collection infrastructure, recruit hospitals, collect and provide quality assurance/quality control of data, and develop a public data dissemination platform.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Academy for Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care

The Academy, a national coordinating and resource center, supports integrating mental health and substance use treatment with primary care. Westat supports AHRQ medication-assisted treatment (MAT) grantees in five states as they work to make MAT for opioid use disorder (OUD) more accessible in rural primary care settings. The AHRQ Academy web portal houses several opioid-related pages and MAT implementation products: <https://integrationacademy.ahrq.gov/>.

Health Care Professional Survey of Prescription Drug Promotion II

This survey assesses health care providers' opinions about professional promotion of prescription drugs and its influence on prescribing practices. Westat is conducting the web survey with a nationally representative sample of primary care physicians, specialists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who are identified and recruited using WebMD's network of Medscape

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subscribers. The research plan includes cognitive testing of survey questions, a pretest, and a main survey. In addition to conducting the surveys, Westat is performing background research and a literature review, revising and programming the questionnaire, and developing and implementing an analysis plan.

Comprehensive Centers (CC), Region 5, West Virginia, Opioid Abuse

The CC Program works closely with state, regional, and local education agencies and schools to enhance their capacity to improve educational outcomes for all students. For Region 5, which includes West Virginia, Westat is collaborating with West Virginia University (WVU) to build on previous work focusing on giving teachers the resources and training to support students affected by the opioid epidemic. This effort includes integrating or building on related efforts to improve outcomes, dedicating Title IV-A state set-asides to address issues related to substance abuse.

Optimal Utilization of Psychosocial Support in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

Westat studied current practices related to psychosocial supports for patients receiving MAT for OUD, and examined the factors that affect these models in clinical practice. The study included three major elements: a literature scan, key informant interviews, and site visits. We provided a briefing to ASPE leaders with an overview of the study process and conclusions.

Florida Opioid Research Project

Westat worked with GuideWell to collect and analyze national, State of Florida, and Florida's regional data to assess the distribution and trends of opioid crisis in Florida. We generated infographics for disseminating findings for key stakeholders. Our focus was on identifying opioid-related consequences, misuse

patterns, and risk and protective factors. In addition, we identified subpopulations and geographic regions of Florida that are in greatest need.

Project ECHO Substance Use Disorder Capacity-Building Initiative

Westat was part of a team that provided technical assistance on the delivery of MAT for OUD by Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Project ECHO and its partners offered biweekly teleECHO clinics to build and sustain capacity for delivering addiction treatment by health workers at 100 FQHCs. We worked with Project ECHO to evaluate the impact of technical assistance on health center capacity to serve people with substance use disorders.

ASAM Level 3 Residential Certification for Virginia's Addiction Recovery and Treatment Services Program (ARTS)

This program is part of Virginia's 1115 Medicaid Demonstration involving certifying addiction programs for ASAM Level 3 Residential provider status in regional managed care programs. Westat conducted on-site surveys of ARTS provider applicants for Level 3 certification. After each survey and review, we issued a notification report on outcomes.

Analytic Support Center (ASC)

This project assisted the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ) in supporting substantive and methodological analyses and data for stakeholders, providing background materials, and obtaining expert opinion in furthering the knowledge and understanding of behavioral health problems and consequences throughout the country. Westat provided support through analytic, statistical, and methodological support services; technical writing; literature searches; evaluation, logistical, and administrative support; and consultation.

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