



# National Health Emergency Demonstration Grants to Address the Opioid Crisis: Implementation Evaluation

## SUMMARY

In 2018, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) to fund contractor Mathematica to conduct the *National Health Emergency (NHE) Demonstration Grants to Address the Opioid Crisis: Implementation Evaluation*. The literature review and implementation study aims to document all facets of the six NHE demonstration grants and identify challenges and promising practices to generate information that will better inform grantees, sub-grantees, providers and partners delivering workforce services to individuals and communities affected by opioid addiction. The evaluation has produced a literature review, resource guide, and final report.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

## Key Takeaways

### *Employment and Training-Related Services to People with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)*

- **Limited evidence exists on interventions specifically for people with OUD.** However, workplace interventions that have worked for other substance use disorders might also benefit employees with OUD.
- **Evidence shows that employment motivates people with opioid use disorders to start treatment and stay with it,** which can lead to better treatment outcomes.
- **Promising employment models include:** employment services that are integrated with or provided simultaneously with substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services; interventions delivered by specifically trained staff; intensive interventions that are “high touch”; and a system for rewarding positive activities such as opportunities for employment-related activities.

### *Best Employer Practices in Preventing Opioid Use Disorder and Creating a Recovery-Friendly Workplace*

- **Workplace prevention initiatives** have the potential to decrease injury, costs, and new incidences of opioid use disorder, and increase productivity.
- **Thoughtful drug testing policies** can ensure that misuse of all classes of opioids are detected and avoid discriminating against those receiving medication-assisted treatment for OUD.





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- **Employee assistance programs** are associated with increased employee well-being, morale, and productivity, as well as reductions in absenteeism among employees.

## *Developing the Health Care Workforce to Address the Opioid Crisis*

- **A critical shortage exists for behavioral health workers**, especially rural providers and those able to provide medication-assisted treatment.
- **The workforce system can play an important role** in encouraging people into health care fields, supporting additional training in OUD treatments and working with partners to increase the availability of training.
- **Training approaches associated with promising outcomes include:** expanding the workforce through distance learning and nontraditional providers; virtual mentoring networks that connect students with behavioral health practitioners; training simulations with actors as patients; and experienced providers guiding social work students in community treatment settings.
- **Effective partnerships** between behavioral health organizations, sector and industry groups, and training programs are critical in developing the health care workforce and better addressing the opioid crisis.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

**TIMEFRAME:** 2018-2021

**SUBMITTED BY:** Mathematica Office

**DATE PREPARED:** November 2021

**PARTNER AGENCY:** Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

**SPONSOR:** Chief Evaluation Office

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