

## CALIFORNIA AWARDS \$21.6 MILLION TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS

**SACRAMENTO** — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today awarded [\\$12 million to 44 programs](#) through the California Youth Opioid Response (CA YOR) project, and [\\$9.6 million to 28 entities](#) through the Low-Barrier Opioid Treatment at Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) project. This is the latest investment in a running total of more than half a billion dollars to help prevent opioid overuse and addiction, address opioid use disorders safely and effectively, and reduce overdose deaths.

“DHCS continues to fight for the health of our youth and other vulnerable individuals through programs that strive to increase opioid and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services for people in need. We recognize that early and effective intervention is essential,” said **DHCS Director Michelle Baass**.

**WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:** While overdoses and overdose deaths have increased among all populations, the rate among youth has risen faster than other populations. Based upon reports of prior CA YOR grantees, many youth are unaware that methamphetamine, counterfeit benzodiazepines, or other drugs they take may contain fentanyl. The stakes are particularly high given the presence of fentanyl and chemically similar compounds in the illicit drug supply chain. The younger the age of first substance use, the stronger the risk of developing a substance use disorder (SUD).

Also, low-barrier treatment actively seeks to identify, reduce, or eliminate hurdles to people with opioid use disorder (OUD) and co-occurring conditions from being able to access, initiate, and continue OUD treatment. A key feature of this approach is the co-location of treatment services, including patient assessment and prescribing with syringe access and other harm reduction services that prospective patients are already utilizing. More than 60 SSPs in California support the health and safety of more than 150,000 people who use drugs each year.

### **CA YOR Project**

Awardees will receive funds for the period of April 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, to support prevention, treatment, and recovery services for youth (ages 12-24) with or at risk of an OUD and/or stimulant use disorder (StUD). The CA YOR project aims to strengthen capacity and increase access for the treatment of OUD/StUDs and to reduce opioid overdose-related deaths among youth through evidence-based practices. Eligible awardees are nonprofit or for-profit businesses, Tribal authorities, state or local government agencies, schools, and school districts.

## **Low-Barrier Opioid Treatment at SSPs**

This project supports the integration of opioid treatment services and other harm reduction services into existing sites to increase the number of SSP sites where OUD treatment services are available and the number of SSP participants engaged in treatment. Eligible awardees include SSPs able to provide health care services in California, directly or in collaboration with one or more health care organizations, sufficient to provide assessment, prescription, and management of medication for the treatment of OUD.

Awarded organizations will be required to demonstrate specific ways in which they will promote equitable access to services offered by the project, including, but not limited to, approaches designed to ensure that Black/African-American, Indigenous, and people of color are able to access services safely and equitably. The awarded SSPs will be able to utilize funds from March 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

“It is imperative that California continues to expand not only access to treatment for an opioid use disorder, but to also provide an increase in harm reduction services,” said **Tyler Sadwith, Deputy Director of DHCS Behavioral Health**.

Both projects are funded by the State Opioid Response III grant awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. They are part of DHCS’ broader efforts to address SUD, collectively known as the [California MAT Expansion Project](#), to increase access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), reduce unmet treatment need, and reduce opioid overdose-related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery activities. For more information, please visit the DHCS California MAT Expansion Project Overview [webpage](#).

**ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:** Since coming into office, Governor Gavin Newsom has dedicated more than \$1 billion in funding to fight the opioid crisis by removing opioids from the streets, providing resources to California communities in need, and increasing education and awareness to prevent harm in the first place.

In fiscal year 2022-23, DHCS is investing more than \$558 million in various opioid prevention and treatment grant activities. Today’s project awards are just two of several efforts made by DHCS in recent months to tackle SUDs/ODs, including [\\$4.6 million to emergency departments to train behavioral health navigators](#), [\\$2.4 million for the MAT in Jails and Drug Courts Project](#), [\\$2 million for the California Native MAT Network for Healing and Recovery Project](#), [\\$4 million to 54 driving under the influence programs for resources and treatment](#), [\\$52 million invested in opioid prevention and treatment services](#), [\\$12 million to tackle youth opioid use](#), [\\$3.4 million to transform medical practices to address the opioid crisis](#), and [\\$58.5 million for youth substance use prevention](#).

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