

WHI Opioid Project Current State: Top Gaps

MEDICAL PROVIDERS NEED BETTER TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH USING/RECOVERING PATIENTS

Medical providers indicated that working with clients with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) was difficult, identifying patient attitudes and behaviors as a barrier. We heard from consumers that they experience stigma when seeking medical services related to their opioid use. These findings suggest that physician attitudes toward SUD affected patients are a barrier to patient care, perpetuating mutual distrust and stigma.

PAIN MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Consumers and providers report a lack of resources for pain management, and our survey of organizations corroborated that few resources exist for chronic pain management. Moreover, there is little information available outlining alternatives to opioids for pain and ways to access them. Our policy analysis also showed that there are systemic barriers related to insurance coverage for accessing non-opioid pain medications and treatments.

ACCESSING TREATMENT

Providers and consumers both reported barriers to referring to and receiving treatment. Barriers identified include: lack of addiction medicine physicians, limited access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), wait time to treatment, funding for treatment, and high co-pays for MAT for privately insured patients. Our policy analysis indicates that Medicaid covers most MAT options, and there are new programs in the community to connect patients to MAT in conjunction with behavioral health services, so providers and consumers also have a gap in awareness of, or comfort with, the existing programs.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND PRIMARY PREVENTION

Our organizational survey illustrates a gap in primary prevention and education, which is corroborated in the consumer survey. The lack of prevention services and education is across all age groups. Our policy analysis identified opportunities related to the new state mandate for opioid curriculum for K-12, which is a gap that will need to be filled once all of the regulation is in place.

MANAGING CARE FOR PATIENTS WITH SUD WITHIN THE NEW PRESCRIBING GUIDELINES

Providers across all professions reported a lack of clarity, information, and resources in understanding and adapting to the new opioid prescribing guidelines laid out in a recent state law, particularly physicians not associated with the major health systems. Physicians also expressed trepidation at the heightened penalties they face for non-compliance, and frustration with the lack of transparency in patient records related to history of SUD treatment, both of which undermine effective care planning, especially for patients with chronic pain and/or SUD.