VERMONT GOVERNOR'S OPIOID COORDINATION COUNCIL
DRIVERS FOR SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT, AND PATHWAYS TO EFFECT CHANGE
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DRIVERS FOR SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT: PREVENTION, TREATMENT, RECOVERY, ENFORCEMENT (AND INCLUDING EDUCATION AND INTERVENTION)

These four areas of focus form the foundation of Vermont's efforts to address the opioid crisis through private and public endeavors. The OCC's work is to assess current systems and strategies in each area, and determine what is working, how to replicate and scale best practices, where gaps and challenges lie, and to develop strategies to improve upon the State's successes in transforming the opioid crisis, and ensure sustainability of that success.

PREVENTION strengthens children, adults, families, and communities by helping to change personal, social, or environmental factors and thereby delay or prevent the onset of illicit drug use and its potential progression to an SUD. Community resources to support healthy choices and avoid the potential harm that drug use can cause are essential.

EDUCATION AND INTERVENTION are two additional factors critical to achieving systemic improvement. *Education* involves curricula and programming that touches all students; *intervention* includes maximizing opportunities to move individuals away from risk and toward services they need.

- Primary Prevention: Involves delivering services and education prior to the onset of SUD, and which are designed to prevent or reduce the risk of developing a behavioral health problem, such as underage alcohol use, prescription drug misuse and abuse, and illicit drug use.
- Secondary Prevention: Focuses on early detection and treatment of a substance use disorder, to shorten its duration and prevent further illness, impairment, or degradation of health.
- Demand Reduction: Reduces the demand for opioids that drives substance use disorders through informed prescribing practices and education, interdiction and drug seizure efforts, intervention, treatment and recovery support for those with SUD, and through community- and school-based programs.
- Harm Reduction: involves managing chronic illnesses to restore function and quality of life, and reducing negative impacts on those with chronic illness, and on families and communities. In substance use disorders, this may include drug and needle disposal, syringe exchange, drug diversion programs, and overdose intervention.

Successful prevention efforts combine effective programs, curricula and public awareness messaging with the engagement of communities and the partnership of public and private institutions, including healthcare providers, schools, state agencies, service organizations, and businesses. It also addresses multi-generational risk factors such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and opioid dependence among older adults.

The goal of prevention is to address the social factors that lead to the misuse of opioids, and the consequences. Current Vermont resources include student assistance professionals in one-third of our **middle and high schools,** sixty percent of the state is served by one of 23 community-based coalitions dedicated to substance use prevention, and other school and community-based models created to address opioids such as Rutland's Project Vision, the Chittenden County Opioid Alliance, and St. Johnsbury's DART - Drug Abuse Resistance Team.

TREATMENT begins when the individual asks for, or responds to, an opportunity for intervention. Treatment and recovery are inseparable partners in supporting the success of the individual with SUD. TREATMENT provides timely, affordable and effective services designed to treat the immediate and long-term needs of all individuals seeking to address their addiction to opioids, and substance use disorder. This includes but is not limited to in-patient and out-patient options, and may involve detoxification, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), counseling, non-pharmacological (integrative) health care options, and other methods. Vermont has the Hub and Spoke system, nationally recognized as a model for replication.

RECOVERY from SUDs requires sustained wraparound lifestyle supports that make it possible for the individual to transform a life often destroyed by the disease. Recovery supports begin simultaneously with the early stages of treatment. They include housing, social and vocational skill development, employment, and ongoing personal and community support and engagement. Recovery has an essential "tie-back" to prevention, particularly in addressing multi-generational risk factors such as trauma (ACEs-Adverse Childhood Experiences) and substance abuse in the family. Vermont has 12 recovery centers which comprise the Vermont Recovery Network, and a statewide education and advocacy organization.

ENFORCEMENT efforts span public safety and policing, the court system, prosecution practices, and efforts through the corrections system. Enforcement includes:

- Supply reduction: reducing the supply of opioids available for unauthorized use by creating deterrents to the sale and trafficking of illicit drugs, using tools such as aggressive investigation and prosecution.
- Alternatives to incarceration: Ensuring treatment and recovery services are available and maximized for those engaged with Vermont's courts and correctional systems, over incarceration where possible.
- Harm reduction: law enforcement plays a critical role in reducing the diversion and misuse of prescription drugs through drug disposal efforts.

Vermont has examples of effective community-based collaborations which successfully bring law enforcement together with prevention, treatment, and recovery service providers.

PATHWAYS TO EFFECT CHANGE: POLICY, PROGRAM, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

The recommended strategies follow four pathways for engaging effective change. They are:
- POLICY**:** Assess and review the current state of laws, legislation and policies, identify gaps and redundancies, and recommend changes that will simplify, clarify and focus resources toward effective changes in practice.

- PROGRAM**:** Support the implementation and integration of both innovative and best practice programs for individuals, families and communities, maximizing and leveraging multi-sector resources.

- INFRASTRUCTURE**:** Identify improvements in the relationships between programs, departments and agencies to increase efficiencies and outcomes.

- INVESTMENT**:** Identify and evaluate funding sources and utilization; and explore public, private, and non-profit partnerships to best leverage resources.