

AACN Commitment Statement on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

The opioid epidemic continues to devastate individuals, families, and communities throughout the United States, contributing to the rise in heroin and synthetic opioid overdose deaths over the last decade. An estimated 130 people died every day from opioid-related overdoses between 2017 and 2018.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), as the national voice for academic nursing, has a vested interest in helping to curb opioid abuse. Nurses are on the frontlines of the epidemic, caring for the most at-risk populations, and are a critical part of the solution to the crisis.

The association establishes quality standards for nursing education, influences the nursing profession to improve health care, and promotes public support of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, research and practice. With a reach of 530,000 nursing students, 45,000 faculty, and 825 schools of nursing across the nation, AACN is well-positioned to connect future practitioners with most current information on opioid prescriber practices and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) training. Currently, AACN member schools have more than 100,000 students enrolled in Advanced Practice Registered Nurse programs (APRNs). These future APRNs—which include nurse practitioners (NPs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), and clinical nurse specialists (CNSs)—will have prescriptive authority in addressing the opioid epidemic.

AACN commits to join the National Academy of Medicine’s Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic and the more than 55 participating Network Organizations dedicated to the executing cross-disciplinary, evidence-based strategies in reversing the opioid epidemic. AACN looks forward to partnering with the Action Collaborative and strengthening alliances to ensure that the healthcare workforce is well-prepared to combat and end this crisis.

AACN’s Actions to Help Reverse the Opioid Epidemic

In 2015, AACN joined with more than 40 healthcare provider groups to address the prescription drug abuse and heroin epidemic in the U.S. AACN remains a committed ally in combatting the epidemic and will build upon its previous actions, specifically by focusing on two primary policy issues: workforce development and access to MAT. AACN’s commitment extends to:

Health Professional Education and Training

- AACN partnered with 28 other national nursing organizations to create an educational webinar series on the opioid crisis.
- AACN collaborated with the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to support student research contributing to the knowledge of substance use disorders (SUD) and advance research, disseminations, and adoption of evidence-based SUD treatment.

Opioid Prescribing Guidelines and Evidence Standards

- AACN commits to educating nursing students and faculty on opioid prescriber practices and medication-assisted treatments.
- AACN member schools pledged to educate their APRN students on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s *Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain*.

Communications to Amplify Reach

- AACN will continue to disseminate information through its vast communication network to reach students, including the Graduate Nursing Student Academy, faculty, and stakeholders on a monthly basis.

Visit <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Policy-Advocacy/Opioids> to learn more about AACN's response to the opioid epidemic.