

ASTHO Commitment Statement to the Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) recognizes the opioid epidemic as one of the most pressing public health issues of our time. We are committed to working with the National Academies Action Collaborative on countering the opioid epidemic. State and territorial health officials and their leadership teams are at the forefront of America’s opioid epidemic working with federal and local partners to save lives every day. The federal leadership and resources to address the crisis have greatly improved state capacity to respond by preventing overdose deaths, monitoring the epidemic, expanding access to treatment, and supporting addiction prevention and awareness campaigns.

While preliminary data show that overdoses may be declining in some states, the rise in the use of fentanyl and other substances reminds us that we must take a comprehensive approach to preventing addiction—one that includes recovery and treatment—and a public health approach to building healthy and resilient communities.

ASTHO and our members’ work are aligned with the Action Collaborative in the following areas:

- Developing a comprehensive public health framework focused on six strategic areas including leadership; partnership and collaboration; epidemiology and surveillance; education and prevention; treatment and recovery; and harm reduction and overdose prevention.¹
- Supporting states and territories in their efforts to maximize the utility of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs, improving the timeliness and comprehensiveness of fatal and non-fatal overdose surveillance data, and engaging medical examiners, coroners, toxicologist and vital registrars to improve drug use specificity on death certificates.
- Increasing attention to opioid use disorder and addiction from a community perspective. ASTHO supports community-driven public health approaches to addressing the root causes of addiction including societal policies that prevent despair and support quality education, meaningful employment, stable housing, and justice reforms supportive of recovery.
- Supporting and implementing prevention strategies directed toward specific communities or subpopulations in which the risk of developing addiction may be higher than average through evidence-based interventions to mitigate adverse experiences and events in communities where they are prevalent.²

ASTHO will work with the Action Collaborative to continuously improve approaches to combating this health crisis through public health advocacy and action.

About ASTHO

ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing the public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories and freely-associated states, and the District of Columbia, as well as the more than 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy and to ensuring excellence in public health practice.

¹ Levine M, Fraser M. Elements of a Comprehensive Public Health Approach to the Opioid Crisis. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2018.

² Fraser M, Plescia M. The Opioid Epidemic’s Prevention Problem. *AJPH* 2019.