

## **NAO Statement for the National Academy of Medicine's opioid initiative**

The National AHEC Organization (NAO) represents Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) throughout the country. Positioned at the crossroads of the healthcare workforce and education, AHECs have been addressing the opioid epidemic for many years in a multitude of ways. The NAO is committed to continuing the efforts to reverse national trends in opioid misuse and overdose by connecting AHECs with relevant resources to continue or expand programming. Some examples of planned interventions include:

- Those designed to prevent opioid abuse and strengthen the capacity of healthcare systems to deliver early detection and appropriate treatment for those at risk and those addicted to opioids.
- Training opportunities for health professionals and health profession students designed to improve the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder in rural and high impact areas.
- Training for community health workers to raise awareness of substance use disorders and increase engagement within the community regarding recognition of opioid abuse, overdose prevention, safe disposal of prescription drugs and available resources.
- The creation and dissemination of toolkits that help prescribers standardize their approach and increase confidence in managing opioid prescriptions, help practices change their support systems, and increase provider and staff satisfaction regarding the way opioid prescriptions are managed.
- Satellite teleconferences targeted at public health and primary care providers that will seek to increase the identification and treatment of SUDs and reduce the impact of related mental and physical diseases. Content will include SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) and Motivational Interviewing.
- Conferences focusing on appropriate opioid prescribing and use of prescription monitoring systems.
- Training on medication assisted treatment in rural and underserved areas.

There are AHEC program offices in universities in each of the 46 states where AHEC has a presence. The resources and relationships for research, data, and metrics needs are in place. AHEC educational activities are evaluated and data compiled, including those addressing opioid misuse.

The AHEC system is funded federally by the Health Resources Services Administration and more locally by state and external funding.

**END**