

Action Collaborative on Countering the U. S. Opioid Epidemic Veterans Administration (VA) Commitment Statement

This commitment statement is in support of the National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative on Countering the U. S. Opioid Epidemic. VA is committed to collaborating with other sites to share plans, products, and develop new initiatives to address the Opioid Epidemic.

In 2017, an average of 134 Americans died each day from an opioid overdose (<https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>). After accounting for gender and age distribution, in 2005 VHA patients had nearly twice the rate of fatal accidental poisoning [from all sources] compared with adults in the general US population (Bohnert et al, 2011). VA is committed to enhancing safe and efficacious care of Veterans who are treated with opioids and is an industry leader in opioid safety. VA's goal is to make sure every Veteran experiences optimal function and pain control while addressing the risks associate with opioid medications.

To address the Opioid Epidemic in totality, it is critical to address causes, risks, impacts, and outcomes. In 2012, VA initiated the Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) to reduce the use of opioids among Veterans. OSI provides guidance on opioid safety practices to VA facilities. Progress on improving patient safety under OSI has been clear and meaningful. VA recently passed the mark of decreasing the number of Veterans dispensed an opioid prescription by 50%.

VA is systemically changing our culture to establish a collaborative approach WITH Veterans to safely and effectively treat their pain while also minimizing the use of opioids, achieving this by reducing reliance on opioid medication for pain management through safe prescribing and, when needed, taking care of Veterans who may have developed a physical and/or psychological dependence. VA is committed to sharing with the Collaborative any products, information, and best practices discovered and developed through research, education, and clinical practices in response to the Opioid Epidemic.

VA is committed to addressing these and all facets of the Opioid Epidemic and work with the Collaborative by:

- Identifying and raising the visibility of complex challenges, outstanding research gaps, and needs of the Opioid Crisis.
- Elevating and accelerating evidence-based, multi-sectoral, and interdisciplinary solutions to improve outcomes for those affected by the Opioid Crisis.
- Support actions to share priorities and solutions to help overcome the Opioid Crisis and improve outcomes for all.