



Office of National Drug Control Policy

Rural Community Action Guide Fact Sheet

- **Drugs in rural America:** Our country is in the midst of an unprecedented drug crisis. In 2018, nearly 68,000 Americans died due to a drug overdose. While that was the first decline in the number of drug overdose deaths in 30 years, this is still almost 200 people each day.

The addiction crisis knows no economic or geographic boundary and has impacted small towns and rural places from Alaska to Maine.

- A 2017 survey conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Farmers Union found that nearly 50 percent of rural adults, and 74 percent of farmers, have been directly impacted by opioid misuse.
- A [survey](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in early January 2020 found that drugs are now equal to the economy as a concern in rural America.
- **Needs of rural communities:** Rural areas lack many of the resources needed to keep people healthy and free from addiction including critical assets like treatment centers, mental and behavioral health counselors, support groups, and transportation. The most effective solutions to filling these gaps often begin at a local level, not in Washington, D.C. To take action and create real change, however, local leaders need tools and the support of state and federal partners.
- **Rural Community Action Guide:** The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has built a number of tools to assist community leaders in building an effective local response to the crisis of addiction. One of those tools is a Rural Community Action Guide (RCAG), found at www.usda.gov/topics/opioids.

The Guide includes background information, recommended action steps from key rural stakeholders, and promising practices for a wide range of issues related to drug addiction in rural America.

The RCAG is built on lessons learned from rural roundtable discussions held in over a dozen states, as well as the experiences of many rural stakeholder partners. No two rural communities are the same. However, what is working in one small

town can often be replicated in another to save lives and build a place of rural prosperity for the future.

Topics covered in the guide include:

- Stigma
- Using data
- Managing fiscal resources in a community impacted by addiction
- Workforce development
- Broadband
- Overcoming economic challenges
- Prevention
- Engaging the agriculture community in addiction
- Rural health care needs
- Medication-assisted treatment
- Engaging law enforcement in addiction
- Drug courts in rural communities
- Harnessing the faith community around addiction
- Recovery support
- Housing

Partners contributing to the Guide include: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Addiction Policy Forum, American Farm Bureau Federation, Appalachian Regional Commission, Center for Court Innovation, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Faces & Voices of Recovery, Housing Assistance Council, National Alliance for Recovery Residences, National Association of Counties, National Association of Development Organizations, National Farmers Union, National Rural Health Association, National Sheriffs' Association, NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis, NTCA- The Rural Broadband Association, National Rural Transit Assistance Program, and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Guide is intended to be used alongside the [Community Assessment Tool](https://opioidmisusetool.norc.org), (opioidmisusetool.norc.org) which provides county-level data to help a local leader better understand the scope of the problem in their community, and the [Federal Rural Resources Guide](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RuralResourceGuide.pdf), (www.rd.usda.gov/files/RuralResourceGuide.pdf) which helps a local leader see what federal funds are available to build that local response.

- **Tool for innovation and partnership:** The RCAG is a tool to empower local leaders to take action in a new way. The magnitude of the addiction crisis and the opportunity that we have to strengthen rural communities as a result demands that we work together and do things differently than ever before. Together, we can save lives and build strong, healthy and drug-free rural communities now and for generations to come.