



# CONTENTS

- 03.** Rural Reach: Access to Justice That Meets People Where They Are

- 04.** Mental Health Symptoms, Stressors, and Coping: An Exploration of First Responder Experiences Working in Rural, Suburban, and Urban Areas

- 04.** Exploring Strategies to Connect Formerly Incarcerated Individuals With Community Pharmacist-Administered Injectable Naltrexone Services

- 04.** “Stigma is Our Most Powerful Enemy”: Understanding Opioid Use Disorder Stigma and the Role of Peer Support in Rural Maryland

- 05.** Initiating Medications During Hospitalization and Strategies for Ensuring Linkage at Discharge for Patients With Opioid Use Disorder: A Scoping Review

- 05.** Access to Suboxone: Bridging the Treatment Gap in Rural Areas

- 06.** New Recovery Programs in Southwest Virginia Will Help Mothers Stay With Their Children During Addiction Treatment

- 06.** Justice Department Announces Winners of the Access to Justice Prize Competition



- 06.** Substance Use and Mental Health Stigma in Rural Areas

- 07.** Community Development in Rural Health Toolkit

- 07.** Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Regional Centers (ROTA-R)

- 07.** Bridge to Care: Advancing Linkage to and Retention in Care Across Health Care Settings for Patients With Opioid and/or Stimulant Use Disorder

# OPPORTUNITY



## JOIN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION AND PARTNERS FOR RURAL REACH: ACCESS TO JUSTICE THAT MEETS PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

**Date:** Wednesday, October 29, 2025

**Time:** 2 - 4:30 p.m. with a networking reception 4:30 - 6 p.m. CT

**Where:** [Overture Center](#) in Madison, Wisconsin

This free event marks the release of the [Rural Justice Task Force Report](#). Explore the challenges rural Americans face in accessing civil legal help and the community-driven solutions making a difference.

Attend in person or watch via livestream. Registration closes on October 14th or when full. [Register here](#). The event website with the preliminary agenda can be found [here](#).

In partnership with:



Quarles





# RESEARCH & REPORTS

## **MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS, STRESSORS, AND COPING: AN EXPLORATION OF FIRST RESPONDER EXPERIENCES WORKING IN RURAL, SUBURBAN, AND URBAN AREAS**



While the mental health experiences of first responders have been generalized across all geographic locations, less is known about the mental health differences among rural, suburban, and urban first responders. This study explored mental health symptom profiles, job stressors, coping mechanisms, and mental health resource availability of 118 first responders

providing services in rural, suburban, and urban locations throughout Oregon.

## **EXPLORING STRATEGIES TO CONNECT FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS WITH COMMUNITY PHARMACIST-ADMINISTERED INJECTABLE NALTREXONE SERVICES**



In Wisconsin, community pharmacists are a promising resource for improving access and use of medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) among formerly incarcerated individuals, specifically by administering injectable naltrexone. However, community pharmacists remain underutilized due to several barriers across the socioecological scale. In this study, virtual

focus groups were held with five Wisconsin community pharmacists who have experience with injectable naltrexone and providing care to formerly incarcerated patients.

## **“STIGMA IS OUR MOST POWERFUL ENEMY”: UNDERSTANDING OPIOID USE DISORDER STIGMA AND THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT IN RURAL MARYLAND**



Rural U.S. communities struggle with opioid-related deaths and low retention in OUD treatment with stigma acting as a major barrier. Unique challenges include structural and geospatial stigma making recovery difficult. Peer recovery specialists who have personal experience with substance use and recovery may help reduce stigma, but their role is not

well understood. This qualitative study explores how stigma affects patients in a rural telemedicine mobile unit, its impact on treatment, and whether PRS involvement helps address these barriers.

## RURAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE

Rural communities face unique challenges that impact their ability to deliver fair and equitable justice. Despite these challenges, rural communities rely on their many strengths to address the needs of their residents.

The National Center for State Courts, in partnership with Rulo Strategies, launched the [Rural Justice Collaborative \(RJC\)](#) to showcase the strengths of rural communities and highlight the cross-sector collaboration that is a hallmark of rural justice systems.

The work under the RJC is supported by a cross-sector advisory council composed of rural judges along with additional stakeholders in the justice, child welfare, and behavioral health systems. The advisory council guides and identifies innovative programs and practices.

## INITIATING MEDICATIONS DURING HOSPITALIZATION AND STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING LINKAGE AT DISCHARGE FOR PATIENTS WITH OPIOID USE DISORDER: A SCOPING REVIEW



Hospitalization offers a key chance to start medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) improving patient outcomes. Although

inpatient MOUD reduces mortality and relapse, many patients lack proper follow-up after discharge. This review summarizes current evidence on discharge practices for OUD patients started on MOUD and highlights best practices for ongoing care. While policy changes like removing the X-waiver have increased buprenorphine access, barriers especially for methadone remain particularly in rural and minoritized groups. Multidisciplinary, patient-focused discharge plans that combine medical and social support are needed.

# ARTICLE

## ACCESS TO SUBOXONE: BRIDGING THE TREATMENT GAP IN RURAL AREAS



Access to effective addiction treatment is a cornerstone in addressing the opioid crisis, especially in underserved rural areas.

One such treatment,

Suboxone, has been proven to significantly reduce opioid dependency, support recovery, and save lives. However, individuals living in remote communities continue to face major barriers in obtaining this life-changing medication. For healthcare providers, treatment professionals, and policymakers, understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for closing the treatment gap and ensuring equitable care for all.

# PROGRAMS

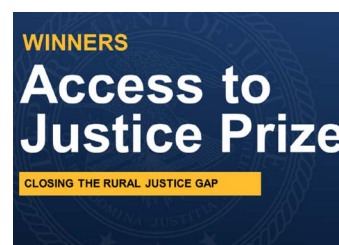
## NEW RECOVERY PROGRAMS IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA WILL HELP MOTHERS STAY WITH THEIR CHILDREN DURING ADDICTION TREATMENT

Two new residential addiction treatment facilities for pregnant and parenting women are coming to Southwest Virginia, addressing a critical gap in care in a region hard-hit by the opioid crisis. Strong Futures and Four Truths were developed through partnerships with city and county governments as well as other community partners. Both programs aim to address not only addiction but broader social determinants of health that drive it, especially among families.



## JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE PRIZE COMPETITION

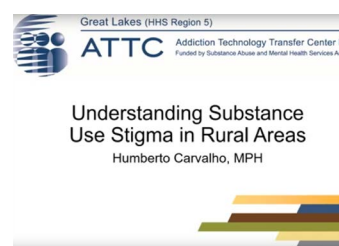
The Access to Justice Prize focuses on closing the rural justice gap, recognizing that rural communities face unique and significant barriers to resources and support in the legal system. This competition highlights the creativity and dedication of organizations working to expand justice for all. The winning projects represent actionable approaches that will help provide legal support for communities across America.



# WEBINAR

## SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA IN RURAL AREAS

Stigma in rural areas can discourage individuals from seeking help due to fear of judgment or ostracization. In rural areas particularly, mental health and substance use stigma is prevalent with residents facing higher suicide rates and fewer options for healthcare access. This webinar explores the prevalence and impact of stigma, especially surrounding mental health and substance use in rural communities, and discusses strategies for reducing stigma to foster more supportive environments. Highlights include: Strategies for Reducing Stigma (26:22), Case Study on the Impact of Stigma on Substance use in Rural Appalachia (35:35), How to Implement a Stigma Reduction Program in Your Community (48:35), and Key to Make Changes: Engaging the Community (54:13).



# RESOURCES

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

The Community Development in Rural Health Toolkit is a practical guide designed to support rural communities in improving health outcomes through collaborative, locally driven strategies. Developed by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), this toolkit equips State Offices of Rural Health, community leaders, rural health providers, and partners with evidence-based models, customizable templates, and real-world examples to guide each step of the community development process.

## RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REGIONAL CENTERS (ROTA-R)

ROTA-R works to create and share training and technical support for rural areas affected by opioid and stimulant use. The teams identify model programs, update materials for prevention, treatment, and recovery of opioid or stimulant use disorders, and provide quality training.

## BRIDGE TO CARE: ADVANCING LINKAGE TO AND RETENTION IN CARE ACROSS HEALTH CARE SETTINGS FOR PATIENTS WITH OPIOID AND/OR STIMULANT USE DISORDER

Transitions between inpatient, primary care, and pharmacy settings are crucial for patients with opioid or stimulant use disorder and can affect their recovery. Given the scale of the overdose crisis in the U.S., keeping patients on a positive path is essential. This toolkit provides best practices for each care setting, highlights key challenges and opportunities, and includes reflection questions to help teams identify local improvements.