



# Foundation *for* Opioid Response Efforts

## Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) Announces Second Wave of Grants to Organizations on the Frontlines of the Opioid Crisis During COVID-19 —Bringing Total Emergency Funding to Nearly \$1 Million

**NEW YORK (October 21, 2020)** -- The Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) today announced it is providing grants to 10 organizations totaling \$634,869 to help at-risk populations throughout the country reeling from alarming increases in opioid use and overdoses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of FORE's COVID-19 National Emergency Response Effort, this second wave of grants brings FORE's total COVID-19 funding to \$968,511 thus far, reflecting the foundation's commitment to support projects contributing solutions to the opioid crisis and impacting people with opioid use disorder, their families, and their communities.

"Evidence shows that drug overdoses, which reached a record high of more than 70,000 cases last year, continue to surge this year due to disruptions in face-to-face interventions and treatments, job losses, anxiety, and social isolation magnified by COVID-19," said Andrea Barthwell, M.D., Chair of FORE's Board of Directors. "The scope of these awards -- to organizations providing services to at-risk populations including Black and Latinx men and women, urban and rural communities, pregnant and parenting women, justice-involved individuals, and young adults -- continues FORE's focus on supporting work to reach the most vulnerable populations affected by the opioid crisis," Dr. Barthwell continued.

The funded organizations include:

- **Association of Recovery in Higher Education** (Kennesaw, Georgia)
- **Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program** (Cleveland, Ohio)
- **Legal Action Center** (New York, NY)
- **Midlands Recovery Center** (Columbia, South Carolina)
- **The Providence Center** (Providence, Rhode Island)
- **Renewal House** (Nashville, Tennessee)
- **University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** (Los Angeles, California)

- **University of Miami** (Miami, Florida)
- **Yale University** (New Haven, Connecticut)
- **Young People in Recovery** (Denver, Colorado)

This second wave of COVID-19 response funding further bolsters two priorities for FORE during this time: assuring virtual recovery support services during the COVID-19 pandemic and creating opportunities to inform future policy and practice.

“Along with bringing lifesaving services to at-risk populations that desperately need them, it’s critically important to understand whether temporary policy measures put in place during the pandemic, such as relaxed telehealth and prescribing regulations for medications for opioid use disorder can lead to improvements in treatment delivery and patient outcomes,” said Karen A. Scott, M.D., M.P.H., President of FORE. “We need to know not only do these changes lead to improved access and quality of care, but for which patients and which providers, so that we do not inadvertently worsen healthcare disparities.”

### **Grants for Recovery Support Services**

College students in recovery already face myriad challenges on- and off-campus as they try to reconstruct their lives and are now facing the pandemic and the resulting uncertainty on college campuses. The **Association of Recovery in Higher Education** will help reduce COVID-19-specific barriers to opioid use disorder recovery services nationwide through a broad array of virtual collegiate recovery programs, such as webinars, recovery meetings, articles, digital discussions, toolkits, and other events, reaching collegiate recovery programs at over 150 college campuses around the country.

The **Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program** will provide culturally and linguistically competent virtual peer recovery support services to Latinx individuals transitioning from residential to outpatient care in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. Aimed at giving people the best chance of maintaining long-term recovery, these services are geared toward connecting individuals to peers with lived experience before, during, and after they transition back into the community.

As face-to-face hospital visits are less feasible during COVID-19, **Midlands Recovery Center** will use telehealth to link opioid use disorder patients hospitalized with intravenous drug use-related conditions with Certified Peer Support Specialists in South Carolina. With a focus on uninsured, low income,

homeless, and criminal justice-related populations, these peer support services aim to break down barriers to recovery support assistance during the pandemic and beyond.

During the pandemic, individuals living in recovery housing face isolation, disrupted access to care, possible loss of employment, and cutoff from the social supports so critical to their long-term success. Through a variety of online platforms, the **Anchor Recovery Program at The Providence Center** in Rhode Island is piloting new ways to provide recovery support services around the state, including virtual recovery groups and individual recovery coaching, to this high-risk population.

COVID-19-related health concerns, economic uncertainty, and social distancing measures have dramatically worsened treatment barriers for low-income pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorder, an especially high-risk population. To help address these issues, **Renewal House** will be providing virtual evidence-based care, life skills, and parenting support to individuals in this at-risk population in Tennessee, including those on the waitlist for their traditional programs, to help them nurture their children, manage their opioid use disorder, and sustain long-term recovery.

Drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in young adults, ages 18-30, with more than 60% of these fatalities related to opioids. To help curb an even higher risk of relapse, injury, disease, incarceration, and fatal overdose due to the pandemic, **Young People in Recovery** is expanding its digital offerings, such as virtual all-recovery meetings, pro-social events, and life-skills training to all of their over 50 chapters nationwide. These support services are aimed at teaching this vulnerable population how to sustain their long-term recovery and locate critical resources, such as education, employment, and housing.

### **Grants that Inform Policy and Practice**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted intersections of race, poverty, public health, and incarceration. With an estimated 50-75% of justice-involved individuals with a substance use disorder, disproportionately impacting Black and Latinx populations, the need for increased access to evidence-based treatment throughout the criminal justice system has never been greater. By developing sound policy recommendations with national implications, and educating policymakers, and stakeholders the **Legal Action Center** will identify opportunities to leverage Medicaid coverage to maximize linkage to evidence-based opioid use

disorder treatment throughout the criminal legal system, including inside prisons and jails, and after release.

To harness the unanticipated benefits of policy changes and practices compelled by the pandemic and the innovations of service providers and peer networks in meeting COVID-19 challenges, the **University of California, Los Angeles** will be home to the *Substance Use X COVID-19 Data Collaborative (SU X CDC)*. This international collaborative of social scientists, community researchers, and public health clinicians will pool data and collect field reports from around the globe and will recommend policy and practice changes that could be sustainable after the pandemic subsides.

Despite recent increases in opioid use and overdose in low-income Black communities, evidence indicates that Black people who inject drugs are 77% less likely to receive the medication buprenorphine than other at-risk populations. To help remedy this issue, the **University of Miami** will be bringing a telemedicine-equipped van to low-income Black communities in Miami-Dade County to initiate medications for opioid use disorder and provide intensive client support services conducted by a peer recovery specialist with roots in the community. If successful, this project will demonstrate how innovations in care delivery can improve engagement and outcomes in underserved Black communities.

Finally, as a result of relaxed methadone prescribing guidelines enacted during COVID-19, **Yale University** will develop a national study to better understand the experiences of various patient populations who received increased methadone take home doses and assess their outcomes and consequences. The overarching goal of this study is to contribute actionable findings that will guide patient-centered, evidence-based state and federal policies in methadone access for opioid use disorder.

### **About FORE**

[The Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts \(FORE\)](#) was founded in 2018 as a private 501(c)(3) national, grant-making foundation focused on addressing the nation's opioid crisis. FORE is committed to funding a diversity of projects contributing solutions to the crisis at national, state, and community levels. FORE's mission is to convene and support partners advancing patient-centered, innovative, evidence-based solutions impacting people experiencing opioid use disorder, their families, and their communities. To date, FORE has awarded 34 grants totaling \$11.1 million.

**Source:** Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE)

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