

Addressing the Opioid Use Disorder Epidemic: Training and Mentoring by Experts at no Cost

With more than 33,000 opioid-related deaths each year, policy makers, the medical community, and the public recognize it is vital that action is taken immediately to address this national health crisis. In an effort to mitigate the number of deaths, healthcare organizations around the country are working together in a powerful coalition through two projects geared to training primary healthcare providers to treat those with opioid use disorder (OUD), as well as identify those at risk of developing OUD.

In response to this public health crisis, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), funded two projects to address this healthcare crises: Providers' Clinical Support System for Medication Assisted Treatment ([PCSS-MAT](#)) and Providers' Clinical Support System for Opioid Therapies ([PCSS-O](#)). Both projects provide a wide array of evidence-based educational resources and training with clinical expert mentorship to support primary care providers to effectively treat their patients with substance use disorders and specifically opioid use disorder. The opioid misuse and overdose epidemic has touched every state in the U.S., highlighting the need for a comprehensive plan to mitigate this growing issue.

PCSS-MAT and PCSS-O work in tandem to address opioid use disorders and opioid overdose epidemic by training healthcare providers in evidence-based treatments and making a vast array of resources available to clinicians, all at no cost.

PCSS-O provides educational and clinical resources to primary care providers on prevention and evidence-based treatment of substance use disorders, particularly opioid use disorder and the interface of OUD and chronic pain.

PCSS-MAT's focus is to train healthcare providers to



treat substance use disorders, particularly OUD, with a combination of therapy and medications. The three FDA-approved medications —methadone, naltrexone, and buprenorphine—combined with therapy, have been clinically proven to increase a patient's chances of recovery. Research supports medication assisted treatment, which is widely considered the most effective way to treat OUD. A common myth with the use of medications in treating any substance use disorder is that MAT is simply replacing one drug for another. Rather, using medications to treat SUD is an approved treatment for a chronic relapsing medical disorder using proven methods that also address underlying co-occurring mental illnesses.

Both projects are made up of a coalition of national healthcare organizations (see lists below) and have been working for years to train primary healthcare providers through a variety of methods, including live and archived webinars, online modules, videos, case vignettes etc. All courses are provided at no cost and many include CME.

PCSS-MAT also offers free MAT waiver training to physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. [Learn more.](#)

In addition, the projects have a [series of podcasts](#), which give clinicians a solid overview of preventing and treating OUD in the primary care setting. The podcasts,



conducted by leaders in the field of treating pain and OUD, include such topics as:

- The CDC Opioid Guidelines
- Myths and Misconceptions of Medication Assisted Treatment
- Buprenorphine Induction
- Opioid Use Disorder overview
- Applications of the CDC Guidelines
- Use of Opioids

One of the unique aspects of the PCSS projects is the mentoring/coaching programs, which give primary care providers access to experts in the fields of addiction and pain medicine. See PCSS-MAT [mentoring program](#) and PCSS-O [coaching program](#). Clinical experts are paired with clinical experts in a variety of ways including:

- **Ask a Colleague.** A simple and direct way to receive an answer related to opioids and pain management. This facet of our opioid therapies training is designed to provide a prompt response to simple practice-related question.
- **Short-term Mentoring.** Designed to provide individualized, one-on-one guidance to discuss specific questions and how to handle complex clinical situations involving prescribing opioids and opioid addiction.
- **In-Depth Mentoring.** Similar to traditional academic mentoring where more discussions could

be on in-depth systematic and complicated efforts therefore require more comprehensive and long-term interactions and possibly including more than one mentor.

The PCSS mentoring programs are not meant to offer medical advice about specific patients. Rather, these programs are designed for clinical experts to offer clinicians information about evidence-based clinical practices and educational resources in the prevention, identification, and treatment of opioid use disorders and substance use disorders.

PCSS-O coalition: Led by the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, it includes the Addiction Technology Transfer Center; American Academy of Neurology; American Academy of Pain Medicine; American Academy of Pediatrics; American College of Physicians; American Dental Association; American Medical Association; American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine; American Psychiatric Association; American Society of Pain Management Nursing; International Society on Addictions; and Southeastern Consortium for Substance Abuse Training.

PCSS-MAT coalition: American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (lead organization); American College of Emergency Physicians; American College of Physicians; American Psychiatric Association; American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine; American Society of Addiction Medicine; Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse; and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Funding for this initiative was made possible (in part) by Providers' Clinical Support System for Opioid Therapies (grant no. 5H79TI025595) and Providers' Clinical Support System for Medication Assisted Treatment (grant nos. 5U79TI024697 and 1U79TI026556) from SAMHSA. The views expressed in written conference materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.