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## **ACAP REPORT HIGHLIGHTS SAFETY NET HEALTH PLAN STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE**

WASHINGTON—A [report](#) from the Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP) highlights innovative strategies employed by not-for-profit Safety Net Health Plans to address the issue of prescription drug abuse—in particular, the misuse and abuse of prescription opioid painkillers. The report is intended to serve as a toolkit for health plans and others interested in reducing prescription drug abuse.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that opioids were responsible for more than 14,800 overdose deaths in 2008, and more than 475,000 emergency department visits the following year. And the misuse and abuse of these powerful drugs also comes at high financial costs: the societal cost of opioid abuse is an estimated \$53 to \$72 billion per year.

“Safety Net Health Plans are rising to the steep challenge posed by prescription drug abuse by finding new or better ways to identify, engage and treat people who are misusing prescription drugs—or are at risk for doing so,” said ACAP CEO Margaret A. Murray. “These innovations are a real point of pride, and we hope that health plans and others can use them as a model when considering strategies for addressing substance use disorder.”

The [report](#) draws upon the experience of ACAP’s Reducing Prescription Drug Abuse Collaborative, a group of 13 ACAP-member Safety Net Health Plans which designed and executed projects aimed at curbing prescription drug abuse among their plan members. Plan interventions deployed differing strategies to curb prescription drug abuse, including:

- Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT);
- Outreach to providers or beneficiaries;
- Specialized support services for beneficiaries;
- Prescriber or pharmacy lock-in programs; and
- Improvement in practices surrounding Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) with Suboxone.

In addition to profiling quality improvement efforts aimed at reducing prescription drug abuse, the Collaborative identified a number of barriers to improving treatment regimens, including legislative, regulatory and data-sharing issues. The toolkit highlights the challenges faced by plans and outlines steps that Federal and state policymakers could take to improve efforts to address prescription drug abuse, including expanded sharing of data and information to better facilitate care coordination and support for the development of meaningful, actionable quality measures that look at the appropriateness of opioid prescriptions.



The efforts of the Collaborative were made possible by a grant from the Foundation to Promote Open Society (FPOS), in collaboration with the Open Society Institute.

“We’re grateful for the support of the Open Society Institute and FPOS in this initiative,” added Murray. “Prescription drug abuse adversely affects millions of lives all over the country—and at all income levels. The Open Society Institute shares the concerns of Safety Net Health Plans, and we thank them for their help in developing and disseminating these initiatives. We look forward to our continued partnership.”

To read the report in full, visit [www.communityplans.net](http://www.communityplans.net).

**About ACAP**

ACAP represents 59 nonprofit Safety Net Health Plans in 24 states, which collectively serve more than thirteen million people enrolled in Medicaid, Medicare, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and other health programs. For more information, visit [www.communityplans.net](http://www.communityplans.net).

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