

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### WHY DID THE CCOA COME TOGETHER?

Locally and nationally, opioid use disorder has increased to epidemic levels. In 2015, more people died from drug overdoses than car crashes across the country. In Vermont, fatalities due to opioid-related overdoses alone eclipsed car crash fatalities by 31 percent.

The social and economic costs of substance use disorder reach into every corner of our community. Local businesses report increased retail theft. The number of children who have been taken into care by Department of Children and Families directly related to their guardian's substance abuse has more than doubled since 2011. The number of community members seeking treatment – as well as the number of deaths by overdose – continues to rise. In Chittenden County, more individuals have received treatment for opioid-related substance use disorder than any other kind of substance use disorder in each year since 2013. In the past six years, accidental opioid-related fatalities (does not include undetermined causes or suicide deaths) have increased by 85% in Chittenden County, and by 159% statewide.

In January 2016, a group of state and community partners recognized that multiple isolated and often contradictory efforts existed to address the complex causes and effects of the opioid epidemic. By organizing those efforts using a Collective Impact framework and shared agenda, the partners began collaborating more effectively.

### WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids are a class of chemically-related substances that includes prescribed pain relievers like oxycodone, codeine, and morphine and the drug heroin. Other opioids are produced naturally in the human brain. All opioids interact with opioid receptors in the brain and other parts of the body, where they produce effects that can include pain relief, sedation, and euphoria as well as side-effects like constipation and nausea. In excess they can also slow or stop breathing and lead to death. Opioid pain relievers are generally safe when taken for a short time and as prescribed, but regular use, even as prescribed, leads to a state of physiologic dependence causing uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms if the opioid is stopped abruptly. Opioids' ability to produce pleasant feelings and relieve unpleasant ones can lead to compulsive use and addiction. The risk of addiction varies depending on individual genetics, history, and experiences.<sup>1</sup>

### WHAT IS CCOA's VISION?

The CCOA envisions a substance use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery system of care that is timely, coordinated and comprehensive.

We are tracking our steps toward this vision through data aggregated across partners, as well as through the work of the CCOA Action Teams. Metrics include, but are not limited to, opioid prescription rates among Chittenden County providers, incidents of fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses in Chittenden County, and treatment capacity in the Chittenden County Hub and Spoke provider system.

### WHY DOES THE WHOLE COMMUNITY NEED TO BE INVOLVED?

Large complex social problems cannot be solved by one organization alone. It truly “takes a village” to make real and lasting change. Community members, government, non-profits and businesses all play unique roles and have different perspectives on the opioid epidemic. Each partner needs to learn, listen and engage together to make progress on our current crisis in Chittenden County. With the will and commitment of the entire community we can succeed.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Goedde, MD and Sanchit Maruti, MD, UVMMC Addiction Treatment Program.



## WHAT IS COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

The Collective Impact model provides a framework to guide many partners from different sectors, to work together successfully and whose foundation is built on including all members of a community to learn together and develop solutions where their activities reinforce a common agenda. More information on Collective Impact can be found at the Collective Impact Forum's website: [collectiveimpactforum.org/](http://collectiveimpactforum.org/).

The CCOA has adopted the Collective Impact framework and its 5 essential components:

1. Every person/group that is part of the Alliance will have a common agenda.
2. The Alliance uses shared outcomes/measurements.
3. Constant communication between Alliance members is necessary.
4. Activities performed by each individual or organization reinforce and support the common agenda.
5. The Alliance has a Backbone Staff to provide structure and oversight.

## WHO'S INVESTED?

The CCOA is funded by a three-year, \$100,000 per year grant from The UVM Medical Center. This grant has been matched with a donation to the United Way of Northwest Vermont from the Stiller Family Foundation. Recent funding includes a 3-year grant from Delta Dental Plan of VT, for a total of \$150,000, as well as a one-year \$25,000 grant from GE Healthy Cities for a population health workforce development project. In addition to financial investment, Alliance partners across Chittenden County are devoting their time and energy.

## HOW DOES THE CCOA WORK?

The CCOA was organized originally into four structural components: Steering Committee, Executive Steering Committee, Backbone Staff, and Action Teams. The Steering Committee acts as a decision and policy-making group with the responsibility to identify and eliminate systems barriers in order to enable solutions identified by the Action Teams.

- The Steering Committee is made up of executive leaders from state and city government, business, and community organizations.
- The Executive Steering Committee is comprised of a subset of the members of the larger Steering Committee, and helps make decisions between their quarterly meetings.
- There are four working Action Teams with goals that reflect their specific expertise – Treatment Access and Recovery Supports, Workforce Development, Community-Level Prevention and CommStat (data driven coordination of law enforcement and human service agencies).

Three additional working teams have been added to support the work of the Alliance: Data, Engagement and Communications Teams. As the Action Teams develop quick-win change strategies, our Data Team, comprised of data experts from partner organizations, helps to build their metrics and will also provide analysis and dissemination of information to the Alliance and community members. The Engagement Team will organize public conversations across Chittenden County to delve deeper into the community's understanding, knowledge and experience with opioids, which will aid in developing key outcomes. These will be shared publicly on our website: [ecosproject.com/chittenden-county-opioid-alliance/outcomes/](http://ecosproject.com/chittenden-county-opioid-alliance/outcomes/), as well as in our 3-5 year workplan. Lastly, the Communications Team is tasked with ensuring that the work of the Alliance is shared effectively in a variety of ways across Chittenden County.

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

You can contact the CCOA Project Director, Cathy Aikman, and discuss the different ways you can get involved. Here is how you can contact her:

**Email:** [caikman@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:caikman@ccrpcvt.org)

**Phone:** 802.861.0138

**Website:** [ecosproject.com/chittenden-county-opioid-alliance/contact/](http://ecosproject.com/chittenden-county-opioid-alliance/contact/)