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LPCA Awarded \$1 Million to Combat Opioid Abuse in Rural Louisiana

As announced yesterday by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), LPCA will receive \$1 million in grant funding to support rural communities fighting the opioid epidemic.

Baton Rouge, LA -- The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has announced that the Louisiana Primary Care Association (LPCA) has been awarded \$1 million to enhance and expand service delivery for substance use disorder and opioid use disorder in rural communities. LPCA has been selected as [one of 89 grant recipients](#) in the country to receive funding as part of HRSA's Rural Communities Opioid Response (RCORP) implementation grant process.

While communities across the nation struggle to combat substance and opioid abuse, rural populations have been shown to be especially vulnerable. Economic hardship, poverty, lack of transportation, the stigma of addiction, provider shortages, and a need for additional resources have all contributed to a rise in opioid use in rural communities.

Before the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, more than 130 people a day died from opioid-related drug overdoses according to HRSA. Now, amid the turmoil of the pandemic, opioid and substance use disorder is even more rampant. From fear of illness to worries over job security and personal finance, all Americans are facing increased levels of anxiety. Individuals who may have been on the road to recovery are now faced with added stress and may find themselves isolated. Those struggling with addiction are no longer able to rely on their usual support networks or even their friends and family due to social distancing guidelines.

Recognizing this growing problem, HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy has worked to support its grantees with resources, technical assistance, and training to integrate behavioral health care services into practice settings and communities.

LPCA will use this funding in a three year implementation of a set of evidence-based interventions and promising practices that align with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Service's [Five-Point Strategy to Combat the Opioid Crisis](#). Specifically, LPCA will:

- Develop a statewide consortium that includes faith leaders, emergency first responders, state agencies, Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), school administrators, and other community organizations who work with SUD/OD patients and their families.
- Work with selected Federally Qualified Health Centers and consortium members on developing and implementing prevention, treatment, and recovery activities like community education, staff recruitment and training, and identify additional resources for treatment.
- Hire additional staff to assist with implementation of grant activities, recruit consortium members, handle data collection, and conduct needs assessments.

“This funding could not have come at a more critical time,” said Gerrelda Davis, Executive Director of LPCA. “While our national attention has turned to the coronavirus, the opioid epidemic continues its deadly assault on our communities. Our rural populations, in particular, have experienced the greatest barriers to services and treatment. We are excited for the opportunity to equip our rural partners with the resources and tools they need to battle the opioid epidemic and save lives.”

While this funding is geared specifically toward expanded service and treatment in rural communities, LPCA will share lessons learned and best practices with Federally Qualified Health Centers and partners in other, urban regions of the state.

“Our Community Health Center members are proven leaders and experts in reaching our state’s most vulnerable and difficult to reach populations,” said Raegan Carter, LPCA Director of Health Policy & Governmental Affairs. “Now, with this grant award, they will have the resources they need to build capacity and reach even more patients in need of help.”

[Learn more about the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program.](#)

About the Louisiana Primary Care Association

The Louisiana Primary Care Association (LPCA) represents 39 federally funded, private, non-profit and public Community Health Centers (and 3 Look-Alikes) across Louisiana that serve over 444,000 patients annually. LPCA promotes community-based health services through advocacy, education, and collaboration with community partners. Our goal is to ensure that every Louisianan has access to affordable, quality, primary care services. For more information, visit www.LPCA.net.

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