How Ohio Prescribers Can Increase Access to Treatment for Adolescent Opioid Use Disorder

Christal Ramos, Lisa Clemans-Cope, Haley Samuel-Jakubos, and Luis Basurto

A vast body of research shows that FDA-approved medications can effectively treat opioid use disorder (OUD), but most adolescents are not receiving these treatments. What should prescribers in Ohio know about medications to treat OUD and about how they can increase access to evidence-based treatment for adolescents?

MEDICATION WORKS FOR TREATING OPIOID USE DISORDER

FDA-approved medications (buprenorphine, naltrexone, and methadone) have demonstrated a reduced risk of death, increased treatment retention, and fewer relapses. Most treatment will involve medication-assisted treatment (MAT), which pairs behavioral or psychosocial therapy with buprenorphine, naltrexone, or methadone. Some adolescents with OUD can be successfully treated with MAT in an outpatient setting; others may require more comprehensive care to address more severe OUD in a residential or inpatient setting or may require treatment to address co-occurring mental health disorders or other conditions.

Buprenorphine is key to treating adolescent OUD. It is FDA-approved medication approved for adolescents age 16 and older. These are key facts about buprenorphine:

- Buprenorphine is as effective as methadone but easier to access because it can be prescribed in an outpatient setting and taken at home.
- Prescribers (including physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners) must obtain a waiver from the DEA to prescribe buprenorphine for OUD.
- Unlike naltrexone, buprenorphine is typically introduced without a lengthy period of withdrawal symptoms.
- Buprenorphine formulations include a tablet or film, a monthly injection, or a six-month implant.

OHIO HAS FEW BUPRENORPHINE TREATMENT PRESCRIBERS

Despite MAT’s success, only 2.4 percent of adolescents in treatment for heroin use receive buprenorphine, and only 0.4 percent of adolescents in treatment for prescription opioid use receive it (Feder, Krawczyk, and Saloner 2016). The number of treatment facilities offering both adolescent services and MAT for adolescent OUD is limited across the US, and Ohio is no exception. For example, in three Ohio counties where stakeholders have prioritized addressing adolescent OUD (Warren, Pickaway, and Franklin), only four available MAT locations offer adolescent services, and three are outpatient facilities, meaning only one is inpatient. Further, research shows that outpatient office-based buprenorphine treatment capacity is limited at the state and national levels; again this holds true in Ohio (see maps on next page).

What prescribers can do to help:

Increase access to medication treatment statewide by completing a buprenorphine waiver from the DEA. Physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants can apply for waivers.

Connect with programs, processes, and protocols that are appropriate for adolescents.

Ask your health center, emergency department, hospital, or addiction treatment program to add buprenorphine treatment capacity.
Ohio Treatment Facilities Offering MAT and Services for Adolescents in Franklin, Pickaway, and Warren Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center name</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryhaven Inc. Inpatient and Outpatient for Youths and Adults</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Outpatient, inpatient and residential services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Community Counseling Centers Inc.</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Outpatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center Pickaway County Office</td>
<td>Pickaway</td>
<td>Outpatient and partial hospitalization/day treatment programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Counseling Services</td>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>Outpatient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator, 2018.

Locations of Ohio Facilities Offering MAT and Adolescent Treatment Services

Few treatment facilities offer both services

Ohio Prescribers with Buprenorphine Waivers to Treat OUD

In many counties, few prescribers have DEA waivers

Source: SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator (2018).

Source: DEA Active Controlled Substances Act Registrants Database (2018).

Communities may want to work with prescribers to expand buprenorphine treatment options for adolescents in the following ways:

- Encourage pediatricians and other prescribers who care for adolescents to become waivered to prescribe buprenorphine for OUD and to connect with programs, processes, and protocols that are appropriate for adolescents.
- Engage with community health centers, emergency departments, hospitals, and addiction treatment programs to add buprenorphine treatment capacity and to develop programs, processes, and protocols appropriate for adolescents.
- Expand access to buprenorphine through telemedicine (Ohio’s state Medicare Board passed rules in 2017 to allow prescribing of both noncontrolled and controlled treatment through telemedicine).

For more information, see Evidence-Based Interventions for Adolescent Opioid Use Disorder by Christal Ramos, Lisa Clemans-Cope, Haley Samuel-Jakubos, and Luis Basurto. The report provides more sources for the research summarized here.

CITATION