


TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Harm Reduction Efforts in Texas During and Post- COVID-19 Pandemic

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Overview

- Substance Use Service Array
- Intervention Services: Outreach, Screening, Assessment, and Referral (OSAR) Programs
- COVID-19 Pandemic and Substance Use
- COVID-19 Funding
- COVID-19 Project Timeline
- Virtual Service Delivery Enhancements
- Recovery Resource Supplies
- Harm Reduction
- Data Collection
- Conclusions

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Substance Use Service Array

- **Prevention:** Activities, services, and health promotion strategies directed at people who have not been determined to require treatment for a substance use disorder (SUD).
- **Intervention:** Services designed to reduce the impact of substance use and may include education, case management, and home visits.
- **Treatment:** Services designed to treat people diagnosed with a SUD.
- **Recovery Support Services:** Services designed to maintain long-term recovery and the quality of recovery.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (1 of 6)

OSAR services:

- Are incorporated into local mental health authorities and local behavioral health authorities;
- Are available to all people interested in information about substance use services in Texas; and
- Provide guidance, education, and coordinated access to a continuum of substance use services.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (2 of 6)

OSAR Purpose

- OSARs can be the starting point for people who want help accessing substance use services but are unsure of where to begin.
- OSAR services offer:
 - ▶ Substance use screenings and assessments;
 - ▶ Referrals to substance use services; and
 - ▶ Education on substance use.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (3 of 6)

Eligibility Determinations

- **Eligibility for OSAR Services:** OSAR services are free and available to all people who reside in Texas.
- **Financial Eligibility for Substance Use Treatment:** OSARs can determine if people are eligible for state-funded substance use treatment on a case-by-case basis.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (4 of 6)

OSAR Screenings and Diagnoses

- OSAR screening and assessment services are based on self-report.
- SUD diagnoses are based on the last 12 months and clinical criteria from the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (5 of 6)

Referrals to OSARs

Common reasons for referrals to OSAR include:

- Department of Family and Protective Services involvement:
 - ▶ Current allegations of parental substance use;
 - ▶ Previous Child Protective Services (CPS) reports alleging substance use;
 - ▶ Person's admission of substance use;
 - ▶ Positive drug test or drug screen with confirmation (date, type of drug, type of test, test result levels);
 - ▶ Substance-exposed newborns;
 - ▶ Child or youth exposed to guardian's substance use; and
 - ▶ Child or youth experimenting with substances or self-medicating with substances.

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Intervention Services: OSAR (6 of 6)

Referrals to OSARs

Common reasons for referrals to OSAR include:

- Justice Involvement
 - ▶ Probation
 - ▶ Parole
- Self-referral
- Family or friend referral

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OSAR Providers

Region	Agency	Phone	Website
1	StarCare Specialty Health	806-740-1421	starcarelubbock.org
2	Helen Farabee Centers	940-397-3391	helenfarabee.org
3	North Texas Behavioral Health Authority	844-275-0600	ntbha.org
3	My Health My Resources of Tarrant County	817-332-6329	mhmrarrant.org
3	LifePath Systems	972-422-5939	lifepathsystems.org
4	Andrews Center	903-597-1351	andrewscenter.com
5	Burke	936-634-5753	myburke.org
6	The Harris Center	713-970-4400	theharriscenter.org
6	Gulf Coast Center	844-704-1291	gulfcoastcenter.org
7	Bluebonnet Trails Community Services	844-309-6385	bbtrails.org
8	The Center for Health Care Services	210-261-3076	chcsbc.org
9	PermiaCare	844-420-3964	permiacare.org
10	Emergence Health Network	915-887-3410	emergencehealthnetwork.org
11	Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	800-813-1233	ttbh.org

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COVID-19 Pandemic and Substance Use

Drug overdose deaths increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- There was an approximate 37 percent increase in reported drug overdoses from March 2020-2021, compared to March 2019-2020.¹
- In 2020, 883 people in Texas died from fentanyl-related overdoses. Provisional data shows that fentanyl-related overdose deaths increased by 89 percent to 1,672 deaths in 2021.²


¹ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug_poisoning_mortality/drug_poisoning.htm

² <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/mental-health-substance-use-resources/fighting-fentanyl/>



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COVID-19 Funding

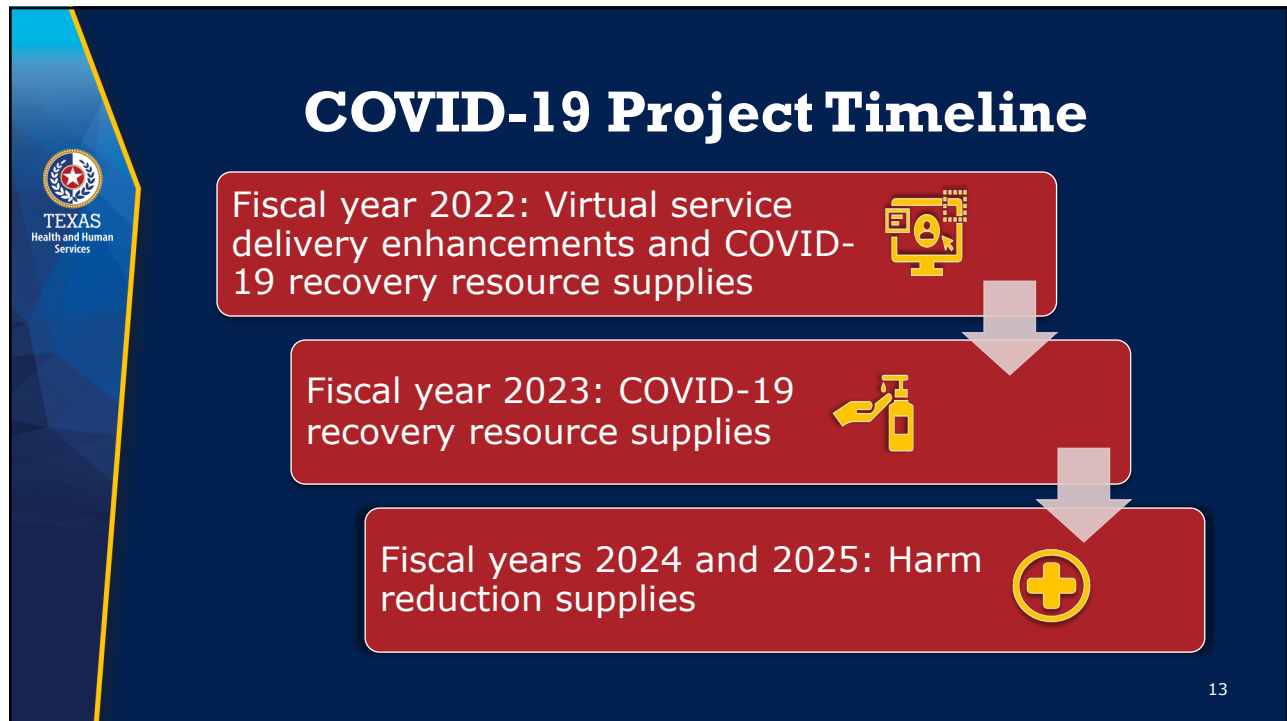
- In accordance with the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 [P.L. 116-260] (H.R. 133) and the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 [P.L. 117-2] (H.R. 1319), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration appropriated funding to states through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant.³
- In fiscal year 2022, COVID-19 funding was distributed to the OSARs for virtual service delivery enhancements and recovery resources.

³ <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-federal-supplemental-funding-primer-jan-2022.pdf>



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Virtual Service Delivery Enhancements (1 of 3)

- Virtual delivery enhancements were needed to provide services to people electronically via online platforms that were secure, encrypted, and HIPAA-compliant.
- Some providers needed:
 - ▶ New electronic supplies such as computers, tablets, phones, routers.
 - ▶ Software or software enhancements.
 - ▶ Kiosks for mobile services.

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Virtual Service Delivery Enhancements (2 of 3)

- All 14 OSARs received additional funding for virtual service delivery enhancements.
- OSARs purchased or enhanced Zoom, Doxy.me, and DocuSign telehealth software for safeguarding client information and streamlining intake processes.

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Virtual Service Delivery Enhancements (3 of 3)

- Additional enhancements included software upgrades (e.g., Microsoft Office, Teams, Electronic Health Record platforms) and supply replacement (e.g., laptops, computers, phones, headsets, routers, hotspots).
- OSARs also loaned supplies to facilities for people to receive virtual services to accommodate COVID-19 quarantining guidelines as appropriate and allowed by Texas Administrative Code.

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Recovery Resource Supplies (1 of 3)

- Recovery resource supplies were intended to meet one-time needs directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and address barriers to receiving substance use prevention, intervention, treatment, or recovery services.
- The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) created an extensive list of allowable supplies and shared with OSARs. HHSC updated the list as additional supply requests were reviewed and approved.

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Recovery Resource Supplies (2 of 3)

OSARs completed supplies distribution using a variety of methods:

- Hosted mass supplies distribution events;
- Distributed backpacks, which included hygiene and overdose prevention kits;
- Expanded existing partnerships and established new partnerships;
- Integrated harm reduction practices into outreach efforts and overdose prevention education; and
- Offered resource access and distribution in rural Texas communities.

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Recovery Resource Supplies (3 of 3)

Supplies distributed included:

- Overdose prevention kits (with naloxone).
- Transportation vouchers (to allow people to access their appointments for SUD program services).
- Personal protective equipment, such as surgical and N95 masks, gloves, and face shields.
- Reusable water bottles.
- COVID-19 test and collection kits.
- Hygiene kits and backpacks.
- Diapers, baby formula, and baby wipes.
- Air purifiers and filters.
- Cleaning supplies.

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Harm Reduction

- In fiscal year 2024, HHSC revised the project's focus to harm reduction supplies distribution to reflect community needs.
- Supplies and funds are used to meet one-time needs relating to harm reduction and overdose prevention and address barriers to receiving substance use prevention, intervention, treatment, or recovery services.
- Funds are used to purchase overdose prevention kits (e.g., naloxone) and other harm reduction supplies.

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Data Collection

- HHSC collects data for this project through the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) data collection system.
- HHSC, in partnership with The University of Texas Austin's Addiction Research Institute, created the data collection projects in REDCap with interface training and support provided by Catherine Kaviani, Recovery Support Services Project Coordinator, and William Hamblen, Data Analyst.
- OSAR providers document two types of distribution:
 - ▶ Individual distribution, which includes the distribution of supplies to people and optional documentation of basic demographic information; and
 - ▶ Partner distribution, which includes distribution to external SUD service organizations.

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Fiscal Year 2022 Results


OSAR providers distributed over 370,000 resources. This included:

- 8,000 overdose prevention kits (including naloxone).
- Over 26,000 hygiene kits and backpacks.
- Over 11,500 COVID-19 tests.

Additionally, OSAR providers distributed over \$1 million via fund transfers to community partners and local organizations providing SUD services.

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Fiscal Year 2023 Results

OSAR providers distributed over 190,000 resources. This included:

- Over 4,500 overdose prevention kits (including naloxone).
- Over 13,500 hygiene kits and backpacks.
- Over 6,000 COVID-19 tests.

Additionally, OSAR providers distributed over \$2 million via fund transfers to community partners and local organizations providing SUD services.

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Fiscal Year 2024 Results

Preliminary data for quarters one and two show OSAR providers distributed over 85,700 supplies and over \$123,200 via fund transfers to community partners and local organizations providing SUD services.

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Conclusions

- The OSAR COVID-19 Recovery Resource Project was extremely successful during the pandemic response with getting needed supplies out to communities in a quick and timely manner.
- As the pandemic evolved, OSARs responded to shifts in community needs, from providing COVID-19 test kits at the beginning of the funding cycle, to providing more harm reduction supplies such as naloxone in the later years of the funding cycle.
- The OSAR Harm Reduction Project is ongoing and will continue through the end of fiscal year 2025.

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Thank you

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