



New Mexico  
Sierra County  
Sierra County Opioid Response Program

## Overview

10/01/19 Grant Start → 09/30/22 Grant End

Sierra County is a small, rural county in New Mexico (population: 11,282) that is disproportionately affected by the drug and opioid epidemic. Its recorded drug overdose deaths between 2013 and 2017 of 29.5 per 100,000 are well above national and state averages (13.3 and 24.6, respectively). Sierra County ranks in the top ten percent in all drug/alcohol/mental illness issues in New Mexico; the county's heroin use rate among individuals in Grades 9 through 12 is the highest in the state and 2.6 percent higher than the state average. The high number of drug overdose deaths can be partly attributed to the lack of services available to Sierra County residents. There is no crisis response team; limited outpatient behavioral health care; no intensive outpatient services; limited medication-assisted treatment; no inpatient services; limited hospital-based care; and no jail. The services that are available are often at capacity, with long waiting lists and staffing shortages. Opioid use has a high correlation in the community to burglaries, thefts, disturbances, and general unrest. As the sixth-poorest county in the second-poorest state in the country, Sierra has few funding resources to combat its substance abuse problem.

## Grant Focus

- Expand law enforcement diversion and first-responder models that connect individuals to substance abuse treatment and recovery support services.
- Expand jail-based treatment and effective reentry programs.
- Expand peer support services and recovery housing.
- Increase access to naloxone.
- Link data sets to identify trends and focus resources.
- Expand models of public health, behavioral health, and public safety information sharing and collaboration at state and local levels.
- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Expand public awareness about opioid abuse.
- Educate public safety and criminal justice stakeholders about substance abuse.

## Program Approach

The Sierra County Opioid Response Program (SCORP) leverages community groups to develop local services along the Sequential Intercept Model. A key partner is the Sierra County Opioid Partnership, which meets monthly to determine service gaps and needs and establish evidence-based programs. It is composed of the following:

- Sierra County Sheriff's Office
- Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, Chief of Police
- Sierra County Detention Administrator
- Probation Department
- Sierra Vista Hospital
- New Mexico Human Services Department
- Representatives from the New Mexico House and Senate
- Sierra County Manager
- Truth or Consequences City Manager
- Clinicians
- Representatives from The Club (focus on teens), Little Things Matter (focus on young children and families), and the Roots Counseling Center

The Sierra County Misdemeanor Compliance Program, the New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils, and the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association also support the initiative.

SCORP prioritizes the following evidence-based programs:

- Establishing a crisis intervention team to assist law enforcement
- Creating a hub for the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program
- Providing jail-based opioid and behavioral health services, skill building, and treatment
- Assisting incarcerated individuals transitioning to community-based services

- Adding community behavior health treatment services
- Conducting school opioid education

A consultant with expertise in health and health disparities, and diversion will work with the program manager and the Sierra County Law Enforcement Diversion Consortium (LE Consortium) to:

- Design jail-based program and treatment options, as well as discharge treatment plans to assist individuals transitioning into the community.
- Explore community education so individuals released from incarceration may continue courses.
- Develop policies and procedures and implement and evaluate the different components of the program.

When incarcerated individuals are released back into the community, they will be enrolled in community programs as part of their discharge planning. The planning team also will analyze the potential for developing services for children and family members. The LE Consortium will explore options for serving youth in later years, working with the LEAD youth-serving program in Houston, Texas.

## Project Partners

- Sierra County Opioid Partnership
- Olive Tree
- City of Truth or Consequences
- Sierra County Law Enforcement Diversion Consortium
- Sierra Vista Hospital

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