



## **ACTION III Project Summary**

### **The Academy for Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care**

**ACTION Contractor:** Westat, Inc.

**PI:** Benjamin Miller, Psy.D. (University of Colorado School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine)

**Project Director:** Garrett Moran, Ph.D. (Westat)

#### **Additional Key Personnel and Subcontractors:**

- Joshua Noda, M.P.P. (Westat), Project Manager
- Rebecca Noftsinger (Westat), Task Lead for National Integration Academy Council
- Glynis Jones, M.S. (Westat), Task Lead for Dissemination
- Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine
- Informatics Studio

**Project Period:** September 30, 2016-September 29, 2019

**Total Cost:** \$1,000,000.00

**AHRQ Contact:** Parivash Nourjah, Ph.D.

**Project Type:** Product Development; Implementation

#### **Project Purpose, Goals, and Objectives:**

The goals of this project are to use AHRQ's Academy for Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care (the Academy) to:

- Provide technical assistance and support to AHRQ grantees working to increase access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorders (OUDs) in rural primary care practices across Oklahoma, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, and
- Develop and disseminate resources and information to support the broader implementation of MAT in rural primary care practices elsewhere in the US.

#### **Background and Significance**

The increasing rate of deaths due to opioid overdoses has made the prevention and treatment of OUDs one of the top public health priorities in the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of deaths from opioid overdose in 2014 was the highest ever recorded, with an average of 78 people dying each day. MAT, in combination with supportive psychosocial services, has been shown to be an effective treatment for opioid addiction. However, MAT is considered to be underutilized by providers, with only 1 million of the 2.5 million Americans who might benefit from MAT having received it. Moreover, while the rates of prescription opioid overdoses are significantly higher in rural areas, individuals who might seek MAT in rural parts of the country find it more difficult to access treatment due to a lack of trained providers.

In 2016, AHRQ funded four grants to improve access to MAT for thousands of residents across rural areas of Oklahoma (28 counties), Colorado (24 counties), Pennsylvania (23 counties), and North Carolina (22 counties). The grants are designed to identify and implement effective strategies for

increasing the number of physicians and other prescribing professionals (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) who provide MAT to patients struggling with OUDs. An additional goal of the grants is to identify approaches to overcome barriers to implementation of MAT services that can be shared across grantees and ultimately with other rural regions of the country.

This project will use the Academy to extend the work of the grantees by providing them with technical support and disseminating the knowledge they acquire to support similar efforts beyond the communities directly benefited by the grantees' current efforts. The Academy is uniquely positioned to serve in this capacity since it was established with the purpose of serving as a coordinating center and national resource for people committed to integrating mental health and substance use treatment with primary care.

#### **Target Audiences:**

The primary target audience is the AHRQ-funded grantees that are supporting physicians and other prescribers implementing MAT in rural primary care settings. Ultimately, the individuals who will benefit from the Academy's work will be those individuals with OUDs who live in these rural settings and will have better access to treatment, and their families and communities who will be spared the loss of contributing members.

#### **Methods:**

Support for providers implementing MAT for OUDs will be provided by leveraging the existing platform of the Academy while also updating it to include a specific emphasis on MAT. The work of this project will be guided by the insight of the expert panel, the National Integration Academy Council (NIAC), as well as the demonstrated needs of the AHRQ-funded grantees.

The Academy Portal will serve as the hub for the Implementation Community Network (ICN), which will help to disseminate information about implementing MAT for OUDs to providers in rural primary care settings. Technical assistance will be provided to the grantees and their participating practices through:

- Updated web content specific to the topic of MAT for OUDs,
- An updated literature collection that includes the evidence base of MAT in primary care settings,
- An updated Community with MAT-specific groups and discussion threads to promote peer-to-peer communication,
- Webinars and other supporting materials that serve as additional learning opportunities and resources related to best practices for implementing MAT in rural primary care settings, and
- An eNewsletter to communicate relevant information, news, and events to grantees.

The Portal will also serve as the platform through which additional providers, researchers, and the broader public can access the evidence base and literature collection, as well as lessons learned from the project regarding promising practices for increasing MAT prescribing in rural primary care settings.

#### **Project Setting/s:**

As the contractor for this project, Westat, in partnership with the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, will serve as the primary settings for the work performed under this task order. All project management, support for the NIAC and grantees, and Academy portal



updates and content management will be done by the project team at Westat's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, or in the Department of Family Medicine in Denver, Colorado.

**Key Tasks/ Activities:**

- Environmental Scan: An environmental scan will be conducted to identify the available literature related to implementing MAT in rural primary care settings that should be added to the portal's literature collection.
- NIAC Expert Panel: The NIAC Expert Panel will hold an annual in-person meeting and three quarterly meetings by video conference to discuss the work of the Academy and how to provide additional resources and support for providers implementing MAT in rural primary care settings.
- The Academy Portal Updates: The Academy Portal will be updated to include resources and news related to the use of MAT for OUDs in rural primary care settings. The Community feature of the portal will also be utilized to serve as a hub for grantees and others within the ICN to discuss challenges and share information.
- Technical Assistance: An ICN will provide technical assistance to the grantees and other providers implementing MAT. Mechanisms of communication and technical assistance will include an eNewsletter, webinars, and posting of updated resources.
- Dissemination of Findings: Project staff will synthesize the findings across the AHRQ-funded grants to summarize the lessons learned and will assist grantees in the dissemination of their findings through the Academy Portal.