

# Public Media Partnering in Communities on the Opioid Crisis

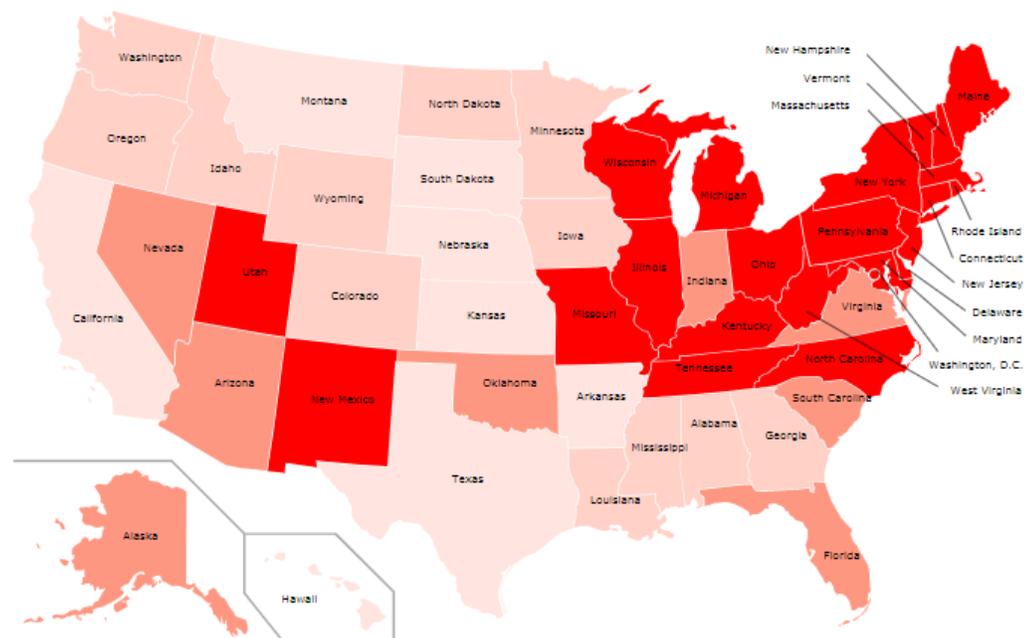


## Public Health Crisis

More than 130 people in the U.S. die every day after overdosing on opioids, according to a January 2019 report from the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#). In March 2018, Congress appropriated over \$3 billion in new funding to address the opioid epidemic. In October 2018, the President signed into law the [SUPPORT Patients and Communities Act](#), a package of more than 50 pieces of legislation addressing the opioid crisis through treatment, awareness and recovery services, expanded research and regulatory changes.

NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates (per 100,000 people) <sup>1</sup>



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## National and Local Coverage

Years before opioid addiction was declared a national crisis, local public media stations were bringing awareness to the issue in their communities. Today, they continue to produce original local reporting, national documentaries, and foster community conversations on its impact.

- **More than 145 public media stations in all 50 states have produced content** addressing the crisis in their communities, accounting for nearly **2,300 hours of local coverage** between January 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018.
- Stations hosted **more than 200 local events** related to opioids, drawing **30,000 people**, in that same 18-month period.
- **More than 50 stations worked with partner organizations** to cover the issue.
- **National news programs**, including [FRONTLINE](#), [NOVA](#), [PBS NewsHour](#), and NPR's [Morning Edition](#) and [All Things Considered](#), have covered myriad issues stemming from opioid addiction through hundreds of broadcast programs, digital content and podcasts.

In states among the hardest hit by opioid addiction, **CPB-supported journalism collaborations** have produced award-winning reporting on the crisis.

From **Ohio, West Virginia** and **Kentucky**, the seven-station **Ohio Valley ReSource** journalism collaboration has produced multimedia coverage on health and opioids, including [interactive graphics](#) on hospitalizations and ER visits due to drug overdose, and [infographics](#) illustrating an overdose rate of two times the national average for those three states.

**Side Effects Public Media**, an award-winning health news collaboration of six public media stations in the **Midwest**, produced [On the Front Lines of a Drug Crisis](#), a special video series profiling health professionals and the approaches they have found to help, such as a task force of law enforcement and social workers that tracks down addicts to put them in touch with needed services and emergency room doctors who connect overdose patients with treatment.

As part of a multimedia journalism collaboration, WXXI in **Rochester, NY**; ideastream in **Cleveland** and **Oregon** Public Broadcasting produced [The Opioid Crisis: The Ripple Effect](#), an in-depth project looking at the people and issues affected by the crisis. The collaboration's centerpiece documentary, [Opioids from Inside](#), which follows the journey of three women addicted to opioids, premiered nationally, reaching 61 percent of all U.S. television households via the WORLD Channel.

## Community Partnerships

Public media stations work in partnership with community organizations to offer valuable content, convene conversations about solutions and provide information on support services.

**West Virginia Public Broadcasting** worked with professionals across the state to launch the [Recovery Project](#), which shares recovery stories of those affected by addiction on-air, online and through local events. WVPB also provides ongoing reporting through [The Damage Done: West Virginia's Opioid Epidemic](#).

*NOVA*, a production of **WGBH Boston**, investigated the science of addiction and discoveries about the brain that inform approaches to treatment. The [Addiction](#) special is part of community screenings across the country, educational resources and short videos that have engaged more than 900,000 people online.

In **Pennsylvania**, seven public television stations collaborated on a yearlong series [Battling Opioids](#), focusing on solutions and providing help for addicts and their families. All the stations aired the WQED (Pittsburgh) documentary [Broken: Women – Families – Opioids](#) and devoted a week of primetime programming to the commonwealth's opioid crisis. The centerpiece was a [90-minute program](#) featuring medical and social service professionals and other experts discussing solutions to opioid addiction. Viewers were able to call in with questions and get connected to help.

In **Ohio**, AAA station WAPS-FM “The Summit” created the [Rock and Recovery](#) format in 2011, offering upbeat rock music, affirmations and resources to raise awareness, remove stigma and offer hope to those in recovery and their loved ones. With support from the United Way, *Rock and Recovery* airs 24/7 via an HD channel, online, free mobile app and three hours nightly in Akron, Canton, Youngstown and western Pennsylvania.

In **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, KUNM's in-depth radio series *Enduring Addiction* won a national Edward R. Murrow award and a first place award from the Public Radio News Directors Inc. KUNM reporting follows the lives of families and health leaders in Española, painting a comprehensive picture from the perspective of people who have been living through addiction for generations. KUNM reporting drew attention to flawed methodology in eligibility for federal rural opioid funding that impacted Rio Arriba County, which has one of the highest drug overdose rates in the country.

**Maryland Public Television's** documentary [Breaking Heroin's Grip: Road to Recovery](#), produced in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health and funded by Chesapeake Employers Insurance, aired on MPT and dozens of commercial television and radio stations in Maryland in February 2017. It was paired with a live phone bank.