



Establishing Statutory Authority for RCORP

The Rural Communities Opioids Response Program (RCORP) has effectively improved access to behavioral health services in rural areas since 2018, receiving bipartisan support in Congress and gaining approval from rural communities and healthcare providers. However, its future remains uncertain without established statutory authority.

Background

RCORP addresses opioid and related substance use in rural areas through prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

Since its inception in 2018, RCORP has been funded annually under Section 711 of the Social Security Act. RCORP operates using a network approach outlined in Section 330A of the Public Health Service Act's Rural Health Outreach Program. This approach funds a network of community partners to address identified community needs. The initial funding was designed to kick start health projects with the expectation that the network will sustain them post-grant. Program funds support various network activities, including full-time employee costs, telehealth, clinical services, equipment purchases, and more.

The Administration has supported RCORP in each of its proposed budgets in FY 2021-2024, and the program has been funded by the Congress from 2018 to the present.

In 2024, Reps. Miller (R-WV), Sewell (D-AL), Carter (GA), and Kuster (D-NH) introduced the "Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Authorization Act." The strong bipartisan bill (H.R. 9842) would provide stability to states and expand prevention, treatment, and recovery services in rural areas for opioid and substance abuse by formally authorizing this successful grant program.

The Importance of Authorization

Authorization is crucial to ensure RCORP's continued success in addressing the rural opioid crisis. It would:

- Provide stability and predictability to rural communities and states.
- Offer grantees certainty for future planning.
- Enable investment in long-term projects.
- Attract additional funding sources for sustainability.
- Allow greater programmatic flexibility.
- Enhance the program's effectiveness in improving rural healthcare access.

Successes since 2018

- **Over 800** grant recipients have provided substance use disorder direct services and technical assistance across more than **1,900 rural counties** spanning **47 states** and two territories.
- Direct prevention, treatment, and recovery services provided to over **2 million rural individuals** across the country and MAT services specifically to over **112,000 rural individuals** in FY 2022.
- More than **634,000** individuals trained on substance use disorder and behavioral health topics.
- Between September 2021 and February 2022, approximately **75 percent of RCORP awardees** reported sustainable activities after the end of Federal grant funding.