

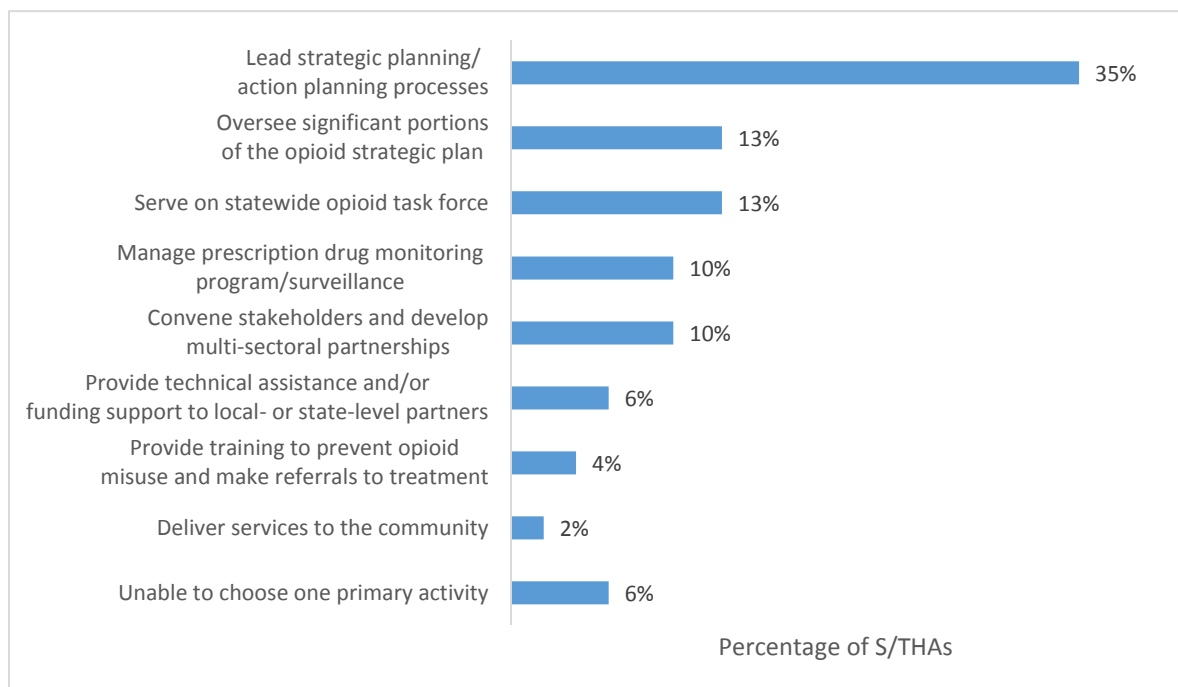
State and Territorial Health Agencies and the Opioid Epidemic

Substance misuse and addictions to alcohol, prescription drugs, and illicit substances are long-standing but growing problems in the United States. In October 2017, President Trump formally requested that the HHS secretary declare the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is employing its 2017 President’s Challenge, “Public Health Approaches to Preventing Substance Misuse and Addictions” to rally state and territorial health officials, affiliates, and cross-sector partners to use proven public health approaches to prevent substance misuse and addictions within states and communities. This issue brief outlines what S/THAs are doing in order to combat the opioid epidemic in their jurisdictions.

Response to the Opioid Epidemic

Though state and territorial health agencies (S/THAs) often hold a variety of roles and responsibilities, one third of S/THAs report that their primary role in responding to the opioid epidemic is to lead strategic planning and action planning processes. **Figure 1** depicts the primary role that S/THAs perform related to the opioid epidemic.

Figure 1: S/THA Primary Role in Responding to the Opioid Epidemic (N=49)*

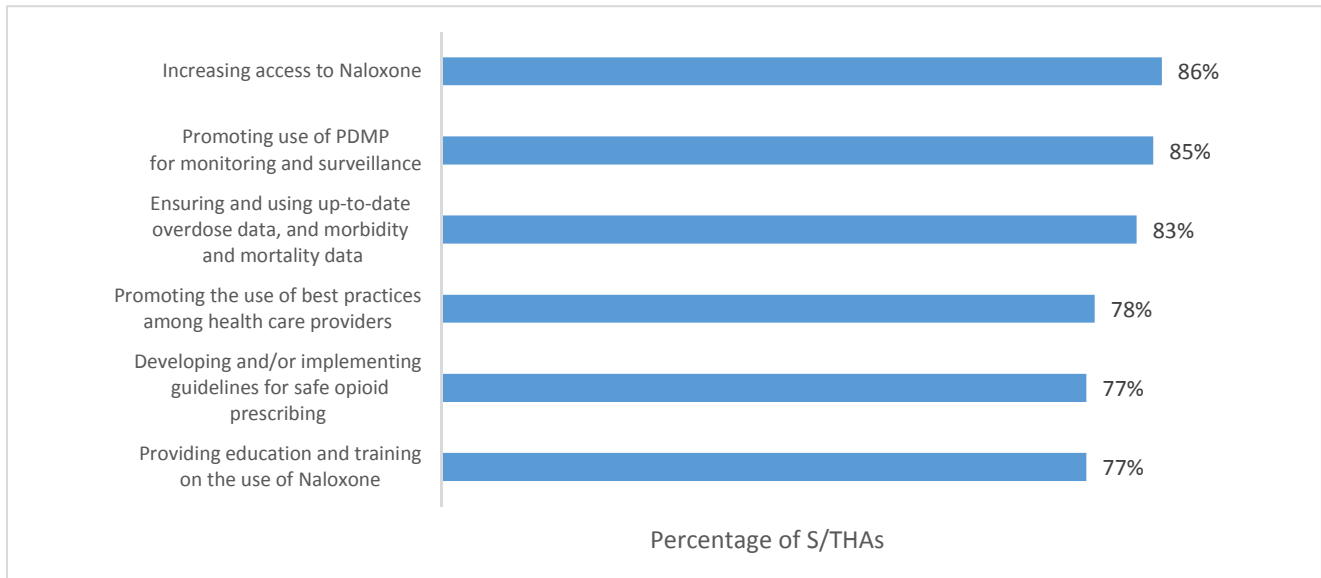


*Note: This chart represents S/THA’s **primary** activities. Agencies can and do perform a variety of activities aimed at responding to the opioid epidemic.

S/THAs rely on a number of strategies to combat opioid misuse and abuse in their communities. **Figure 2** depicts the top six strategies in S/THAs’ comprehensive approaches to combatting the opioid epidemic. Increasing access to Naloxone, promoting the use of prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs),

and ensuring and using up-to-date data are the three most common strategies that are central to S/THAs' work in addressing the opioid crisis.

Figure 2: Top Strategies Central to S/THAs' Comprehensive Approaches to Combatting Opioids, 2017 (N=46-50)



State and Territorial Health Agency Resources

Despite the increasing demands on S/THAs to respond to public health emergencies like the opioid epidemic, in 2017, many S/THA total¹ budgets either remained the same (46%) or decreased (31%) from their 2016 levels. In 2018, 39 percent of S/THAs expect their budgets to decrease from 2017, while 36 percent of agencies expect their budgets to stay the same. In addition, when asked to predict which services would be affected by a potential CDC budget reduction, 40 percent of S/THAs indicated that chronic disease programs would be affected. An additional 4 percent of S/THAs specifically noted that their response to the opioid epidemic would be affected. S/THAs provide vital, comprehensive public health services, and this critical work requires continued, robust public health funding.

Data Source

This data is from ASTHO's 2017 Forces of Change survey, an annual survey completed by the state and territorial health agencies that comprise ASTHO's membership. ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing public health agencies in the United States, the U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia, and over 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. The full 2017 Forces of Change Survey Report can be accessed at <http://www.astho.org/Research/Forces-of-Change/>.

Acknowledgements

For more information about the Forces of Change Survey, please email ASTHO's Research and Evaluation team at profile@astho.org. For more information about ASTHO's opioid response framework, visit <http://my.astho.org/opioids/home>.

This brief was supported by grant or cooperative agreement number NU38OT000161, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services. Support for this publication was also provided in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

¹ Agencies were asked to report on total budgets, and response options did not distinguish between usual funding streams and congressional emergency supplemental appropriations.