

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Alabama

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Alabama Provider
Capacity Project

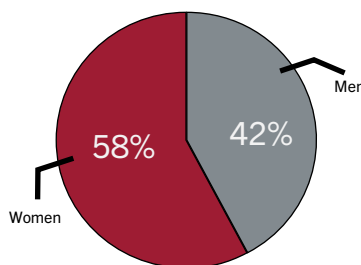
Lack of resources creates imbalanced access to publicly-funded treatment. Disparities emerge along racial, geographic, socioeconomic, physical, and mental wellness lines.

- All of rural Alabama counties are either medically underserved or their low income population is medically underserved.¹
- Higher rates of opioid-related deaths and opioid prescribing rates are found in rural counties. In 2017, 14 of the 15 counties with the highest opioid prescription rates were rural.²
- Patients in the most rural counties have an 87% higher chance of receiving an opioid prescription compared to those in metropolitan areas.²
- Ninety-five percent of admission to Alabama's Opioid Treatment Programs are White.³ However, 16% of the Alabama's overdose deaths are Black.⁴ Access to treatment needs to be easily accessible across all racial lines to prevent overdose deaths.
- Black and Latino Americans utilize treatment less than White Americans. One study suggests this could be due in part to lower perceived need for treatment.⁵

Pregnant women face extra challenges.

- Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law makes it a felony to expose a child to drugs. Alabama prosecuted 479 women for drug use while pregnant from 2006 to 2015. The law was amended in 2016 to exclude prescription drugs.⁸
- In the U.S., a baby is born with neonatal abstinence syndrome or neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome every 15 minutes. From 2004 to 2014, there was a 433% increase in these births.⁹

Alabama Chemical Endangerment Cases 2006-2015⁷



Catching substance misuse early.

- Teens who participate in underage drinking are more likely to misuse other drugs.¹⁰
- One in three high school seniors are current users of vape. Most teens are using nicotine in their vapes.¹¹
- In 2018, 18% of Alabama teens age 12 to 20 reported drinking alcohol in the past month.¹²
- Up to 45% of adolescents and young adults with a mental health disorder also have SUD. At least 65% of youth with SUDs also have a mental health disorder.¹³

Stigmatizing SUD prevents people from getting the treatment they need.

- Use person-first language to describe what a person "has" rather than what a person "is."¹⁴
- Stigma is found among health professionals. This undermines access to diagnoses, treatment and successful health outcomes.¹⁵
- Stigma is the fourth-highest ranked barrier to seeking help for mental health.¹⁶
- Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the most effective therapy for opioid use disorder.¹⁷ However, it's stigmatized as replacing one addiction with another.
- Forty-three percent of U.S. addiction programs won't enroll youths who participate in MAT.¹⁸

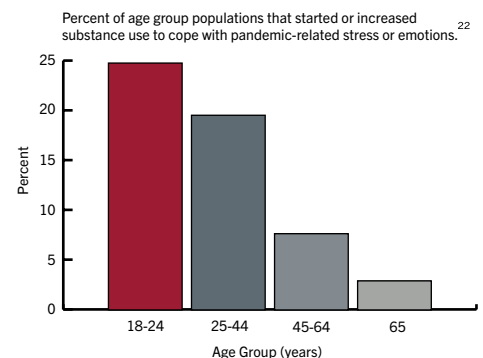
Alabama has too many prescriptions, not enough treatment centers.

- Alabama has the highest opioid prescription rate in the country with 97.5 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons. The U.S. average is 51.4.¹⁹
- Alabama has the lowest number of substance use and behavioral health counselors per capita (1,100:1).²⁰



COVID-19 could make Alabama's already bad opioid epidemic worse.

- Addictive behaviors increase when under stress.²¹ As unemployment and isolation rise, so could addiction.
- Over 13% of U.S. adults started or increased substance use to cope with stress related to the pandemic.²²
- Telehealth has been a



- Telehealth has been a solution to healthcare during the pandemic, but not everyone has the technology. Around half of the state of Alabama doesn't have access to high-speed internet.²³
- As many as 69,000 Alabamians lost their insurance due to joblessness by May 2020.²⁴

¹[Health Resources & Services Administration MUA Find.](#)

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³[Alabama Department of Mental Health. Admissions data.](#)

⁴[Kaiser Family Foundation. \(2018\). Opioid overdose deaths by race/ethnicity.](#)

⁵[Pinedo, M., & Villatoro, A. P. \(2020\). The role of perceived treatment need in explaining racial/ethnic disparities in the use of substance abuse treatment services. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment.*](#)

⁶[Seung-Bickey, R. \(2017\). New report shows Alabama's pregnancy law hurts, not helps. *ACLU Alabama.*](#)

⁷[Al.com. \(2019\). Special report: Alabama leads nation in turning pregnant women into felons.](#)

⁸[Patrick, S.W., Richards, M. R., & DuPont, W. D., McNeer, E., Buntin, M. B., Martin, P. R., Davis, M. M., Davis, C. S., Hartmann, K. E., Leech, A. A., Lovell, K. S., Stein, B. D., & Cooper, W. O. \(2020\). Association of pregnancy and insurance status with treatment access for Opioid Use Disorder. *JAMA Network.*](#)

⁹[Jilani, S. M., Frey, M. T., Pepin, D., Jewell, T., Jordan, M., Miller, A. M., Robinson, M., St. Mars, T., Bryan, M., Ko, J. Y., Ailes, E. C., McCord, R. F., Gilchrist, J., Foster, S., Lind, J. N., Culp, L., Penn, M. S., Reefhuis, J. \(2019\). Evaluation of state-mandated reporting of neonatal abstinence syndrome - six states, 2013-2017. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*](#)

¹⁰[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. \(2020\). Underage drinking.](#)

¹¹[National Institute on Drug Abuse. \(2019\). Monitoring the future survey: High school and youth trends.](#)

¹²[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. \(2018\). Alabama state report underage drinking prevention and enforcement.](#)

¹³[Child Mind Institute, Center on Addiction/Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. \(2019\). Substance use + mental health in teens and young adults. Your guide to recognizing and addressing co-occurring disorders.](#)

¹⁴[Stopjudging.org.](#)

¹⁵[Nyblade, L., Stockton, M. A., Giger, K., Bond, V., Ekstrand, M. L., McLean, R., Mitchell, E. M. H., Nelson, L. R. E., Sapag, J. C., Siraprasiri, T., Turan, J., Wouters, E. \(2019\). Stigma in health facilities: Why it matters and how we can change it. *BMC Medicine.*](#)

¹⁶[Clement, S., Schauman, O., Graham, T., Maggioni, F., Evans-Lacko, S., Bezborodovs, N., Morgan, C., Rüsch, N., Brown, J. S. L., Thornicroft, G. \(2015\). What is the impact of mental health-related stigma on help-seeking? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies. *Psychological Medicine.*](#)

¹⁷[The Pew Charitable Trust. Understanding why medication assisted treatment is different in rural communities. In U.S. Department of Agriculture \(Eds.\), *Rural Community Action Guide* \(pp. 58-60\).](#)

¹⁸[Jobe, B. \(2019\). Few youths receive recommended medication for addiction. *HealthCity.*](#)

¹⁹[National Institute on Drug Abuse. \(2020\). Alabama: Opioid-involved deaths and related harms.](#)

²⁰[Mental Health America. \(2020\). Access to care data.](#)

²¹[John Hopkins University & Medicine. \(2020\). The unequal cost of social distancing.](#)

²²[Czeisler, M. É., Lane, R. I., Petrosky, E., Wiley, J. F., Christensen, A., Njai, R., Weaver, M. D., Robbins, R., Facer-Childs, E. R., Barger, L. K., Czeisler, C. A., Howard, M. E., Rajaratnam, S. M. W. \(2020\). Mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation during the COVID-19 pandemic - United States, June 24-30, 2020. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*](#)

²³[Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. \(2019\). Alabama broadband eligibility map - unserved areas.](#)

²⁴[The National Center for Coverage Innovation. \(2020\). The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crash have caused the greatest health insurance losses in American history.](#)