



Center on  
Rural Addiction  
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT





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**Community Rounds Workshop Series**

**Assessment of Substance Use Disorder Stigma &  
Strategies for Addressing Stigma in Rural Areas**

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January 31, 2024

# Learning Objectives

1. Identify stigmatizing beliefs about opioid use disorder and medications for opioid use disorder.
2. List preferred and non-preferred terms used by rural providers to describe people with substance use disorders.
3. Name top rural provider-identified barriers to treating patients with opioid use disorder nationally.
4. Describe strategies to address stigmatizing beliefs and behaviors in rural communities.



# Three Rural Centers of Excellence (RCOEs)



Recovery Center of Excellence

Find us at:  
[www.uvmcora.org](http://www.uvmcora.org)

Find us at:  
[www.fletchergroup.org](http://www.fletchergroup.org)

Find us at:  
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# Background: Rural vs. Urban differences

## Stigma against Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

- Rural clinicians have greater abstinence orientation compared to urban clinicians
- Rural clinicians perceive MOUD as less effective and acceptable than urban clinicians

*(Brown et.al., 2023, J of Subst Use & Addiction Trt)*

## Stigma against Patients with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

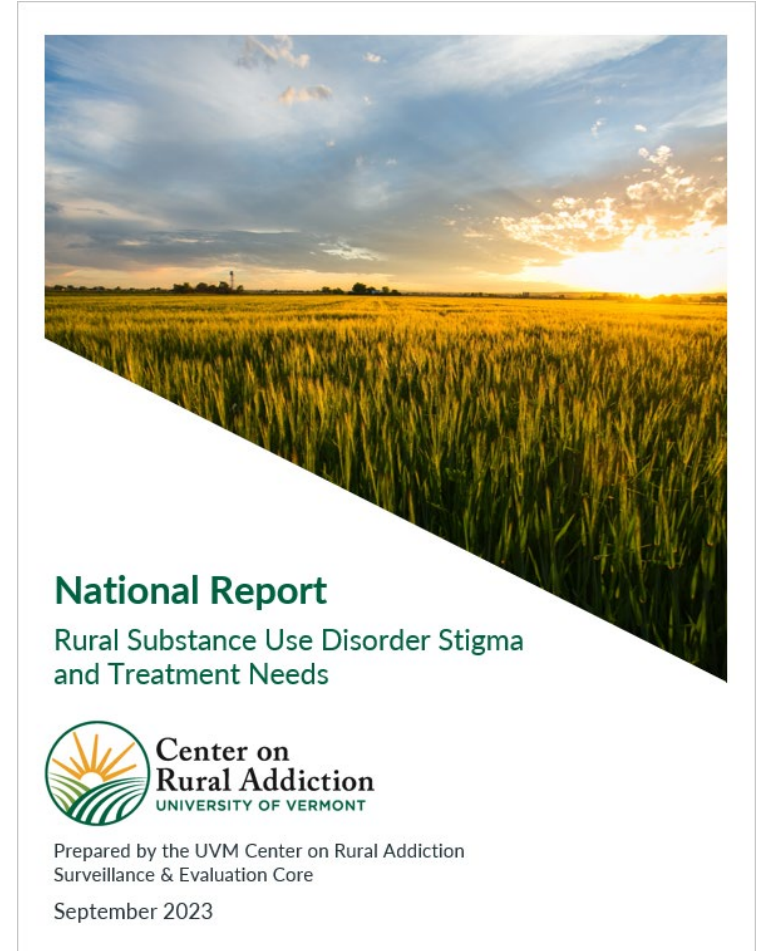
- Rural physicians had greater bias towards people with OUD than urban physicians
- Rural physicians reported practicing in areas with less access to buprenorphine prescribers and harm reduction services (e.g., naloxone dispensaries)

*(Franz et.al., 2021, Psychiatric Services)*



# Rural Substance Use Disorder Stigma and Treatment Needs Report

- Online survey (June 1-30, 2023) in partnership with the two other HRSA-funded Rural Centers of Excellence.
- **Outline**
  - Practitioner Barriers to Treating Patients with OUD
  - Practitioner Affect While Interacting with People with SUDs
  - Use of Stigmatizing Language
  - Beliefs About OUD and MOUD
- [www.uvmcora.org](http://www.uvmcora.org)

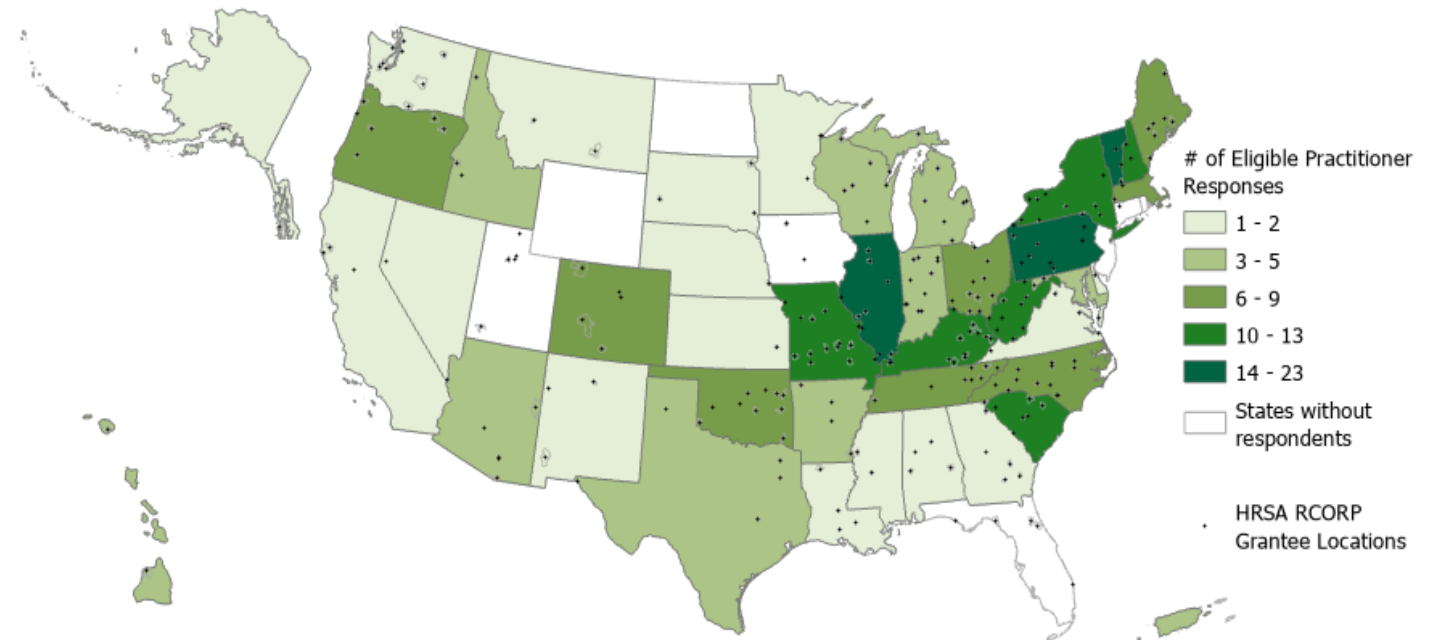


# Methods

## NATIONAL SAMPLE

- Voluntary participation from practitioners affiliated with HRSA RCORP grants.
- Survey distributed to 794 practitioners.
- 303 survey responses, 257 eligible.
- Responses from 42 states and Puerto Rico.

## Geographic Distribution of Practitioner Respondents



# Practitioner Respondents National Sample - Demographics and Professional Roles

## Demographics:

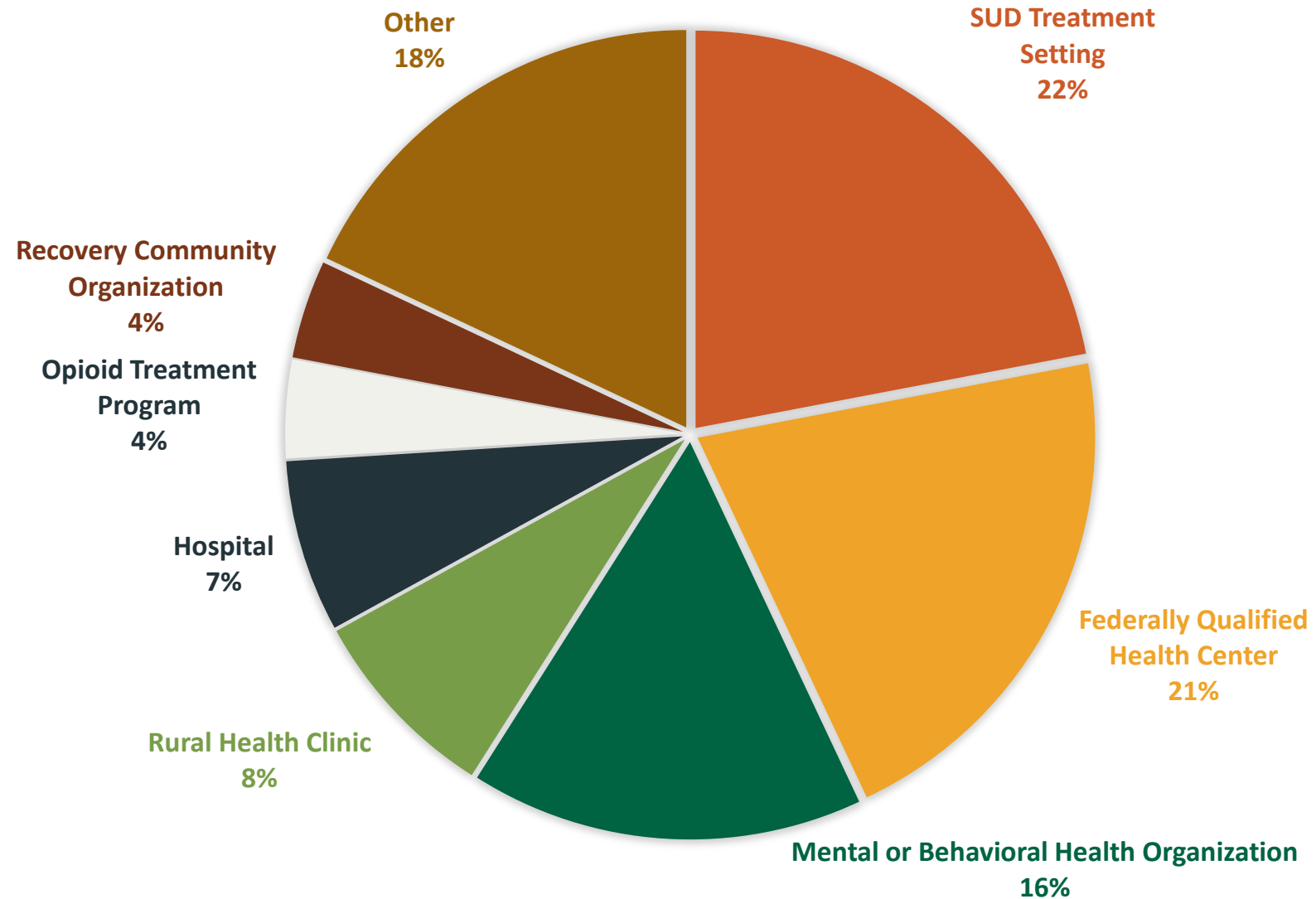
- White (91%)
- Non-Hispanic (94%)
- Female (75%)
- Mean age 46 years

Clinical Roles	N=110 (43%)	Counseling Roles	N=147 (57%)
Nurse Practitioner <sup>†</sup>	34 (13%)	Alcohol and Drug Counselor	45 (18%)
Nurse	19 (7%)	Mental Health Counselor	27 (11%)
Primary Care Physician <sup>†</sup>	19 (7%)	Recovery Coach/Peer Support	24 (9%)
Specialist Physician <sup>†</sup>	15 (6%)	Case Manager	20 (8%)
Physician Assistant <sup>†</sup>	12 (5%)	Social Worker	19 (7%)
Certified Nurse Midwife <sup>†</sup>	2 (1%)	Psychologist	5 (2%)
Paramedic	1 (<1%)	Other Counseling Role	7 (3%)
Pharmacist	1 (<1%)		
Other Clinical Role	7 (3%)		

<sup>†</sup> Can prescribe medications

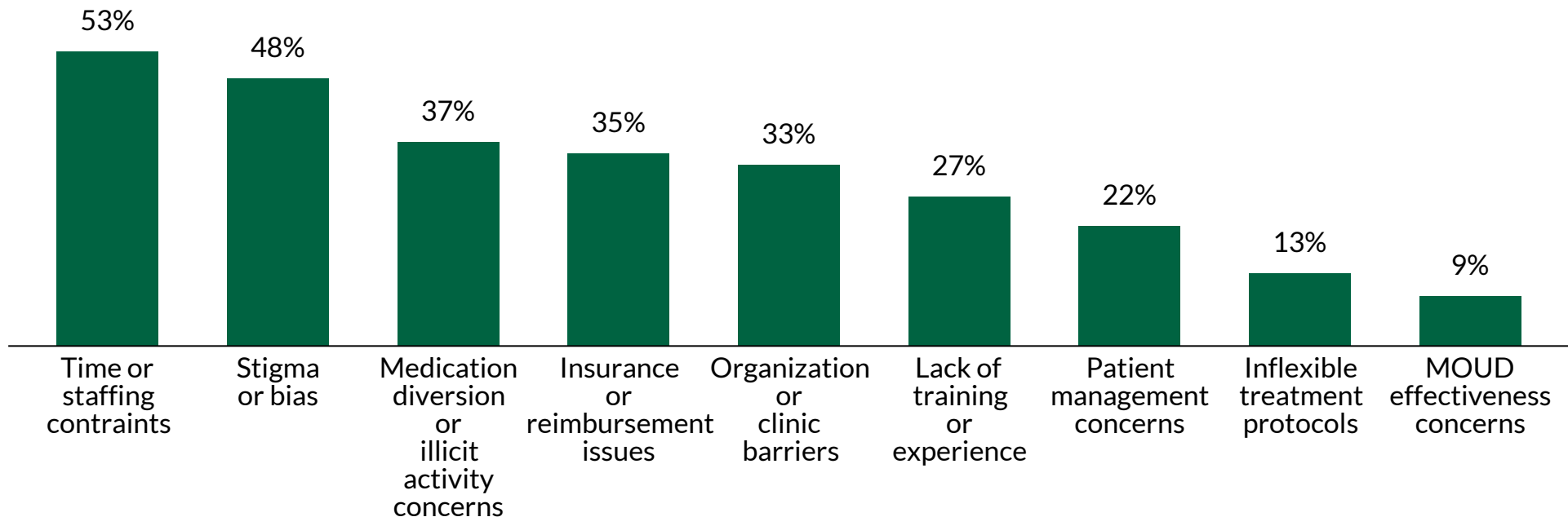


# Practitioner Respondent Work Setting



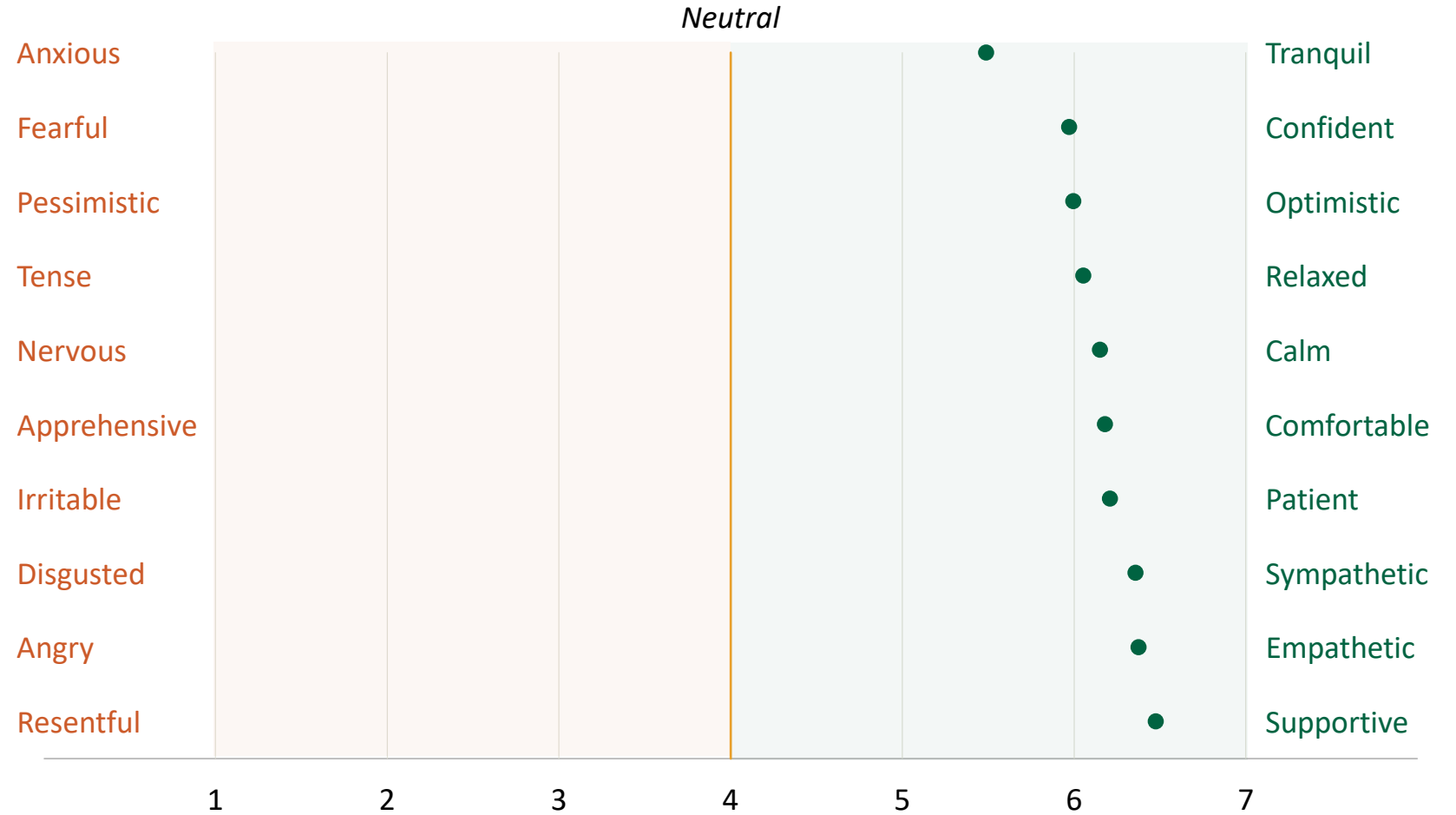
# Practitioner Barriers to Treating Patients with Opioid Use Disorder

“Please rank the top three provider-related barriers to treating patients with opioid use disorder in your practice or organization.”



# Practitioner Affect Ratings

“Please indicate how you would feel on a scale from 1-7 if you were to interact with a person who has opioid use disorder.”

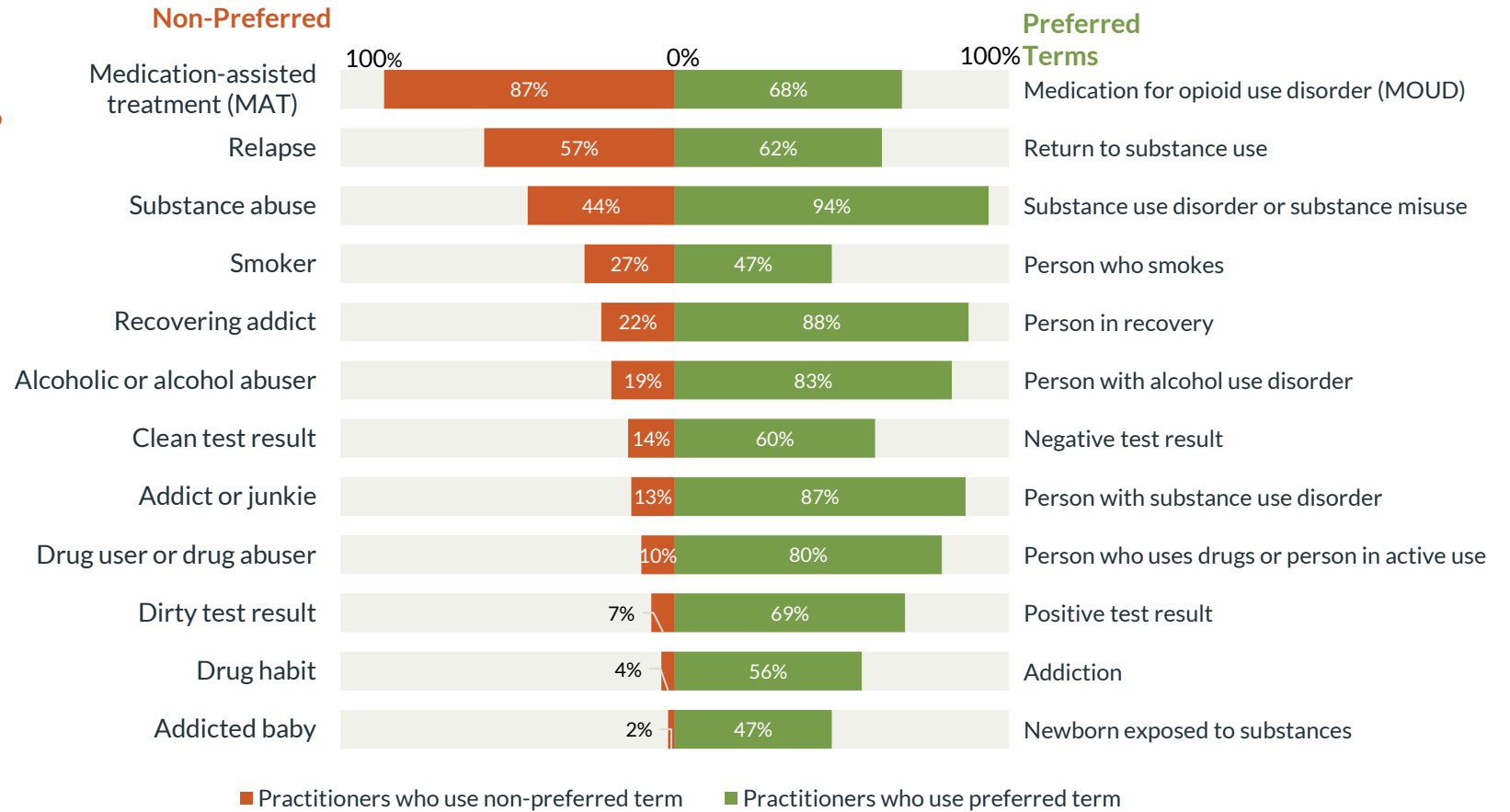


Brown SA. Standardized measures for substance use stigma. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2011;116(1-3):137-141.

# Proportion of Practitioners Who Report Using Preferred and Non-Preferred Terms in Professional Settings

“Which terms do you use in a clinical or professional setting?”

Select all that apply.”



For more information about preferred and non-preferred terms, please see the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)'s [Words Matter](#)

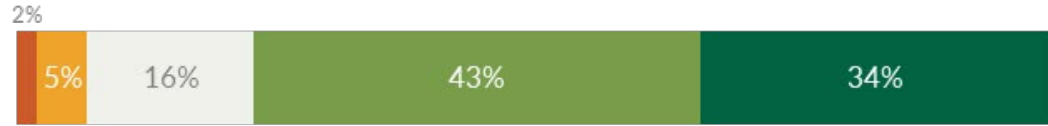
# Practitioner Beliefs About Opioid Use Disorder

■ Strongly Disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Neutral 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree  
 OUD is a chronic medical condition like diabetes mellitus.



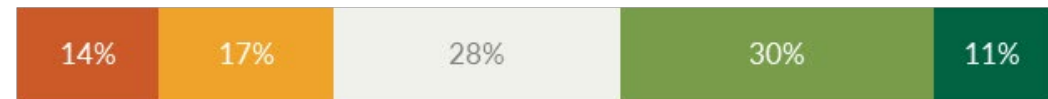
Most people with OUD will, with medication treatment, get well and return to productive lives.



Treating people with OUD is an important part of my clinical practice or work.



Treating patients with OUD is more complicated than treating patients with other chronic health conditions.



Individuals with OUD only have themselves to blame for their problem.

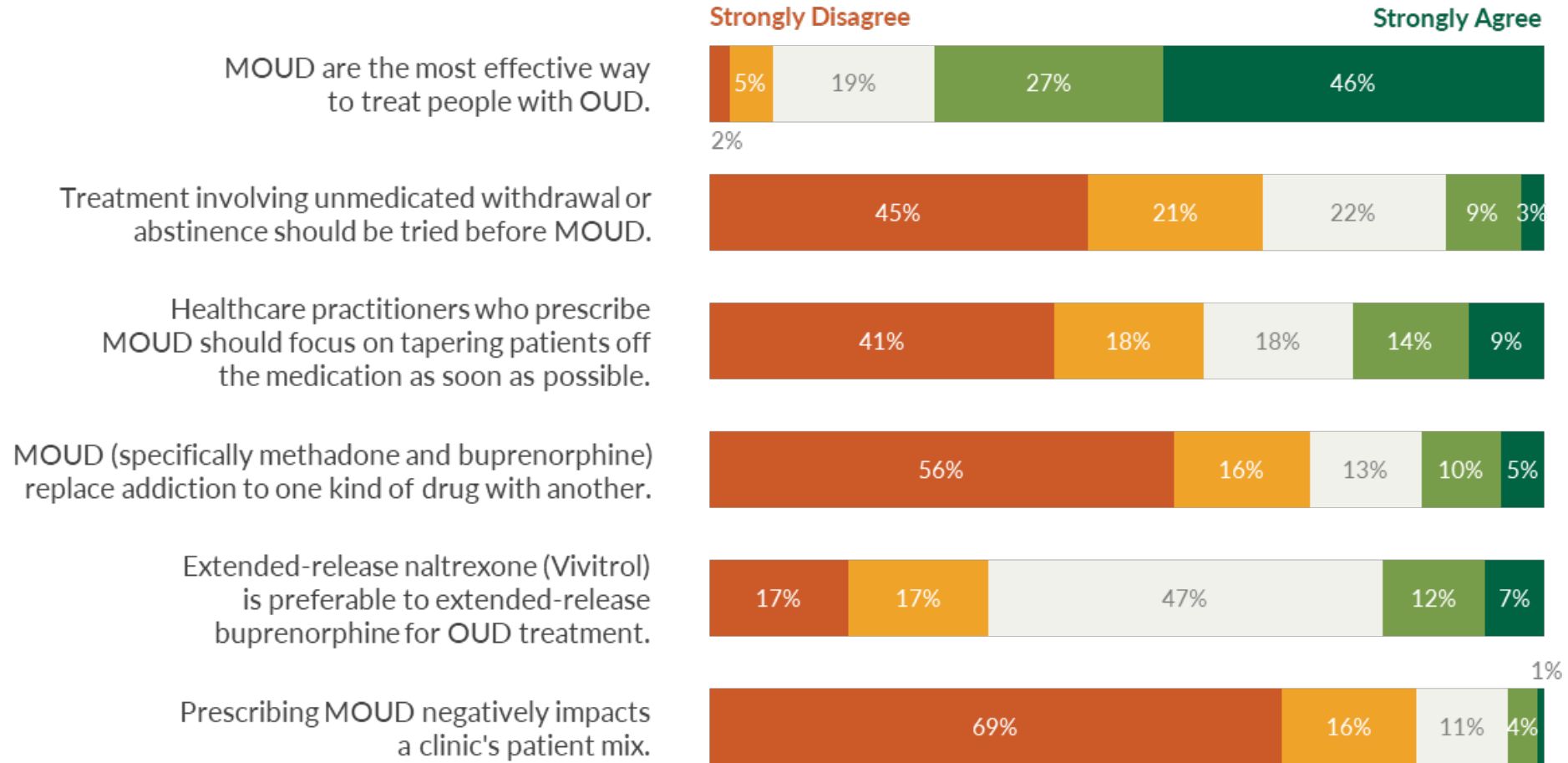


People with OUD are weak.



# Practitioner Beliefs About Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

■ Strongly Disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Neutral 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Strongly Agree







# Three Rural Centers of Excellence (RCOEs)



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Valerie Harder, PhD, MHS



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Madison Ashworth, PhD



Recovery Center of Excellence

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Lisham Ashrafioun, PhD

# Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Stigma

Since 2021, the Fletcher Group RCOE has collaborated with the University of Wyoming to conduct **3** randomized controlled trials examining messaging and strategies to **reduce stigma** and **increase support** for recovery housing in rural areas.










## What have we tested?

1. Data about the effectiveness of recovery housing and recovery stories delivered via writing and video
2. Different descriptions of recovery housing residents
3. Pictures of people in recovery (varying race and gender) in addition to recovery stories.

## What worked?

1. Recovery stories through written format
  - Reduced stigma and increased *local* support for recovery housing
2. Written stories can be either anonymous or identified by name
3. Recovery stories are especially important in rural areas

# The Importance of Community Champions

 <p><b>47</b> States Receiving our TA</p>	 <p><b>2,989</b> Partners and Clients</p>	 <p><b>6,050</b> Technical Assistance Encounters</p>
 <p><b>247</b> Trainings 4,323 participants*</p>	 <p><b>4,209</b> Recovery Houses Participating in research</p>	 <p><b>2,361</b> New Houses Added to the registry</p>
 <p><b>25</b> Rural Houses Built with our TA</p>	 <p><b>236</b> Housing Projects Ongoing with our TA</p>	 <p><b>262</b> New Beds Added with our TA</p>

The Fletcher Group RCOE works directly with community champions in rural areas to improve the quality and capacity of recovery support services.

Community champions are **trusted** community members with a **passion for recovery**.

**Anyone** can be a community champion:

## Cedar River Haven

- ❖ Women's recovery community in rural Iowa
- ❖ Local business owner and teacher championed project

## Lifeline for Me

- ❖ Men's recovery house in rural Maine
- ❖ Local EMT, therapist, and drug and alcohol counselor championed project

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# Model

- **Community Conversations** are built on education + contact
- Provide opportunities to learn, discuss, and reflect on:
  - What stigma means in different communities
  - How it impacts people with SUD
  - How to reduce stigma, biases, and negative perceptions about people with SUD
- A **train-the-trainer** curriculum disseminates the workshop and further addresses provider and community stigma.

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# Product

- Suite of instructional materials centered around artwork depicting the lived experience of individuals in recovery in rural areas
- Installing artwork in high-traffic areas in the community
- Conducting Community Conversations to further disseminate information in rural communities, discuss materials, and allow for opportunities to reflect at a deeper level



# Portraits



Portraits by Charmaine Wheatley





# UVM CORA Scholarship Program

## Purpose

- Education for rural practitioners / teams

## Themes

- Expanding awareness of resources
- Multidisciplinary efforts / 'No Wrong Door'
- Increasing exposure to individuals with SUD decreases stigma



Clinical and Translational Scholarship Program

# Solution Focused Discussion

**What are your takeaways / observations from the Stigma Survey data?**

**What strategies have been effective at reducing stigma?**

- in your rural community?
- among your clinical team?

**What are next steps that are needed at your practice or in your community?**

# Stigma Resources for Rural Communities

Identifying Substance Use Disorder Bias and Addressing Stigma in the Clinical Setting

Peter Jackson, MD – [Recording](#) + [Slides](#)

Pregnancy, Parenting, and Substance Use: Stigma, Fear, and a Call for Improved Messaging

Marjorie Meyer, MD – [Recording](#) + [Slides](#)

Facts and Personal Recovery Stories to Reduce Substance Use Disorder Stigma and Increase Support for Recovery Housing: A US Randomized Study

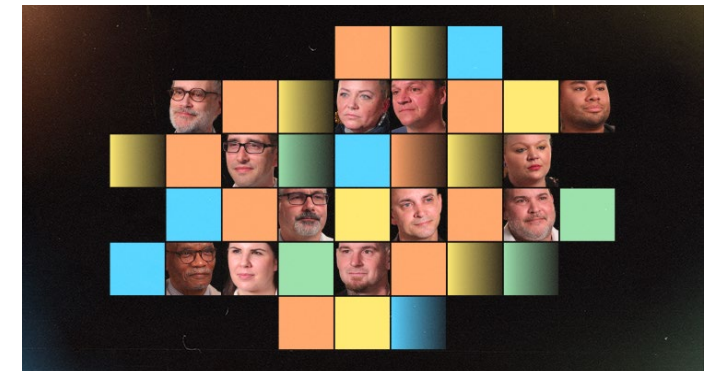
[Webinar](#) + [Published Article](#)

Fletcher Group Learning Center  
[Information](#)

Fletcher Group Newsletters  
[Stigma](#) + [NIMBY](#)

Fletcher Group Website:  
[www.fletchergroup.org](http://www.fletchergroup.org)

Recovery Center of Excellence



For More Information

[Community Conversations for OUD](#)  
[Reducing Stigma in Rural EDs & Other Settings](#)  
[National Rural SUD Health Equity & Stigma Summit](#)



**Thank you!  
Questions?**

**Stay up to date on all CORA happenings!  
Subscribe to our quarterly newsletter at:  
<https://www.uvmcora.org/connect-with-us/>**



**November 13, 2023**

Welcome to our quarterly newsletter. We are excited to share research, resources and news from The UVM Center on Rural Addiction (UVM CORA).

### **UVM CORA's Support for Rural Providers to Continue**

In the four years since its inception, UVM CORA has supported over 32,000 rural healthcare providers across all 50 states. Our center's activities have included: 27 Community Rounds webinars attended by 6,700 providers in 46 states with 550 CME credits claimed; 950 technical assistance encounters with providers from 33 states; dissemination of 325,000 harm reduction and other supplies; creation of a digital resource library with 10 Research Spotlights, 5 Data Reports, 9 Data Briefs, 5 Resource Guides, 4 User Guides; and 458 presentations given to diverse audiences.



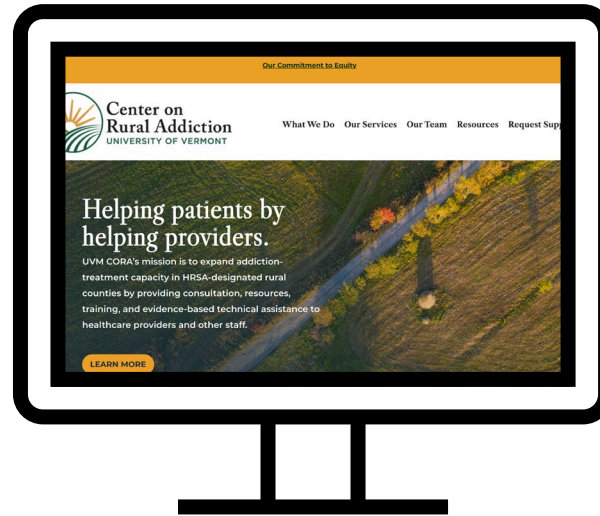
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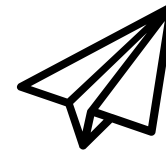
We'd love to hear from you



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[uvmcora.org](http://uvmcora.org)



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