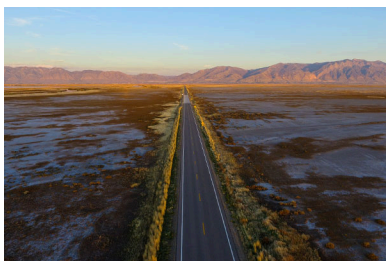


Tribal and Rural Opioid Initiative Receives \$1.1M Grant | CEHS

09/23/2020



The Tribal and Rural Opioid Initiative (TROI) was recently awarded a 2-year \$1.1 million Rural Opioid Technical Assistance (ROTA) grant to provide opioid use disorder resources to rural and tribal communities. This is the second ROTA grant that TROI has received from the US Department of Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Over the past two years, TROI has had many successes in expanding treatment and recovery resources to rural areas. The organization's efforts include two signature opioid health and wellness summits in rural and tribal communities, a statewide Holistic Health Coalition with rural and tribal representation, and the DEBUNKED podcast (@debunkedpod), which combines evidence-based health practices with storytelling to debunk myths about opioids and substance use disorders.

Dr. Sandra Sulzer, director of the USU Office of Health Equity and Community Engagement and co-founder of TROI, said, "This new award will expand our efforts farther across the Intermountain West." Sulzer explained that TROI is planning two more opioid wellness summits; one will be entirely online to help reach remote communities and follow social gathering restrictions, and the other will have an exclusively tribal focus.

Efforts will be targeted in several rural Utah counties that are home to four of Utah's native tribes: the Confederated Goshute Tribe, the Skull Valley Goshutes, the Ute and the Paiute, as well as three rural counties in New Mexico. The new funds will contribute to TROI's mission to reduce the stigma surrounding opioid and substance use disorder. "One major focus during our next phase will be on storytelling," said Sulzer. "The production of graphic

novels that depict lived experiences is an effort to make these stories more accessible to youth, adults, classrooms and reading groups."

Beyond changing attitudes, TROI's upcoming projects will address the ongoing needs of people who use opioids and psychostimulants, advocating for holistic, whole-person wellness. All activities in TROI's plan are guided by a community-based, participatory-action approach to harm reduction. Continuing programs offered by TROI include stigma and harm reduction education for treatment professionals in rural counties, a community consortium that provides science-based harm reduction education and resources to rural residents, and life skills and reintroduction classes for individuals in recovery.

TROI, in partnership with USU Extension, is housed in the Office of Health Equity & Community Engagement, part of the Department of Kinesiology & Health Science in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University.

More information about the programs currently available and program sponsorship opportunities is [available online](#).