

# Combating the Fourth Wave of America's Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Crisis: NQF Releases New Measurement Framework

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- National Quality Forum (NQF) furthers its commitment to combat the overdose crisis in the U.S. with a [new report from the Opioids and Behavioral Health Committee](#). More than 255 individuals die each day from a drug overdose as our nation continues to grapple with a continuing opioid and substance

use disorder (SUD) crisis; and the latest data shows 9.5 million adults within the U.S. have both a mental illness, and a co-occurring SUD.

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*Meredith Gerland, MPH,  
Senior Director, Quality  
Innovation, NQF*

Opioid-related overdose deaths and morbidity demand national attention and have emerged as some of the most complex and persistent challenges facing the healthcare delivery system. This crisis has drastically worsened during the COVID-19 public health emergency, especially for individuals with co-occurring behavioral health conditions. In 2020, opioid-involved overdose deaths increased to an estimated 69,769 according to provisional data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Factors related to the pandemic, such as social isolation, increased

anxiety and depression, and disrupted access to SUD support services likely contributed to the increase in overdose deaths.

Recognizing the evolution of the opioid and SUD crisis, with funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), NQF convened this Committee to develop a measurement framework to address overdose and mortality resulting from polysubstance use involving opioids in individuals with co-occurring behavioral health conditions.

The report was developed to improve the prevention and monitoring of SUD, opioid-related overdoses, and opioid-related mortality, specifically in individuals with co-occurring behavioral health conditions. It outlines opportunities for coordination and partnerships across care settings and enables stakeholders to adapt and improve their readiness in a rapidly changing landscape. Collaboration and coordination from diverse stakeholders are critical to transitioning from measure concepts to quality measures that can be used to improve health and outcomes.

Given the ever-changing nature of the crisis, it is important to ensure measure concepts and recommendations evolve as the latest research and data emerge.

“The ongoing opioid and SUD crisis has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are seeing opioid-related overdoses and deaths at increasing rates. As we continue to combat this crisis, we must employ high quality measurement science to identify, assess, and improve equitable access and care for people with co-occurring SUD and behavioral health conditions,” said Meredith Gerland, MPH, Senior Director, Quality Innovation, National Quality Forum.

NQF recognizes the integral role that quality measurement plays in adequately addressing some of the leading health challenges in the U.S. With extensive experience as a convener of subject matter experts and a commitment to driving better health outcomes for people and communities, NQF distinguishes itself as a prominent leader in the field. Learn more about [ongoing initiatives at NQF](#) and how to become involved.

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About National Quality Forum:

The National Quality Forum (NQF) works with members of the healthcare community to drive measurable health improvements together. NQF is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization that gives all healthcare stakeholders a voice in advancing quality measures and improvement strategies that lead to better outcomes and greater value. Learn more at [www.qualityforum.org](http://www.qualityforum.org).

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