

# **Project Title:** Vermont Legislators' Opinions Regarding the Opioid Epidemic

**Community Agency:** University of Vermont AHEC Program

## Abstract

**Background:** In response to the opioid crisis, the 2018 Vermont legislative session proposed 22 bills, nine of which passed. While there is literature that includes various legislators' information source preferences, there is no literature regarding how Vermont State Legislators gather information and formulate public health decisions surrounding opioid policies. The goals of this study were 1) to identify Vermont legislators' opinions regarding investments in, and effects of, programs to prevent and treat opioid addiction, and 2) to determine sources of information used and valued by legislators.

**Methods:** The 68-item electronic survey was developed using REDCap\* and sent via email to legislators. The survey included closed and open-ended questions about legislators' opinions about the opioid crisis and enacted legislation as well as demographic information. Closed ended questions were analyzed using STATA.

**Results:** A total of 39 responses were obtained for a response rate of 22%. A majority reported that Vermont's investment in opioid addiction prevention and treatment improves overall health (67%) and saves the state money in the long term (72%). Legislators agreed housing/employment services for those in treatment and recovery, and recovery resources upon incarceration release are currently ineffective (65% for both). Online databases were found to be the most difficult resource to access (46%), while testimony was the top information source (64%).

**Conclusions:** Vermont State Legislators are supportive of future programs in Vermont directed toward youth education, those in recovery, and improving treatment in prisons. Direct engagement is the most effective method to inform legislators about public health efforts.

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\*Study data were collected and managed using REDCap<sup>1</sup> electronic data capture tools hosted at University of Vermont. REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies, providing: 1) an intuitive interface for validated data entry; 2) audit trails for tracking data manipulation and export procedures; 3) automated export procedures for seamless data downloads to common statistical packages; and 4) procedures for importing data from external sources.

<sup>1</sup> Paul A. Harris, Robert Taylor, Robert Thielke, Jonathon Payne, Nathaniel Gonzalez, Jose G. Conde, Research electronic data capture (REDCap) - A metadata-driven methodology and workflow process for providing translational research informatics support, J Biomed Inform. 2009 Apr;42(2):377-81.