



Wyoming Probation and Parole: Mental Health Training Needs

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)ⁱ is a partnership between the University of North Dakota and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and serves the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming (Region 8). Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)ⁱⁱ, the Mountain Plains MHTTC is a five-year program focused on providing free training, products, and technical assistance to individuals serving persons with mental health disorders. In partnership with SAMHSA and state probation and parole offices, the Mountain Plains MHTTC team conducted an electronic survey in December 2019 to assess mental health training needs among probation and parole officers in the six-state region. Results from the survey will inform the development of new products, training materials, and technical assistance (TA). For more information, read the completed report, [Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Needs: Findings, Implications, and Summary of a Survey of Probation and Parole Officers in Region 8](#).

Probation and Parole in Wyoming

Approximately 35 probation and parole officers in Wyoming completed the electronic survey. Respondents were predominantly female (80%) and between the ages 30 and 49 (69%). Roughly 71% worked in rural settings while 29% worked in suburban/urban areas. A majority (80%) worked in both probation and parole, and 37% had been working in the field between 11 and 20 years.

Knowledge and Experience

In the last 12 months, a greater proportion of officers had attended a training on mental health (94%) than on substance use disorder (76%). When compared to probation and parole officers in all of Region 8, a greater proportion of officers in Wyoming had access to Narcan (80%). However, only 66% agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose. See Figure 1 and Table 1. A greater percentage of officers in Wyoming compared to all of Region 8 could recognize signs of suicide risk (97% compared to 89% in all of Region 8).

Figure 1. Access to Narcan/Naloxone

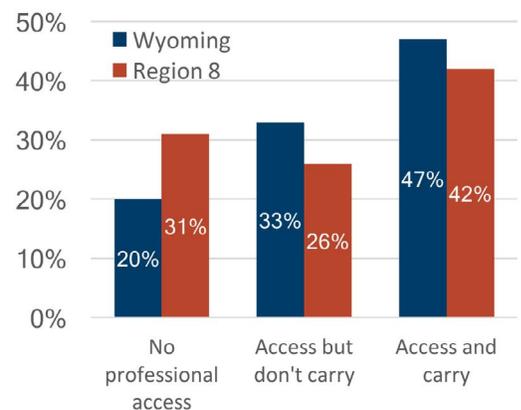


Table 1. Percent of Officers Who Strongly Agree/Agree

| | Wyoming | Region 8 |
|--|---------|----------|
| I know what trauma-informed care is | 86% | 80% |
| I can recognize signs of suicide risk | 97% | 89% |
| I know how to help someone calm down from a crisis state of mind | 91% | 85% |
| I can recognize the signs of addiction | 94% | 95% |
| I can recognize signs of a drug overdose | 77% | 83% |
| I know how to administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose | 66% | 67% |

Training and Technical Assistance Needs

Participants identified the priority for training or TA on a variety of topics. Each topic was rated as not a current need, would be helpful, high priority, or not applicable/unsure. Probation and parole officers identified different training needs when exploring topics identified as high priority (Table 2) compared to those identified as either helpful or high priority (Table 3). When looking at only high priority topics, staff recruitment and retention were identified but were not included when looking at topics combining either high priority or helpful. Instead, when combining need categories, officers in Wyoming identified wanting more training or TA on the topic of effects of psychotropic medications, understanding the connection between trauma and deviant behavior, and community supports for recovery.

Table 2. Top Topic Priorities Indicated as High Priority

| | Wyoming | Region 8 |
|--|---------|----------|
| 1. Staff retention ^a | 63% | 45% |
| 2. Mental health and substance abuse (co-occurring) ^a | 63% | 48% |
| 3. Community support for recovery | 57% | 37% |
| 4. Compassion fatigue/burnout | 50% | 40% |
| 5. Staff recruitment | 49% | 37% |

^a Staff retention and substance abuse co-occurring tied at 63%

Table 3. Top Topic Priorities Indicated as Helpful Topics or High Priority

| | Wyoming | Region 8 |
|--|---------|----------|
| 1. Mental health and substance abuse (co-occurring) | 94% | 93% |
| 2. Effects of psychotropic medications | 91% | 87% |
| 3. Understanding the connection between trauma and deviant behavior ^a | 89% | 88% |
| 4. Mental health and intellectual disabilities (co-occurring) ^b | 89% | 92% |
| 5. Community supports for recovery ^a | 89% | 85% |

^a Topics 3-5 tied at 89%

In addition to priority topics, the survey asked probation and parole officers to identify which populations (if any) they would like additional training or consultation about to assist in improving their professional efforts in the field of mental health. Participants could select multiple populations from a list of 25. Overall, the top priority populations for Wyoming were the same as those identified across Region 8. However, Wyoming was the only state to identify veteran populations in its top five.

Table 4. Top Priority Populations

| | Wyoming | Region 8 | Region 8 Rank |
|---|---------|----------|---------------|
| 1. People with serious mental illness | 77% | 59% | 1 |
| 2. People with substance use disorder (addiction) | 63% | 53% | 3 |
| 3. People who are homeless/transient | 57% | 55% | 2 |
| 4. People with serious emotional disturbance (SED) ^a | 57% | 49% | 4 |
| 5. Veterans | 54% | 35% | 9 |

^a People who are homeless and individuals with SED tied at 57%

¹ Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center: <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/home>.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov>.