

# Community-Informed Project Investments

Milwaukee County gathered local, statewide, and program specific input from community members, stakeholders and front-line staff in the development of initial Opioid Settlement Fund project investments. Milwaukee County departments pursue community engaging activities on an ongoing basis, complimenting the availability of Opioid Settlement Funds. This document outlines the various modes of input considered in the development of the project recommendations.

## Community Engagement Activities by Department

### Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

EMS Council is a public-facing meeting to engage and inform the public. OEM regular receives requests for data surrounding opioids in this forum.

OEM routinely fulfills request to train on Narcan to the general public and staff of various venues. They also train all Law Enforcement agencies on the use of Narcan

Medical direction oversight has direct feedback from Mobile Integrated Health (Community Paramedicine) programs that serve county Opioid Use Disorder patients.

### Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Behavioral Health Services (BHS)

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) routinely connects with the community to inform programing and policies. The summary below outlines Behavioral Health Services' (BHS) efforts around community engagement to address the opioid crisis. It is important to note that the majority of practitioners and advocates working in the arena of substance use are people with lived experience, and many are themselves in active recovery. In addition, many of the providers that BHS partners with also have lived experience with substance use.

#### **Road to Recovery Report, Wisconsin Policy Forum, November 2022**

In this report, the Wisconsin Policy Forum seeks to provide greater clarity on the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) service provision landscape in the county with an eye toward identifying service gaps and priorities for new investment. The Forum conducted dozens of interviews with officials and staff from BHS, community-based providers that are part of its service network, private health system leaders, and other stakeholders. Using these extensive interviews and review and analysis of comprehensive data received from BHS and providers, the department concluded by sharing a series of insights that will provide guidance to BHS and its partners as they seek to forge a more robust response to SUD challenges in Milwaukee County.

Recommendations:

- Invest in Residential Treatment and Housing
- Bolster Prevention and Harm Reduction

### **Partnership with Vital Strategies—Milwaukee County is a partner with Vital Strategies and the Bloomberg Overdose Initiative on the *In Their Voices Survey***

- In Their Voices is a survey of racial and ethnic disparities in overdose risk and opioid use disorder treatment and harm reduction access and use in Southeast Wisconsin.
- The goals of *In Their Voices Survey* are:
  - Identify gaps in access to harm reduction and treatment services in Milwaukee for people who use drugs.
  - Learn about the lived experiences of people who use drugs.
- Survey planning and site recruitment is currently underway, along with community partner involvement.
- Survey implementation and dissemination will take place in January.
- Vital Strategies is doing cutting edge work around community engagement and substance use needs and they are doing it with us.
- They are interviewing people who use drugs and saying what do you need? And they are doing it in Milwaukee.
- Their primary objective is to bring more substance use prevention, treatment and harm reduction services to Black and Brown neighborhoods.

### **Harm Reduction Vending Machine Community Engagement**

- **In October**, 20 Harm Reduction vending machines were purchased from HRI Vending using SOR 2 funds. They include Medication lock bags, Detera Deactivation pouches, gun locks, fentanyl test strips and nasal Narcan was delivered to HRI vending for coil fitting.
- **In November**, a harm reduction coordination meeting was hosted to coordinate countywide efforts with key partners. A vending machine project presentation was given to the representatives of the Health Departments across the county.
- **In December**, HRI vending will customize 11 vending machines and deliver them to the Coggs building. The HARM REDUCTION AND PREVENTION VENDING MACHINE REQUEST APPLICATION will be drafted and finalized. The department plans to send an interest request email to current partners announcing this project, highlighting vending machine hosting opportunities and collecting interest.
- **In January**, the HARM REDUCTION AND PREVENTION VENDING MACHINE REQUEST APPLICATION will be shared with businesses, nonprofits, religious agencies and public buildings for bid. Agencies will be selected based on their ability to meet basic requirements including staff time, zip code, available space, availability for orientation and training and relationship with the surrounding community.
- Additionally, community educators (volunteers) will be recruited and trained to educate community members on where to find and how to use Medication lock bags, Detera Deactivation pouches, gun locks, fentanyl test strips and nasal Narcan.
- **In February**, vending machines will be delivered to selected agencies. Each agency will be trained on how each item should be administered, when to restock the machines and how to order additional items from the county. A press release will be distributed to announce the vending machine initiative.

- The first seven are going to one each in the top seven zip codes for overdoses. BHS will ensure organizations that take them have training and assess how it goes. Based on utilization and success, BHS will deploy the balance of the machines prudently, based on neighborhoods with the highest need.
  - Example: Lighthouse Center at (formerly) Dewey. They host Narcotics Anonymous groups every day; hundreds of people in recovery go through the facility; they would like to host a machine and it's great place to put one.
- **Between February and May**, community educators will canvass neighborhoods with flyers, resources and vending machine maps. They'll provide live demonstrations on using medication lock bags, Deterra Deactivation pouches, gun locks, fentanyl test strips and nasal Narcan.

#### **Better Ways To Cope Awareness Campaign focuses on prevention**

- BHS executed an ongoing, yearlong awareness campaign to address substance use disorder called, "**Better Ways To Cope**," This multi-faceted campaign drives awareness around County-supported resources and community partners for substance abuse treatment and prevention.
- The campaign was anchored by a website, [betterwaystocope.org](http://betterwaystocope.org) with comprehensive information about how people can get connected to resources.
- Messages were featured on radio, transit, billboards, and social media. Compelling radio and video spots were created through an ongoing "Mental Health Minute" feature with behavioral health professionals.

#### **Grab & Go Events at Owen's Place**

- Children's Community Mental Health Services and Wraparound Milwaukee continue to offer the ever-growing and popular Grab & Go events in partnership with Owen's Place, a drop-in resource Center operated in conjunction with St. Charles Youth & Family Services.
- Grab & Go events were hosted the last Wednesday of each month from March through October to support over 700 people in our community.
- This is a great opportunity to meet families in the surrounding neighborhoods, building community amongst each other, and offering people a safe space to receive support, a connection to others, especially for families who may be in need of mental health support.
- Grab & Go events provide basic necessities and connection to resources eight months out of the year.

## Upcoming Community Coordination and Engagement

In addition to the activities identified above, the following community engagement is planned:

- DHHS will regrant \$1M in Opioid Settlement funds to community providers (funds requests in the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Capacity proposal)
- In January, DHHS will announce the process to apply for Opioid Settlement funds.
- In February, DHHS will hold one or more information sessions regarding the grant process and to provide technical assistance.

- DHHS will take the information learned and go back and submit additional proposals if something was missed.
- In early March 2023, community provider grant awards will be announced.

Also, based on the feedback received from the listening sessions scheduled in February, DHHS may request additional funding for the regranting and future allocations. The regranting component of the project will take place in a series of phases:

- **Phase 1:** Engage community partners in a planning process to create guidelines and an application for the sub-grant.
- **Phase 2:** Hold a series of community informational sessions and enlist the support of community partners to promote the availability of the funds; Eligible organizations who serve people affected by opioid abuse will have an opportunity to apply for the subgrant; community partners will be engaged to select the recipients of the sub-grant.
- **Phase 3:** Recipients of the sub-grant will implement prevention, treatment, recovery, or harm reduction services; recipients will receive technical assistance; DHHS will report on use of the funds and impact.

## Local and Statewide Reports

### City-County Heroin, Opioid, Cocaine Task Force (CCHOCTF)

The CCHOCTF represents multiple sectors from city, county, and state agencies and those with lived experiences of substance abuse. The CCHOCTF met regularly to gather information and create items to guide the community in addressing substance abuse. Opportunity for community comments was provided during regular meetings, and two additional meetings were held specifically for community input.

Multiple community engagement sessions occurred throughout Milwaukee County to gain insight from all stakeholders. Participants included those in active treatment or recovery, social workers, public health nurses, family members of those experiencing substance abuse disorder, researchers, community activists, educators, business owners, providers and other concerned citizens. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences with substance abuse, discuss existing efforts, and expectations of the CCHOCTF by identifying action items. The results of this engagement are incorporated into the CCHOCTF recommendations. Recommendations were publicly shared at the January 2019 Task Force meeting. Based on the recommendations, the CCHOCTF conducted community fairs, provider engagement, Narcan giveaways, Grab & Go events; these efforts continue to be built upon today.

#### CCHOCTF Overview and Charge

- In 2018, the City-County Heroin, Opioid, Cocaine Task Force (CCHOCTF) was created. Milwaukee County representatives include the Deputy District Attorney, Housing Services Administrator, Behavioral Health Services Administrator, Medical Examiner's Office, Director of Office of Emergency Management, and a DHHS representative.

- The CCHOCTF represents multiple sectors from city, county, and state agencies and those with lived experiences of substance abuse. The CCHOCTF met regularly to gather information and create items to guide the community in addressing substance abuse. Opportunity for community comments was provided during regular meetings, and two additional meetings were held specifically for community input.
- **The charge of the group was to get a pulse on what’s going on and what the recommendations were needed to tackle the opioid epidemic.**
- Multiple community engagement sessions occurred throughout Milwaukee County to gain insight from all stakeholders. Participants included those in active treatment or recovery, social workers, public health nurses, family members of those experiencing substance abuse disorder, researchers, community activists, educators, business owners, providers and other concerned citizens. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences with substance abuse, discuss existing efforts, and expectations of the CCHOCTF by identifying action items. The results of this engagement are incorporated into the CCHOCTF recommendations.
- This series of community listening sessions were held on weekends, evenings, and often served food. The session held at the Mitchell Park library, included a resident group joining from UCC’s resident facility for women and children, people with lived experience, families, and concerned citizens.
- Community listening session attendees were representative of the Milwaukee County with more than 50% people with lived experience with SUD.
- The Task Force members divided up into groups and focused on four areas: Prevention, Awareness, Harm Reduction, and Treatment.

**Major achievement with the #1 recommendation: transitional safe and sober housing**

- Housing was the #1 recommendation: BHS invested in Oxford Houses. **In January 2019 there were 0 beds of Oxford Houses, today there are 92.** This was a recommendation of the Task Force that transitional safe and sober housing was needed.
- Since becoming part of the Milwaukee County community in the past few years, Oxford House has expanded to include a total of 10 houses. Oxford House is able to serve men, women, and women with children in their homes, contributing housing for more than 92 individuals in our community. The homes, which are democratically operated by the individuals living there – all of whom are committed to their recovery from substance abuse – are in a wide variety of neighborhoods throughout the county.
- BHS provided capital support for the Women’s Treatment Center; which is now a 15-bed facility.
- BHS engaged WCS and created outpatient plus program.

**Wisconsin Department of Human Services Listening Sessions**

**Listening Sessions:** 518 Attendees (229 attended listening sessions in Milwaukee region)  
113 Speakers

**Survey:** 326 Respondents; 897 Comments

**Participants:** 269 Providers and stakeholders  
172 Families/friends of individuals with substance use disorder  
71 individuals with lived experience

**Summary of Themes:**

- Address root causes - Address the social determinants of health. Improve access to mental health services. Bolster family stability. Reduce trauma.
- Enhance harm reduction - Maintain and expand harm reduction strategies, including needle exchange, safe use sites, increased access and use of naloxone/ NARCAN®, and fentanyl test strips.
- Support recovery - Support individuals in recovery with targeted wraparound services. Provide direct support to families with a loved one with substance use disorder.
- Prevent Proactively - Provide evidence-based education, especially in K-12 schools, as well as in communities. Consider including the voices of those with lived experience to reduce stigma in communities.
- Expand Treatment options - Increase the accessibility and availability of all forms of treatment that follow best practices. Ensure equity in the location and delivery of treatment options.

## Settlement Fund Project Recommendation Process

- The proposal review panel is 75% community-based and includes two community members with lived experience as well as external individuals, partners, and stakeholders in the community with expertise and experience in the subject matter
- Proposals demonstrated how the proposed strategy has been community-informed and vetted.
- Proposal articulated a needs assessment using local data.

## Project Details on Promising Practices and Community Support

Each proposal was required to describe how the proposal is evidence-based, evidence-informed, or community validated. Proposals were also required to describe how the project would be effective in addressing the opioid crisis. The summary below includes each project title and a summary of their community engagement and supporting evidence.

### **Aging and Disabilities Services Opioid Prevention Project (DHHS)**

The proposed project is community validated and innovative as it looks to build community by bringing together community partners and governmental agencies to look at ways to move towards our future state supporting our mission to end racism in Milwaukee County utilizing a no wrong door approach to eliminate the effects of the opioid pandemic.

### **Coordination of Opioid Prevention Services Project (DHHS)**

DHHS has begun several participatory and collaborative regranting processes to promote community engagement, address public health determinants, and develop grassroots providers. This has helped DHHS achieve a provider diversity rate of 45% for Black and BIPOC led non-profits and human service

agencies and included impacted persons in program design, fund allocation, and program implementation.

#### **Harm Reduction Kits (Office of Emergency Management)**

Harm reduction kits are evidence-informed to show a positive response to alternative access to treatment in a vulnerable situation.

#### **Harm Reduction Supplies (DHHS)**

The administration of naloxone among laypersons and emergency personnel is an evidence-based strategy for reducing opioid deaths.

#### **Homeless Outreach Project (DHHS)**

The proposed project is heavily evidence informed and derives from the intersection of housing instability and harm reduction.

#### **Staffing Needs (Medical Examiner)**

All of the areas associated with death investigating are processes that are done by individuals. The additional positions will allow the office to perform these death investigations and provide the data associated with them to partners in a timely fashion.

#### **Medication Assisted Treatment - Behind the Walls (DHHS)**

Medication Assisted Treatment is known to be an effective, evidence-based practice for individuals who are living with an opioid use disorder.

#### **Patrol Division Narcan Deployment and Education (Sheriff's Office)**

Having the proper training coupled with the additional Narcan in the field will no doubt expedite the process of getting overdose patients the lifesaving care they need to survive a potentially fatal incident.

#### **Opioid Educator- EMS (Office of Emergency Management)**

By educating our providers OEM hopes to aid patients and families in finding resources during the time of crisis and providing the best possible patient care and resuscitation efforts to improve overall outcomes. Then, by educating the public, it raises awareness of the crisis, resources, and how the public can impact the outcomes of the patient through early access and administration of Narcan and early resuscitation efforts in the event that an overdose leads to cardiac arrest.

#### **Medication Assisted Treatment – EMS (Office of Emergency Management)**

Field-based buprenorphine administration is an evidence-based program with proven success.

#### **Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Capacity (DHHS)**

Having a safe, supportive, structured facility with trained clinicians, peer support, and others who are going through the same experience is both evidence-based and powerful.

#### **Substance Use Education and Treatment for Justice Involved Youth (DHHS)**

The services provided through this project are evidence informed in that substance abuse education, specifically targeting opioid use and effects, will support the prevention of youth engaging in the activities, as well as reducing the number of youths using opioids.