



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

2/5/24 OPIOID SETTLEMENT LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY

Background: On Monday, February 5th, approximately 35 people met on zoom for a listening session on opioids. The goal was for local board of health members and health department staff to listen to community voices on how settlement funds should be spent.

The meeting began with a short power point summary on opioid settlement, given by Ryan Paxton, Montague's Health Director, and Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Health at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The presentation included the amount of opioid settlement funds going to Franklin County towns over a 17-year period and categories of allowable expenditures.

During the listening portion, many expressed ideas about where financial support could be useful. For the purposes of summarizing the meeting, those ideas have been organized by the allowable expenditure categories under the opioid settlement funds, with additional ideas at the end:

Supporting People in Recovery

- Support existing recovery agencies to increase staffing, programming and outreach, including online recovery support meetings.
- “Mini recovery scholarships” that can be used by folks in recovery to: pay for fees, re-instate driver’s licenses, etc..
- Funding for complementary and alternative medicine supports for people in recovery.
- Additional supports for people leaving treatment similar to the support available to those leaving incarceration in our region, like help getting a job, getting to appointments, finding housing.

Prevention

- Support prevention in schools
- Support prevention work with young people who are not connected to schools
- Reduce trauma –working with youth, their caregivers, and other adults in their life (teachers)
- Support for children and youth in foster care, for children who may be raised by their grandparents (and whose parents may be incarcerated)

Connections to Care

- “Boots on the ground” to connect folks who may be interested in recovery and/or harm reduction to existing resources. Strong support in the meeting for funding people who do outreach to connect people to peer supports like the Recover Project and North Quabbin Recovery Center over mailings, signage, ads, etc.
 - Ditto for folks who are in recovery—navigating existing resources is difficult!
- Access to transportation is a huge issue, floated ideas on how to address access and how to help people learn about current options.

Harm Reduction

- Get Narcan into the community

Support for folks with OUD involved with the criminal justice system

- Long term treatment supports, supportive housing
- Re-entry support after incarceration

Support for pregnant and parenting people with OUD

- Support children in foster care system, their caregivers
- Support for children, adolescents, parents, caregivers, teachers around trauma

Additional ideas/comments/questions:

- Funeral homes: work to change the DTA rule that requires proof of financial need to qualify for subsidy for cremation
- Bus ads for the Recover Project – so much support available at the RP, but many people do not know that.
- General support for the flexibility of using funds regionally between towns
- What will the next steps for community members and organizations/programs to find out how to qualify for funds? What will the process be like?

+++++

Summary of City of Greenfield Opioid Settlement Survey Responses – December 2023.

The City collected 163 responses to a survey over three months this winter, 75% from people impacted directly by opioid use disorder. While their research continues, they have generously shared the data from this first round. The survey gathered a great deal of useful qualitative data (open-ended question responses), and below is a quick summary of the main points, which are similar to the priorities addressed at the listening session:

Top 3 priorities identified by respondents:

1. Support People in Treatment and Recovery,
2. Address the needs of criminal justice involved persons,
3. Connection Care/Harm Reduction (a virtual tie)

Summary of narrative responses to the question “how can we best address your priority areas?”

- Increase outreach to active users
- Increase access to housing
- Fund those who provide direct support to people in recovery through peers