



Summit County Opioid Epidemic Abatement Strategy

Background

The opioid epidemic has surged during the last several years in Summit County, with more than 7,000 overdoses reported by our emergency rooms since 2016. This continuing epidemic has put significant stress on the capacity of clinical healthcare, behavioral health systems and first responders. These systems are experiencing a shortage of both residential and outpatient treatment services, as well as providers, support services and necessary resources.

The drastic increase in opioid use also created an excessive strain on both the criminal justice and emergency response systems, where substance use disorders are prevalent. Those with opioid use disorders frequently collide with the criminal justice system, creating additional barriers to treatment and support services. Local first responders receive high volumes of emergency calls, causing a significant strain on local resources and manpower.

Upon the realization that the root cause of the opioid epidemic was the purposeful actions of the pharmaceutical industry's manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies, Summit County initiated a lawsuit to hold the responsible parties accountable. As a result of the litigation, Summit County has agreed to settle the lawsuit with multiple defendants. However, the trial date remains in place as many defendants are still unwilling to resolve the issue.

The dollars received from these settlements will be used to abate the opioid epidemic in accordance with best practices, local quantitative and qualitative data and County sequential mapping. This data will be coupled with the input of community partners and the abatement plan laid out by subject matter experts engaged as part of the litigation.

Committee Formation

As the costs of addressing the epidemic were borne by our local community, settlement dollars will remain in Summit County for the benefit of Summit County residents. The following Key Stakeholders will meet to form a task force which shall be referred to as the Opioid Abatement Advisory Council ("OAAC"):

- Summit County Executive
- Mayor, City of Akron
- Mayor, selected by the Mayors Association of Summit County
- Township Trustee, selected by the Township Trustees Association of Summit County
- Representative of Summit County Public Health

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The OAAC will be made up of professionals in the fields of healthcare, addiction treatment, mental health, child welfare, education, public safety and any other fields identified as necessary by the Key Stakeholders. The OAAC will be charged with recommending the programming and distribution of opioid settlement funding to address the priorities listed below in an effort to maximize abatement outcomes. Additionally, the OAAC will be charged with recommending and implementing measurements and methodologies for reporting the outcomes achieved from these programs. The OAAC will also be asked to identify other resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of their recommended programs.

As directed by the federal judge, settlement funds will be used exclusively for abating the opioid epidemic. The OAAC will work to define the best use of funds within the following priority areas of abatement and other priorities that may subsequently be identified. The priority areas below are not listed in any particular order and it remains at the will of the OAAC and Key Stakeholders as to the appropriation of funds to each priority area.

Priority Area 1: Treatment

- Detox
- Residential treatment
- Outpatient treatment
- Recovery housing
- Medication assisted treatment (MAT)
- Recruiting treatment providers
- Connecting individuals to services
- Focusing on special populations: pregnant women, children, incarcerated individuals

Priority Area 2: Harm Reduction

- Naloxone purchase, distribution, training
- Syringe exchange
- Fentanyl test strip availability

Priority Area 3: System Coordination

- Abatement tracking
- Court system resources
- Data informed systems
- Children Services support
- First responder support and resources
- Prosecutor assistance

Priority Area 4: Evidence Based Prevention and Education

- Awareness campaigns and public service announcements
- School-based prevention programs

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- HIV/Hepatitis C intervention
- Reducing stigma (addiction and MAT)
- Social support/transitional housing
- Medical provider outreach
- Drug disposal