

OPIOID SETTLEMENT REMEDIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 24, 2023

Location: Virtual

Present: Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Grimm, Sheriff Ramsay, Attorney Maki, Jessica Pete, Linnea Mirsch, Jana Blomberg, Brooke Wetmore (support), Greg Anderson, Allison Vanneste, Heather Blue, Jess Nickila, Laura Bennett, Melissa Dybvig, Jennifer Garbow, Pat Conway

Convened: The meeting was convened at approximately 4:04PM

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- Welcome, Moment of Silence
 - Round 1 Funded Organizations – Updates & Outcomes

Jana Blomberg offered updates of the 7 funded organizations as well as the St Louis County led Communications Plan. Wellbeing Development (Ely-based) is conducting community engagement and location identification for a co-located housing/recovery center with a target end of 2024 opening. WBD is currently engaged in Naloxone training as well. RAAN has hired a position to conduct Naloxone and Fentanyl test strip distribution and training, resource connections, outreach events, and infectious disease testing in Northern SLC. RAD has hired 1.5 Peer Support Specialists to serve SLC. YWCA (Duluth-based) offers housing to young moms and conducts Naloxone distribution and training to moms, staff, and the community. Young moms are offered peer recovery support through YWCA's Health Realization programming. Vita Nova (formerly Housing for Inmates) has purchased, received licensing, and is currently renovating a building in Duluth to provide housing for individuals leaving NERCC with a goal to have residents by end of 2023/beginning of 2024. Vita Nova is working to find funding to bring in SOAR to provide staffing. United Way has been able to double the size of their Lunch Buddy program and is now in 10 schools. Chum is hiring Peer Support Specialists and, after struggling with recruitment and retention, has reworked their job descriptions to make them more attractive.

Linnea Mirsch noted that St. Louis County does intend to provide flexibility on contract end dates (currently set to end February 2024) if organizations provide ample reasoning and plans. Greg Anderson highlighted "the art of collaboration" occurring between WBD, RAAN, and RAD in Northern SLC.

Jana Blomberg offered an update of the Communications Plan, for which the St Louis County Board set aside \$120,000. The plan is being prepared by a subgroup and is focusing on (1) harm reduction, including what is harm reduction and offering supports for family members of those with SUD, (2) Stigma reduction, including how the words we use matter, and (3) Youth prevention including "positive community norms."

- Next funding round, Post-Incarceration processes and criminal justice focused

Sheriff Ramsay offered a review of current data regarding drug overdoses using preliminary data provided by the Duluth Police Department. Sheriff Ramsay noted that the Office's current strategy is targeting suppliers and working to reduce the supply, especially of meth and fentanyl which are currently cheap. Sheriff Ramsay notes that, from his perspective, prevention education in schools across St. Louis County is not as robust as it should be.

Jail Administrator Jessica Pete offered an update of progress to date on post-incarceration reentry work. The Jail has built a team with the help of multiple grants to provide services. The biggest barriers are currently transportation – especially to the Range – and follow through with appointments.

Commissioner Grimm proposed a workshop with other MN counties regarding best practices around opioid use reduction. She also proposed conducting focus groups or other methods of gathering input from those coming out of jail on the impacts involvement in the systems has had on them. Sheriff Ramsay noted anecdotal evidence that involvement in the system has had positive impacts on recovery of some individuals.

Jess Nickila reported that SURT is coordinating with the Jail to collect data around prevalence of overdoses before and after incarceration.

➤ Logistics

Linnea Mirsch proposed using Opioid Settlement Funds to pay for administration of this work (30% of Jana Blomberg's time). She also noted this committee will need to be re-established by next year's Board Chair and all members will need to be reappointed. All members should expect outreach regarding their willingness to remain engaged if the committee is re-established.

➤ Internal Updates

- Virtual upcoming Municipality Meeting (MOA required)
 - Tues Nov 28 12pm
 - Thur Nov 30 3pm
- St. Louis County Blueprint to share the county's process is available here:
<https://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/departments-a-z/public-health-human-services/boards-committees/opioid-remediation-settlement-advisory-committee>

➤ Questions?

There were questions regarding Youth/School outreach. Laura Bennett offered the MN State Survey data analysis (available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEQBP_qsKl4 and <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/977f665a4746413bb717e238ec67400c>). Jana Blomberg noted that there is a dedicated staff person in SLC PHHS connecting directly with schools.

Adjourned: 5:19PM