MARYLAND
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STOP OVERDOSE STRATEGY

Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall Series Impact Statement: Lower Eastern Shore

Takeaways from our Town Hall held at Salisbury University

October 20th, 2021

In the second installment in our Maryland Stop Overdose Strategy Regional Town Hall Series, the Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC) was joined by Glenn Fueston, executive director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, at Salisbury University in Wicomico County. This session was focused on engaging community members from the counties in the Lower Eastern Shore.

OOCC Executive Director Rickard provided an update on overdose trends at the state level and in the Lower Shore region. She also provided information on the Opioid Restitution Fund and the potential uses of funds that Maryland receives legal settlements with prescription opioid makers and distributors. Lastly, Executive Director Rickard provided an update on the work of the Racial Disparities in Overdose Task Force on behalf of Dr. Aliya Jones, deputy secretary for the Behavioral Health Administration at the Maryland Department of Health and co-chair of the task force.

In our final presentation, Executive Director Fueston provided an overview of his office and its efforts to enhance safety in Maryland. This involves coordinating with law enforcement agencies that are working to disrupt drug trafficking organizations in Maryland as well as to promote substance use disorder (SUD) services throughout the criminal justice system, diversion programs, and youth prevention programs.

The public comment portion of the town hall featured a lively and thoughtful discussion with community members from across the Lower Shore, who shared their concerns and ideas for addressing the opioid crisis. A large contingent of our participants represented community organizations, some were from local health departments or local behavioral health authorities, and many of the speakers were individuals in recovery and spoke about their lived experience. The priorities highlighted during our conversations include:

- Addressing trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in substance use prevention programming

- Increasing resources for families caring for a loved one with SUD

- Increasing support for community organizations in the prevention, treatment, and recovery communities

- Addressing stigma throughout the community

- Increasing access to naloxone at local restaurants and other businesses

- Utilizing targeted naloxone distribution in high-risk settings

- Expanding peer support services throughout the behavioral health workforce

- Increasing resources on college campuses

- Increasing access to peer support and treatment services in correctional facilities

- Increasing awareness about Maryland's Good Samaritan Law

- Raising awareness regarding access to treatment for uninsured individuals

- The challenges of providing treatment services in rural communities

- Offering medications for opioid use disorder (OUD) in jails and increasing care coordination for incarcerated individuals upon release

- Increasing the availability of fentanyl test strips

The OOCC would like to thank everyone who attended for their participation in our second Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall and for their shared dedication to helping those who are struggling with the disease of addiction. The feedback that we received will be used to help inform Maryland's strategy for addressing the opioid crisis through our Inter-Agency Opioid Coordination Plan, which is updated annually. We would also like to thank the Salisbury University College of Health and Human Services for providing a venue for the town hall and for their support in coordinating the event.