



Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall Impact Statement: Western Maryland

Takeaways from our Town Hall held at the
Allegany College of Maryland in Cumberland

August 26th, 2021

THE OPIOID OPERATIONAL COMMAND CENTER

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Our inaugural Maryland Stop Overdose Strategy Regional Town Hall was held on Thursday, August 26th, 2021, at the Allegany College of Maryland in Cumberland. This event was co-hosted by the Opioid Operational Command Center (OCCC) and Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford with support from the local Opioid Interventions Teams of Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties.

This event featured opening remarks provided by Lt. Governor Rutherford and a presentation on current opioid-related overdose statistics in Western Maryland by OCCC Executive Director Robin Rickard. Executive Director Rickard also addressed the Opioid Restitution Fund, which was established in 2019 to manage all money that Maryland receives from litigation involving prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors. We also heard from Dr. Aliya Jones, deputy secretary for the Behavioral Health Administration at the Maryland Department of Health, about the work of the Racial Disparities in Overdose Task Force, which is working to address widening racial disparities in overdose mortality in Maryland.

During the public comment portion of the town hall, community members from across Western Maryland shared their concerns and ideas for addressing the opioid crisis. These passionate individuals came from a wide variety of backgrounds, including emergency medical services, public health, the treatment community, the criminal justice system, and the faith-based community. Several important issues and potential solutions for addressing overdose rates and opioid mortality were discussed. The overarching ideas and priorities from our conversations included:

- Expanding in-patient treatment capacity
- Increasing treatment options, to include providing more juvenile services and access to medications used to treat opioid use disorder
- Increasing transportation services for individuals in treatment or recovery
- Expanding recovery support resources
- Promoting the involvement of the faith-based community
- Promoting programs that help keep children in school and equipping students with substance use prevention skills
- Evaluating criminal justice penalties, implementing the Justice Reinforcement Act, and funding for law enforcement programs
- Ensuring access to substance use disorder resources in rural areas

The OCCC sincerely appreciated this thoughtful discussion and the participation from concerned community members. These ideas 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 thank everyone who participated for their time and their passion for helping people who are struggling with the disease of addiction. We also thank our gracious hosts at the Allegany College of Maryland.