



Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall Series Impact Statement: City of Annapolis

January 19th, 2022

PREVENTION • TREATMENT • RECOVERY



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THE OPIOID OPERATIONAL COMMAND CENTER

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On January 19, 2022, the Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC) held the sixth installment of the Maryland Stop Overdose Strategy (Maryland SOS) Regional Town Hall Series. This event, which was held virtually, was focused on residents of the City of Annapolis.

The town hall began with a presentation from OOCC Executive Director Robin Rickard, who provided an update on recent overdose trends in Maryland. Executive Director Rickard also talked about the Opioid Restitution Fund and addressed the potential uses for funds that the state will receive from legal settlements with prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors. Executive Director Rickard also provided an update on the work of the Racial Disparities in Overdose Task Force on behalf of Dr. Aliya Jones, deputy secretary for Behavioral Health at the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and co-chair of the task force.

We were also joined by Dr. Jinlene Chan, MDH deputy secretary for Public Health Services. Dr. Chan addressed several important programs at MDH that are focused on addressing opioid-related morbidity and mortality, including an overdose spike alert system and a partnership between the MDH Center for Harm Reduction Services and the Maryland State Police to check samples from the supply of illicit drugs.

Our final presentation was provided by Kevin Simmons, the Director of the Annapolis Office of Emergency Management. Director Simmons provided an update on local overdose trends. We would also like to acknowledge Anne Arundel County Health Officer Dr. Nilesh Kalyanaraman, who briefly spoke about the importance of community engagement in tailoring programs to fit local needs.

Following our presentations, we invited town hall participants to talk about their experiences with the opioid and overdose crisis and to share their ideas for how state and local officials can do more to help individuals struggling with substance use disorder (SUD). The issues addressed by town hall participants included:

- The importance of collaboration between local organizations and between state and local government entities for implementing comprehensive opioid crisis response efforts
- The need to increase compensation for peer recovery specialists
- The budgetary challenges that SUD treatment providers have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for more support, such as gap funding
- The need to increase insurance reimbursement rates for SUD treatment and the potential benefits of increased flexibility for Medicaid reimbursements to SUD treatment providers
- The need to combat stigma associated with harm reduction programming and implementing overdose prevention sites
- The need to address the flow of illicit drugs across jurisdictional boundaries
- Ensuring that efforts to address the opioid crisis balance the needs of chronic pain patients who rely on prescription opioids

- Expanding recovery support services and the need for continued engagement with individuals exiting treatment
- Addressing trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and the social determinants of health in SUD prevention programming
- The need to expand school-based SUD prevention programming and to educate adolescents about the dangers of fentanyl
- Expanding opportunities for behavioral health workforce development for members of Maryland's Black communities
- Expanding treatment opportunities that focus on the needs of Maryland's Black communities
- Increasing support services for justice-involved individuals reentering society
- Need to expand connections to care in hospital emergency departments and to increase access to transportation services for individuals seeking SUD treatment
- Expanding insurance coverage for SUD treatment services
- Developing more robust continuums of care
- Addressing compassion fatigue among emergency medical services personnel

The OCCC would like to thank everyone who participated in this session for their shared dedication to supporting those who are living with the disease of addiction. The feedback that we received will be used to help inform the 2022 update to Maryland's Inter-Agency Opioid Coordination Plan, the state's strategic opioid crisis response framework.