



Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall Series Impact Statement: Central Maryland

February 1st, 2022

PREVENTION • TREATMENT • RECOVERY



Before it's too late.

THE OPIOID OPERATIONAL COMMAND CENTER

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The Opioid Operational Command Center (OCCC) hosted the ninth installment Maryland Stop Overdose Strategy (Maryland SOS) Regional Town Hall Series virtually on February 1, 2022. This town hall was focused on residents of the counties of Central Maryland.

OCCC Executive Director Robin Rickard began the event by providing an update on recent overdose trends in Maryland. She 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.

Next in our program, we heard from Dr. Aliya Jones, Deputy Secretary for the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health. Deputy Secretary Jones provided an overview of local overdose trends and the work of Maryland's Racial Disparities in Overdose Task Force, which is currently working under the auspices of Maryland's Inter-Agency Opioid and Heroin Coordination Council chaired by Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford.

Our final presentation was from Eric Bromwell, the Opioid Strategy Coordinator for Baltimore County. Mr. Bromwell addressed the challenges in implementing substance use disorder (SUD) programming amid the coronavirus pandemic. He also addressed the Opioid Use Disorder Examination and Treatment Act of 2019 and the continued need to assist local detention centers in providing treatment services and other resources for inmates with opioid use disorder. He also talked about the importance of multijurisdictional and regional approaches to addressing the opioid crisis.

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 SUD. The issues addressed by town hall participants included:

- Directing funding to local agencies and organizations who are more familiar with the specific needs of local communities
- Expanding support for recovery services and peer recovery specialists
- The need for state-level support for recovery support capacity building, peers, local health departments
- The need to focus on recovery and provide meaningful data to the public about recovery successes
- Expanding access to detox services and inpatient treatment services
- Increasing access to recovery services for men and supporting recovery housing for individuals receiving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Addressing the regulatory burden on recovery services, increasing oversight of non-certified recovery residences, and promoting diversity of services among recover residences
- Using prescription opioid settlement funds to expand access to treatment

- Expanding the length of stay in treatment covered by insurance
- Expanding access to treatment services for adolescents
- Creating additional opportunities for justice-involved individuals with SUD to have their criminal records expunged
- Expanding access to long-term housing for individuals in recovery
- Concern over the increasing number of overdoses involving either methamphetamine or cocaine mixed with fentanyl
- The need to expand resources for individuals with co-occurring mental health and behavioral health disorders
- Expanding access to employment opportunities for individuals in recovery
- Addressing stigma surrounding people with SUD
- Increasing awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and enacting harsher penalties of people who sell fentanyl
- Increasing resources provided in Spanish for individuals with SUD
- Increasing support for harm reduction services and implementing overdose prevention sites
- The need to support services for families of individuals with SUD
- Increasing regional crisis services that can take the strain of the hospital system
- Addressing compassion fatigue among first responders and hospital emergency department 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.