



Maryland SOS Regional Town Hall Series Impact Statement: East Baltimore City

Takeaways from our Town Hall held at the Orleans Street Branch
of the Enoch Pratt Free Library

November 17th, 2021

PREVENTION • TREATMENT • RECOVERY



Before it's **too late.**

THE OPIOID OPERATIONAL COMMAND CENTER

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On November 17th, 2021, the Opioid Operational Command Center (OCC) hosted the fourth event in our Maryland Stop Overdose Strategy (Maryland SOS) Regional Town Hall Series. This session, which was held at the Orleans Street Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, focused on engaging community members from neighborhoods in East Baltimore City. This was the second of two events held in Baltimore City following our town hall held on November 3rd at St. Bernardine Roman Catholic Church.

To begin our town hall, we were honored to be joined by Maryland Department of Health Secretary Dennis Schrader, who provided an overview of the department's ongoing efforts to reduce overdose mortality. Next, OCC Executive Director Robin Rickard provided an update on overdose trends at the state and local level. She also discussed Maryland's Opioid Restitution Fund and the potential uses of funds that Maryland will receive from legal settlements with prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors.

Our last presenter for the evening was Dr. Aliya Jones, Deputy Secretary for the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health. Deputy Secretary Jones provided an update on 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.

Following our presentations, we heard public testimony from a wide range of individuals, such as representatives from community-based organizations, local treatment providers, individuals in recovery, advocacy groups, who shared their personal experiences and their ideas for addressing the opioid and overdose crisis. The issues addressed by community members included:

- Increasing availability of community-based mobile outreach, especially outside of regular working hours
- Promoting care coordination and linkages to recovery support services, such as housing, for individuals exiting treatment
- Implementing overdose prevention sites
- Decriminalizing paraphernalia
- Increasing collaboration with and the potential benefits of multi-year grant funding for community-based organizations
- Increasing support for peer programs, raising peer compensation, and expanding peer training opportunities
- The need for increased representation of marginalized individuals in treatment and recovery organizations, such as members of the Native American community
- Increasing treatment capacity and the need for expanding the duration of treatment covered by insurance
- The continued need to promote mental health resources and prevention efforts
- Increasing substance use disorder support services for women

- Increasing access harm reduction services
- Reducing stigma surrounding people who use drugs

The OOC would like to thank everyone who attended our East Baltimore Town Hall for their participation 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 our hosts at the Orleans Street Enoch Pratt Library as well as the Maryland Peer Advisory Council for their assistance in organizing this town hall.

