



Opioid Settlement Funds Community Engagement Report

RESULTS FROM CONSULTANT SKY FREYSS-COLE

JULY 21, 2025

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What We've Accomplished

- Total amount of funding received thus far: \$405,671
- Hired a recovery coach in collaboration with Norfolk County-8 Regional Coalition
- Narcan distribution
- Health Resources in Action Narcan training for Health Department staff
- Received resources and technical assistance from Care Mass
- Engaged community through facilitator and leadership consultant Sky Freyss-Cole

Methodology

- Consultant Sky Freyss-Cole was hired to lead community engagement work
 - Work completed August 2024-June 2025
 - Working group formed (Health department staff and community member with lived experience)
 - Weekly working group meetings for planning and discussion
- Key Informant Interviews:
 - 11 individuals
- Focus groups:
 - 4 groups
 - Milton Coalition, loved ones, individuals in recovery, community partners and service providers
- Community survey (online and paper)
 - 110 responses
 - Distributed in newspaper, social media, school handouts, COA, etc...

Findings: Workshops/focus groups

- Stigma and shame
 - Stigma hinders open conversations, prevents individuals from seeking help, and affects those struggling with addiction and their families
- Early education and prevention
 - Importance of starting conversations about substance use at young age and implementing tools and resources for school age children
- Family and community support
 - Need for support groups, resources for bereaved families, and programs that involve families in recovery process
- Access to treatment and resources
 - Accessibility and affordability of treatment options, more comprehensive and inclusive programs
- Narcan availability and training
 - Importance of making Narcan widely available
- Coordination among community groups
 - Need for better coordination and communication among town agencies, organizations, and businesses

Findings: Community Survey

- ~110 responses
- Majority of respondents are in the 55-64 age range
- Survey distributed over 6-month period (December 2024- May 2025)
- Findings:
 - Varied levels of awareness about available resources and supports
 - Uncertainty about the extent of opioid impact in the community
 - Mixed satisfaction regarding support for individuals and families affected
 - Barriers to accessing services, need for accessible services for diverse populations
 - Top Priorities:
 - Enhancing treatment options
 - Supporting individuals in recovery, facilitating connections to care
 - Youth education and prevention
 - Community awareness and stigma reduction

Findings: Key Informant Interviews

- Gaps in parental awareness and misconceptions
- Gaps in youth support and engagement
 - No places to “hang out”, prevention through early intervention
- Public health communications
 - Need for clear accessible messaging, more centralized location for information
- Better support for families impacted by addiction
 - More integrated services and centralized care
- Insufficient data
 - No central data base for treatment availability or real time information
- Limited access to mental health services and substance use disorder treatment
 - Must travel to Quincy, Dorchester, etc...for services
- Recovery barriers and support needs
 - Need for basic resources (money, jobs, dignity), financial and social instability

Community Feedback for Allocating Opioid Funds

- Sober living scholarships
- Funeral/burial support for families
- Arts/extracurricular activities for individuals in recovery/impacted
- Substance misuse related training that is trauma informed for first responders and open to public
- Grief and other support for children and families impacted
- College or post high school scholarships for individuals affected

Going Forward:

- Best practices for allocating spending informed by other communities in the area (Dedham, Westwood, Randolph, Norwood, Walpole, Needham, Wellesley, Canton, etc...)
 - Dedham - grant application open twice per year
- Health Department will develop grant application to go out to the community
- Grant funding opportunities offered to community two times per year
 - Sept 1 - Oct 15
 - Feb 1 - March 15
- Health Department staff will review grant applications to award funding
 - With final approval from Board of Health
- Plan for community feedback and evaluation every 3-5 years

Questions

- How can we provide access to programs/classes (art, yoga, reiki, etc...)
- How much money are we looking to spend in each grant cycle?
- Are there opportunities to either partner or fund organizations that are already distributing funds to individuals?
- Large vs. small funding initiatives/opportunities?
 - Dedham has \$30,000 limit which may be renewed yearly per the Board of Health
 - Dedham also has smaller grants open on a rolling basis for \$1,000
- How will we continue to learn and get feedback throughout the process?
 - Require deliverables - may include data or testimony to support individual, community or program impact