**Overview: Healey-Driscoll Administration Opioid Strategy – June 2023**

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The opioid-related overdose death rate in 2022 was the highest to date, increasing by 2.5% from 2021 and 9% from the pre-pandemic high in 2016. The Healey-Driscoll Administration is committed to addressing substance use disorder, providing resources to communities to reverse the trend in overdose deaths, and supporting evidence-based harm reduction strategies. Through investments from the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund (ORFF), MassHealth rate increases, and DPH policy and program actions, the Administration will invest over $1 billion in community-focused interventions that will increase access to naloxone and treatment services, bolster the substance use disorder workforce, and provide the data needed to take action.

**Actions since January 2023:**

Since taking office in January 2023, the Healey-Driscoll Administration has:

* Proposed more than $600 million for substance addiction prevention and treatment programs in the FY24 budget.
* Distributed 50,000 doses of naloxone to nearly 10,000 people through more than 120 DPH-funded naloxone distribution programs. This has resulted in at least 700 overdose reversals.
* Distributed over 150,000 fentanyl test strips at no cost to consumers.
* Provided support and funding for 12 additional peer recovery support centers, bringing the total to 39 across the Commonwealth by the end of summer 2023.
* Continued to fund Low Threshold Housing and Services that provide permanent housing and intensive case management for unaccompanied adults.
  + Since its inception in 2021, over 400 people have been housed with a 96% retention rate.

**Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund**

Over the next 18 years, Massachusetts can anticipate $1 billion to be received through certain legal settlements relating to allegations brought against companies in connection with the opioid crisis and used for substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery; 40% of this funding is allocated for municipalities. Currently, the ORRF is supporting:

* $15 million in loan forgiveness for SUD workers employed by BSAS licensed facilities.
* $11.5 million annually for expanded harm reduction programming, access to Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) such as buprenorphine and methadone, and supporting low threshold housing.
* As directed by statute, the Administration will continue to ensure that oversight of the funding decisions and operations related to the ORRF will remain in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), overseen by the Secretary.
  + This is in recognition that the ORRF funding allows the Commonwealth to make significant changes and investments for people suffering with substance use disorder.
  + EOHHS, in partnership with DPH’s Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS), is building up a team to support the opioid settlement work.

**Immediate Investments and Actions:**

* **MassHealth Substance Use Disorder Rates**: The Administration is investing $100 million in historic rate increases to MassHealth reimbursement for critical SUD services, including:
  + A $67 million investment in rate increases to support Opioid Treatment Programs, effective January 1, 2023.
  + A 35% rate increase to Acute Treatment Stabilization (ATS) rates and a 25% increase for Clinical Stabilization Services (CSS) effective July 1st, 2023; beginning January 1st, 2024, EOHHS will pay an additional 10 to 15% increase for ATS and CSS services rendered by providers with a high public payer mix, resulting in as much as a 50% increase for ATS and 40% for CSS.
  + A 20% increase for Residential Rehabilitative Services (RRS) and Individualized Treatment Services (ITS), effective July 1st, 2023
* **Increased Access to Harm Reduction Supplies:** DPH has been engaging syringe service providers (SSPs) to use DPH funding for **harm reduction vending machines** for use by their clients during off hours. The first 3 vending machines will be in service in fall 2023 through Berkshire Harm Reduction.
* **Overdose Prevention Hotline:** This summer, BSAS will release an RFR to **establish a free statewide overdose prevention hotline,** similar to the national Never Use Alone helpline,to provide overdose prevention, detection, crisis response and reversal services for people who use drugs.
* **Improved Data-to-Action:** BSAS will update its data dashboard to **create community profiles** that will present relevant indicators of substance addiction specific to cities/towns. These profiles can be used to inform public health decision-making related to substance addiction and will support municipalities in developing informed plans to distribute municipal allocations of opioid settlement funds.
* **Focus on Youth and Families:** DPH will increase therapeutic outpatient services for youth and adolescents with SUD in the Merrimack Valley through a targeted grant program, and will explore additional opportunities to support young people in other regions.

**Additional 2024 Investments and Actions**

The Administration is committed to evaluating for implementation the most effective evidence-based tools and harm-reduction approaches to prevent overdoses, and will provide a comprehensive plan later this year. As part of this plan:

* DPH will examine and produce a plan on the feasibility of **overdose prevention sites**. This will include an evaluation of the data around their use, feasibility in the context of federal legal barriers, funding required, and necessary engagement with municipalities and the legislature.
* DPH will **identify Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) deserts**, including the Cape and Islands and rural areas of the Commonwealth, to support access to MOUD. DPH will then work with EOHHS, the ORRF, and Administration partners to develop policy and funding required to address limited access.

**Longer-term Investments and Actions:**

* **Mandate SUD Core Competencies**: DPH will adopt standards used for medical schools to provide core competencies for students who are seeking professional licensure in all fields licensed by DPH and veterinary students.
* **Expand Harm Reduction Vending Machines**: Based on lessons to be learned from the fall 2023 pilot in Berkshire County, DPH will identify communities and areas of high overdose incidence and with limited access to naloxone and other harm reduction supplies. DPH will then provide funding and coordinate engagement between syringe services providers, municipalities, SUD providers and community-based organizations to support further implementation of vending machines.
* **Expand Workforce Initiatives:** EOHHS will seek to expand workforce initiatives for behavioral health providers – including tuition reimbursement – to include those who work in non-traditional levels of care (e.g., overdose education, naloxone distribution, Moms Do Care, FIRST Steps Together), and work with state schools, community colleges, and vocational and technical high schools in MA to bolster the workforce pipeline.

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