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CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee Receives Recommendations on Funding Priorities for Opioid Settlement Funds Received by the State

(HARTFORD, CT) – The Connecticut Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC) received a report today highlighting recommendations for the informed use of funds received by the state from settlements with prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors. Connecticut is amid an opioid overdose crisis; there were 1,464 deaths in 2022 alone. The state has an unprecedented opportunity to use funds received from the settlement of opioid-related litigation to address this crisis and reduce overdose deaths and opioid-related adverse personal and public health effects in the immediate, near, and long-term.

The report, authored by faculty in the Yale Schools of Medicine and Public Health, uses current epidemiological and biomedical evidence on the overdose crisis to update recommendations from the [2016 Connecticut Opioid REsponse \(CORE\) Initiative Report](#). In 2016, in the face of an unprecedented number of opioid overdoses in the state, the Connecticut Opioid REsponse (CORE) team developed a strategic plan laying out a series of strategies designed to reduce opioid-related deaths. That document, a summation of the scientific literature at the time, provided guidance to the state, alongside efforts from the Alcohol and Drug Policy Council (ADPC), a statewide stakeholder group. Many of the recommendations of that report and from the ADPC have now been enacted. At the request of the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and in coordination with the ADPC, the CORE team, with members from the Yale Program in Addiction Medicine, were invited to summarize the existing scientific literature and make recommendations regarding funding priorities to the OSAC.

The OSAC is a [legislatively mandated](#) body co-chaired by DMHAS Commissioner Nancy Navarretta and supported by DMHAS staff. Legal settlements with prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors resulted in large payments to be transferred to the state for the intended use of addressing the public health consequences of the prior decade's increase in opioid prescribing. This Opioid Settlement Fund has provided the State of Connecticut with the means to implement initiatives and interventions to reduce overdose deaths in the state. This draft of the report allows for public and expert comment, with a more detailed version to be released in February 2024.

“This report will be instrumental in helping the OSAC make decisions about prioritizing and funding the most effective strategies to reduce overdose deaths in Connecticut,” said Commissioner Navarretta. “With over 1,400 overdose deaths in our state in each of the past two years, it is important to allocate resources to provide lifesaving support to those who need it most.”

“The Yale team is honored to work with the state in this capacity. We believe we have a unique opportunity to put these funds to use saving lives in Connecticut,” said Dr. David Fiellin, Director of the Yale Program in Addiction

Medicine. “While we have made progress since our original report, fentanyl and other substances create unprecedented challenges. There remains an urgent need to focus our attention and spending on those strategies that are backed by the strongest scientific evidence and will have the largest return on investment.”

Recommendations and strategies identified in this report conform to the nine core abatement strategies identified in the Opioid Litigation Settlement to address the opioid overdose crisis. The 2023 CORE Report recommended funding priorities are as follows:

1. Increase access to and support the most effective medications (methadone and buprenorphine) for opioid use disorder across diverse settings;
2. Reduce overdose risk and mortality, especially among individuals at highest risk and highest need with linkage to treatment, naloxone, and harm reduction;
3. Improve the use of existing data and increase data sharing across relevant agencies and organizations;
4. Increase the size of the addiction-specialist workforce and improve non-specialist and community understanding of the scale and nature of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) as well as evidence-based treatments to decrease stigma and promote treatment uptake;
5. Simultaneously deploy and evaluate select primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies; and
6. Address social determinants and needs of at-risk and impacted populations.

The public will have an opportunity to review the draft report in full and provide commentary to the CORE team to inform preparation of the final report to be issued February 2024. A 60-day public comment period is now open, and the comment period will close on November 12, 2023. [Click here](#) to access the Comment Form.

To view the report, [click here](#). For more information about the CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee please [visit the OSAC website](#).

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