



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

VACANT
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: September 12, 2023

DRAFT

XX

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RECEIVE UPDATE ON OPIOID SETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK AND AUTHORIZE ANNUAL UPDATES ON THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK BUDGET PLAN (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

In response to the regional overdose crisis, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has approved the following actions including, but not limited to:

- Adoption of the County's Comprehensive Harm Reduction Strategy (June 8, 2021 (4));
- Approval of a media campaign to prevent fentanyl overdoses in youth (October 19, 2021 (2));
- Declaring Illicit Fentanyl a Public Health Crisis (June 28, 2022 (22));
- Enhancing Fentanyl Education and Strengthening Harm Reduction Efforts for Young People (October 11, 2022 (11));
- Adoption of the San Diego County Opioid Settlement Framework (October 25, 2022 (20)); and
- Update on Opioid Settlement Framework Implementation and Harm Reduction Media Campaigns (May 23, 2023 (26)).

Today's actions provide an update on Opioid Settlement Framework priorities that are in alignment with allowable spending uses defined in the Opioid Settlement Agreements guidelines set forth by the California Department of Health Care Services pursuant to Board direction on May 23, 2023 (26), and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to report back to the Board annually on updates to the Opioid Settlement Framework budget plan in alignment with any new State guidelines.

This item supports the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as the ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. This will be accomplished by investing in access for care, support, outreach, and education for those impacted by the opioid crisis.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive an update on Opioid Settlement Framework and its alignment with Opioid Settlement Agreements and new State guidance.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back via memo annually on updates to the Opioid Settlement Framework budget plan that will include adjustments based on ongoing review of existing programs and according to any new guidelines for the Opioid Settlement Framework.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Every San Diegan experiences the world differently and has unique circumstances and opportunities that can impact health, lifestyle behaviors, and overall well-being, leading to differences in health outcomes, or health inequities. These health disparities exist among communities, including when it comes to overdose and substance use. Although no single age group, race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status is immune to the current overdose crisis, data from the County of San Diego (County) Medical Examiner Office and the San Diego Association of Governments reveal trends over time and disproportionate impacts among varying groups in San Diego County. From 2017 to 2021, the rate of opioid overdose deaths increased by 209%, with the fentanyl overdose death rate increasing by 885% in that same period. However, opioid overdose death rates were highest among those between the ages of 18-45 years old, as well as Native American/Alaska Native and Black/African American residents compared to all other groups. In fact, these groups experienced opioid overdose death rates that were 2-3 times as high as the overall county rate. Based on this, efforts are underway in collaboration with regional stakeholders to learn the unique needs of San Diego County’s communities.

Although overdose deaths reached a peak in 2021, preliminary data show a 10% decrease in overdose deaths from quarter 2 of 2021 compared to 2022 which may forecast a plateau and demonstrates the critical need to continue to the work laid out by the Opioid Settlement Framework. Today’s update builds on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors’ prior actions, including the adoption of the Opioid Settlement Framework, to specifically address the opioid and illicit fentanyl public health crisis. Through the implementation and performance monitoring of programs and services driven by the Opioid Settlement Framework’s key components, as well as the current and future responsive behavioral health public messaging, outreach, and education efforts, the County strives to reduce harm to San Diego County residents impacted by this crisis.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today’s actions support the County of San Diego’s (County) Sustainability Goal #2 to provide just and equitable access to County services with investments focused on chronically underserved communities. The implementation of the Opioid Settlement Framework ensures that programs and services are informed by the community and are available countywide to address the opioid and overdose crisis. This item also supports Sustainability Goal #4 to protect the health and well-being of everyone in the San Diego County region, through broad public messaging campaigns designed to enhancing community awareness of the harms associated with opioid misuse, overdose prevention and the availability of community resources.

FISCAL IMPACT

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There is no fiscal impact associated with this item. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

At their regular meeting on August 3, 2023, the Behavioral Health Advisory Board voted to the recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In response to the regional overdose crisis, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has approved the following actions including, but not limited to:

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The October 25, 2022 (20) and May 23, 2023 (26) actions noted above detail initial implementation of the Opioid Settlement Framework (Framework) which leverages an unprecedented award resulting from lawsuits against particular opioid pharmaceutical companies, manufacturers, and distributors described in further detail in aforementioned Board actions. This award, in addition to other County of San Diego (County) funding streams, collectively advance the broad range of work the County has taken toward overdose prevention and harm reduction.

Today’s action provides an update on Framework priorities that are in alignment with allowable spending uses defined in the Opioid Settlement Agreements guidelines set forth by the California Department of Health Care Services. Activities-to-date below are informed by community feedback, included in the current budget, and reported within the three key components outlined by the Framework: healthcare integration, harm reduction and prevention, and social supports and services.

Healthcare Integration

In alignment with the Framework, the Opioid Settlement Fund (OSF) budget plan includes allocated funding for healthcare integration initiatives that aim to improve access to care, minimize stigma, lower costs, and improve overall health outcomes for people who use drugs (PWUD). These efforts include the development of the San Diego Relay program, the County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) buprenorphine induction program, and an Overdose Surveillance and Response Unit.

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San Diego Relay Program

Design and implementation of San Diego Relay, a 24/7 nonfatal overdose response service delivered by peers in select emergency departments (EDs) in San Diego County, is currently underway. Allocated funding will support the execution of contracted services that will aim to increase linkages to care and reduce subsequent overdoses for San Diego Relay participants. Services will focus on the delivery of peer-led interventions that foster engagement, address immediate needs, provide overdose education and naloxone access, and support linkages to care and other vital services. Funding for contracted services will support operational and administrative costs necessary to offer the 24/7 service including funds to support staffing, supervision, and sub-contracts with participating emergency departments. Additionally, the budget plan includes funds allocated to support expansion of San Diego Relay to support warm hand offs initiated by County's EMS buprenorphine induction program described below. A request for proposals (RFP) is slated for release this fiscal year, with an anticipated launch of services by early winter of 2024.

EMS Buprenorphine Induction Program

As part of the County's efforts to offer opportunities for increased access, engagement, and retention among those seeking medication assisted treatment (MAT) services, County EMS is working to launch a pilot program authorizing paramedics to initiate MAT (buprenorphine) in the prehospital setting to treat patients in opioid withdrawal. Planning and implementation activities have included the recruitment of two opioid mitigation-focused staff supported by the allocated OSF budgeted funds: an Epidemiologist II and an EMS Specialist. In addition, training for staff, development of program protocols and efforts to establish warm hand offs to support linkage to care services for buprenorphine pilot participants are underway. Program operations are scheduled to launch in late summer 2023.

Overdose Surveillance and Response (OSAR) Unit

In an effort to improve detection of overdose outbreaks and facilitate more effective responses, the County has been working to establish a cross-departmental County OSR unit which will be situated within the County's Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) and Public Health Services (PHS) departments. This unit will ensure the County can effectively implement and manage cross-sector, real-time surveillance, and respond to overdoses in San Diego County. The unit will be responsible for the monitoring of trends, identification of possible clusters, investigation of individual or cluster situations, and community response, including public messaging and education, as needed. Allocated OSF funds support additional positions dedicated to this effort.

Additionally, the OSF budget plan includes funding allocated to support the expansion of surveillance and data collection of emerging drug trends through a collaborative partnership between PHS and the County's Public Safety Group (PSG). Specifically, funding will support staffing resources used to conduct drug testing on both seized substances and decedents of suspected overdose cases processed by the San Diego Medical Examiner's Office. Testing will be conducted on unknown substances, pills, syringes, and associated paraphernalia from decedents as well as data products. It is expected that adding testing of unknown substances from the San Diego

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Medical Examiner's Office will provide well-rounded seized drug data once combined with drug seizure testing data currently housed and maintained by the Crime Lab. It is also anticipated that emerging toxic drug trends can originate with overdose victims first before routinely being observed in forensic testing from crimes including drug possession, sales, distribution and trafficking and drug facilitated crimes such as sexual assault and driving under the influence. Tracking substances and associated paraphernalia will provide emerging information on drug use evolutions.

Harm Reduction and Prevention

Harm reduction services and prevention strategies are critical components of the Framework and are necessary tools for addressing the opioid crisis. For this reason, efforts aimed at supporting harm reduction interventions that *meet people where they are* and directly serve PWUD to prevent overdoses and disease transmission, and to improve the well-being of those served are included in this budget plan. Additionally, prevention strategies, including public messaging campaign activities, specifically those that focus on engaging and empowering individuals to choose healthy behaviors; and primary prevention efforts aimed at preventing opioid misuse among youth through resiliency and refusal skills-building, are supported by this budget plan.

Expanding Naloxone Access and Supply

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. As reflected in the Framework, increasing the availability and distribution of naloxone to community members is not only essential to preventing overdose deaths but one of the County's high priorities. Through the County's Naloxone Distribution Program, efforts to saturate the community with naloxone have been tremendously successful. These successes have led to increased access and targeted distributions across San Diego County. To date over 55,000 naloxone kits have been allocated to County's naloxone distribution network partners, of which an estimated 30,050 have been distributed to community members, over 1,000 of which were accessed through 12 naloxone vending machines that have been placed across the county as of July 6, 2023. Although the County receives free naloxone from the State's naloxone distribution project, our expanded efforts require additional resources to support these on-going overdose prevention activities. For this reason, the budget plan includes a yearly allocation for the purchase of naloxone. It is anticipated that this dedicated funding will support the distribution of over 21,000 additional naloxone kits a year to community members. Without this funding allocation, efforts would be limited to the State allocation of an estimated 32,000 naloxone kits per year, impacting our capacity and commitment to meet the community's naloxone needs.

The OSF budget also includes funding allocations to support expanding naloxone access and distribution efforts. Specifically, this funding supports activities that will enhance access to community naloxone education and training with special attention to increasing access among communities of color and vulnerable populations. These activities will include expanding naloxone access points, supporting targeted naloxone education and training events and the implementation of a naloxone response team, a dedicated naloxone distribution deployment team available to respond to OSAR identified overdose clusters or spikes.

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Drug Checking

Design and implementation of San Diego drug checking services, a harm reduction public health intervention that informs individuals on the chemical composition of their drug samples and pairs peer led interventions to support more informed decision-making and access to linkage to care services is underway. Drug checking services can serve as an immediate intervention tool aimed at changing an individual's drug use and can help PWUD to understand their overdose risk. Drug checking data can also be used to help determine trends in the unregulated drug supply offering opportunities to help inform the development and implementation of effective community responses. Funding for contracted services will support operational and administrative costs necessary to provide services including funds to support staffing, supervision, training, and drug checking technology. Additionally, the budget plan includes funds allocated to support expansion of the drug checking services model to increase the program's capacity to reach targeted high-risk populations, particularly those from rural communities and communities of color. A request for proposals (RFP) is slated for release in this fiscal year, with an anticipated launch of services by early winter of 2024.

Harm Reduction Services

PHS is in the process of implementing the County of San Diego Harm Reduction Services (HRS) program. Services, including clean syringe access, collection of used syringes, health education regarding risk reduction, testing (HIV, hepatitis C and sexually transmitted illnesses), and referrals to substance use treatment, mental health services, housing supports, and other needed services. Services will be provided at several locations throughout San Diego County twice per month using a mobile clinic. Allocated OSF funding will support salaries and benefits for four full-time employees who will staff the HRS program: an Office Assistant, a Certified Nurse Practitioner, a Community Health Worker, and a Community Health Program Specialist II. These four staff will be responsible for a range of duties that will support the direct delivery of services to program participants. Additionally, with the support of OSF funding an updated community assessment to determine and address needs between current conditions and desired conditions as they relate to program services will be conducted. Currently, program services are scheduled to launch by late summer 2023.

Primary Prevention

Primary prevention efforts are designed to educate youth on the harms of substance use and to support resilience and awareness before they start using or experimenting with substances. Investing in evidenced-based primary prevention programs that have been studied and are proven to be effective, are key to helping reduce risk factors for drug use among youth. For example, the Life Skills School-Based Substance Use Prevention program is a classroom-based substance use prevention program that supports development of skills to reduce the prevalence of substance use among youth using an evidence-based curriculum, Project Alert. Project Alert, validated for use in seventh and eighth grades, is currently being adapted to extend to sixth grade, and focuses on building resiliency and refusal skills among participants. The curriculum includes eleven core sessions and three booster sessions, which are incorporated in either science, health, or physical education classes (depending on school determination). The program has been implemented through a collaboration with designated school sites throughout San Diego County through a contract with San Diego County Superintendent Office of Education. Currently, the program is

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funded by the Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Block Grant (SABG) ARPA funding through June 30, 2025. Included in the OSF budget plan is funding to support extending the program by funding program services for an additional two years through June 30, 2027, to allow for full contract implementation and evaluation.

Public Messaging Campaign

Messaging campaigns and materials that promote awareness and access to information about opioid misuse and treatment resources are vital to addressing stigma and empowering individuals impacted by substance use to seek and engage in services. Additionally, public messaging offers opportunities to outreach and educate the public on prevention efforts that seek to encourage healthy behaviors. The OSF budget plan supports ongoing public outreach and education efforts through community informed public messaging campaigns and materials aimed at enhancing community awareness of the harms associated with opioid misuse, overdose prevention and the availability of community resources. These efforts will build and expand upon the County's youth illicit fentanyl and harm reduction public messaging campaigns with the aim to further enhance and reinforce prevention efforts.

Prescription Medication Disposal Bags

As reported by the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics (NCDAS), 52 million or 18.4% of Americans over the age of 12 have misused prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime. The prolonged presence of prescriptions and medications in homes can lead to addiction, overdose, and even death. Prescription medication disposal bags help people safely dispose of unused prescription drugs making them unavailable for misuse and safe to dispose in the trash. Efforts to provide these disposal bags particularly among those individuals prescribed opioids post medical procedures or surgeries, offer an opportunity to increase awareness, reduce the risk of unintended overdose and prevent misuse. For this reason, the OSF budget plan includes one year of funding to support medication disposal bag distribution to individuals prescribed opioids after a medical procedure and/or surgery. Distribution of these disposal bags will primarily target post- surgery patients served by hospitals in the Central and East Regions of the county, where increased rates of overdose mortality have been documented. In addition, dental providers will be engaged given the higher volume of opioid prescriptions observed with this specialty. Preliminary analysis of data from the Controlled Substance and Utilization Data system (CURES), California's prescription drug monitoring program, estimates that about 41,326 opioid prescriptions related to surgical or dental procedures were provided in 2022 within the targeted regions. Distribution efforts will be informed by these estimates and activities to engage hospitals, dental providers, and relevant pharmacies in the targeted regions will be facilitated.

Social Supports and Services

Social supports and services are vital in our efforts to address the opioid crisis. For this reason, threaded within the OSF budget plan are funding allocations that support efforts, interventions and resources aimed at helping people enter and stay in recovery. This ranges from emotional and social support to workforce integration. For instance, several OSF funded initiatives including San Diego Relay, Drug Checking, and HRS integrate a peer workforce within its design. Leveraging the lived experience of peers within each program establishes both a supportive resource for program participants and the opportunity to, with the help of this workforce's unique perspectives,

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to inform and improve service delivery in meaningful ways. In addition, activities supported by OSF funding aimed at engaging parents, family members, schools, community organizations and businesses through ongoing public health messaging campaigns and targeted community naloxone distribution events continue. These efforts offer opportunities to further enhance community members' understanding of substance use and available treatment resources. Furthermore, public messaging and education efforts reduce stigma and draw support for behavioral health interventions which can normalize conversations about behavioral health needs, empower individuals to be advocates and allies, and help drive change.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions support the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Equity (Health) and Community (Quality of Life and Partnership) as well as the *regional Live Well San Diego* vision, by expanding programs which support, outreach, and education for all impacted by the opioid crisis.

Respectfully submitted,

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HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A