

Van Buren County Opioid Settlement Steering Committee

Van Buren County Community Mental Health
801 Hazen St; Paw Paw, MI 49079 Conference Room C

Meeting Minutes – March 5, 2025, at 9:00 AM

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at **9:05 AM**.

Present: Chairman Danielle Persky, Commissioner David DiStefano, Sheriff Abbott, Director Recovery Zone Jewel Dailey, VBCMH Substance Use Disorders Services Supervisor Nikki VanSandt, Specialty Courts Program Supervisor Brianne Smith, Finance Director Becky Grabemeyer, and Community Services Director Lisa Ransler.

II. Approval of Agenda - DiStefano, supported by VanSandt, made a motion to approve the agenda for March 5, 2025. Motion approved unanimously.

III. Approval of Minutes - DiStefano, supported by Abbott, made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2025 meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

IV. Financial Report – Opioid Settlement Fund - Ransler provided the financial update. The available balance in the Opioid Settlement Fund remains at \$748,268, with no significant changes from the previous meeting.

V. Public Comment - None.

VI. Reports / Project-related Updates - There was discussion on the Van Buren County Opioid Spending Priorities, including the following key areas:

A. Increase Capacity of Existing Programs – Stakeholders discussed expanding funding for treatment and recovery services, particularly focusing on programs that have already demonstrated success.

B. Expand Education & Stigma Reduction Efforts – Members emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns and integrating substance use education into schools and community programs.

C. Create a County-Wide Resource List – Discussion on compiling a comprehensive list of available opioid-related resources in the county for easier access by service providers and community members.

VII. Old Business - The committee continued discussions on spending priorities for the opioid settlement funds. Some members advocated for larger-scale projects, while others preferred smaller, more targeted efforts. The RFP process for funding disbursement was reviewed, with emphasis on ensuring transparency and effectiveness.

VIII. New Business

- A. Request for Proposals and Scoring Criteria – Discussion** - A discussion was held regarding the criteria for evaluating RFP submissions. The committee agreed that funding should prioritize projects demonstrating measurable impact, sustainability, and alignment with county opioid response goals.

The review committee should be diverse enough to have a broad awareness of existing programs and funding sources, ensuring that proposed projects do not duplicate services already available or funded elsewhere.

While most grants should be issued on a reimbursement basis, provisions should be made for entities that lack the upfront funding to provide services on a reimbursement model.

It is recommended that funding be distributed once or twice per year on a set schedule, but flexibility should be maintained to address emerging needs or emergency situations as they arise.

Additionally, a grant agreement must be established, requiring recipients to use funds strictly for the specified purpose and to comply with reporting requirements to track both progress and fund usage.

B. RFP Process Timeline

The group reviewed a tentative timeline for releasing and evaluating RFPs, aiming to have a public review of priorities and procedures in April/May with RFP's available in June/July and funding decisions made before October 1.

C. Bronson Partnership

An update was provided on potential collaboration with Bronson Health System to support opioid-related treatment and prevention initiatives. This partnership would leverage Bronson's healthcare network to expand access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and other recovery support services.

- IX. Adjournment** - Abbott, supported by VanSandt, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 AM. Motion approved unanimously.

Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 9:00 AM

Submitted by: *Lisa Ransler*