

Van Buren County Opioid Settlement Steering Committee

Van Buren County Community Mental Health Conference Room

801 Hazen St; Paw Paw, MI 49079

Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2024 at 9:00AM

- 1. Call to Order & Attendance:** Meeting was called to order at 9:~~12~~ AM

Present: Chairman Danielle Persky, Commissioner Mike Chappell, Commissioner Richard Godfrey, Sheriff Abbott, Dr. Anna Tart, Director Recovery Zone Jewel Dailey, Veronica Stillson, Family Division Administrator and Community Services Director Lisa Ransler.

- 2. Approve Agenda:** Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Godfrey seconded the approval. Motion passed.

- 3. Approval of Minutes:** Sheriff Abbott moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Chappell seconded the approval. Motion passed.

- 4. Financial Report – Opioid Settlement Fund:** Lisa Ransler provided the group with a financial update, there were no changes in financial status from the last meeting, being that there was currently \$748,268 available in the fund.

- 5. Public Comment:** None.

- 6. Project-related Updates**

- a. **Michigan Opioid Settlement County Reporting – Data Overview – June 2024:** Michigan Association of Counties completed a survey and the data was distributed and briefly reviewed.

- 7. Old Business:**

- a. **Van Buren County Community Assessment Report:** Anna Merrill summarized MSU's community survey results - The **2024 Community Assessment** gathered data through a community survey, an organization survey, and five focus groups, with a strong emphasis on hearing from people with lived experience (PWLE). The findings highlighted key service access trends, barriers faced by individuals and loved ones, and gaps in resources. Major barriers identified included affordability, stigma, and the lack of nearby resources. Survey respondents also indicated a strong need for increased substance use disorder (SUD) education and training. Based on the assessment, MSU recommends focusing on capacity building, expanding community education opportunities, and developing a county-wide resource list.

The Community Assessment Report also identifies housing as a significant gap in services, particularly for individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) and those in recovery. The report recommends expanding transitional housing, especially for individuals re-entering the community after incarceration, as this resource is currently

lacking. Additionally, the report highlights the need to increase the capacity of existing housing programs rather than creating new ones, ensuring that more individuals can access stable and supportive housing. Transportation barriers also contribute to housing access challenges, as individuals struggle to reach available services. Addressing stigma in housing is another key recommendation, as it prevents individuals with SUD from securing stable living arrangements. The creation of a county-wide resource list is proposed to improve access to housing and related services, streamlining referrals and support. Expanding sober living facilities and supportive housing options was strongly emphasized in focus groups as a necessary step to help individuals sustain long-term recovery.

8. New Business

- a. **Opioid Spending Priorities** were discussed. Treatment and recovery support were suggested at the top of the list. Prevention in schools was also a priority. Access to opportunities was also discussed as a concern with the rural nature of Van Buren County.
- b. The Michigan Association of Counties recently issued a Settlement Funds Toolkit, which can serve as a guide to local spending. Staff will review and begin to develop RFP.

9. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 9:48 AM. The next meeting date will in a few months after the tool kit for the RFP process has been reviewed

Submitted by Lisa Ransler