

Recovery for All: A Unified Approach to Combat the Opioid Crisis

I represent the collective voice of the **Michigan Association of Substance Abuse Providers (MIASAP)**, on an issue that transcends politics and one that impacts a majority of Michiganders - the opioid crisis. This crisis is not confined to any one community or group; it is a pervasive threat to the health, well-being, and prosperity of all Michiganders.

The Common Ground We Stand On

At the heart of our mission is a simple truth that resonates with each of us: addiction is a disease, a formidable challenge that requires our collective effort, empathy, and resources to overcome. Wayne County, along with the broader Michigan community, finds itself at the epicenter of an opioid crisis that has led to soaring overdose rates and untold suffering. Yet, within this crisis lies an unprecedented opportunity. The influx of settlement funds presents a beacon of hope, a chance to fundamentally strengthen our community's response to addiction, to extend a hand to our neighbors in need, and to forge a path towards recovery and resilience.

Envisioning Recovery for All

Our guiding principle, "Recovery for All," embodies our commitment to inclusive, comprehensive addiction services that span from prevention and treatment to sustainable recovery. In 2021, Michigan witnessed over 3,000 drug overdose deaths, marking an all-time high and a clear call to action. Our SUD providers, many operating as small nonprofit organizations, are at the forefront of this battle, offering critical services despite facing daunting challenges such as severe staffing shortages and systemic barriers that hinder access to care.

Strategic Allocation of Opioid Settlement Funds

In alignment with the principles of the National Settlement Agreement, MIASAP advocates for a deliberate and impactful use of the opioid settlement funds to address several critical areas:

1. **Workforce Enhancement:** Address the acute workforce shortage in the substance use disorder field. Our proposal includes measures such as retention bonuses, credential cost coverage, and wellness events for therapists. These steps aim to support, valorize, and sustain the dedicated professionals who provide life-saving services to our communities.
2. **Barrier Removal:** Enhance access to care by streamlining authorization processes, funding transportation to care facilities, and expanding recovery support services. These measures are vital in dismantling the barriers that prevent individuals from seeking and receiving the help they need.
3. **Local Government Collaboration:** Encourage municipalities receiving settlement funds to establish oversight committees and commit a significant portion of these funds to SUD prevention, treatment, and recovery services. This collaborative approach ensures that resources are used effectively and according to their intended purpose.
4. **Building Sustainable Recovery Systems:** Extend residential treatment durations and develop comprehensive post-treatment support programs. Integrating primary care into SUD services

Michigan Association of Substance Addiction Providers
Testimony, April 8-10, 2024. House + Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on HHS

and establishing recovery housing funds are pivotal steps toward creating a seamless pathway to long-term recovery.

But the reality is that the opioid funds are not being distributed strategically and each community that is receiving them is not necessarily using them in line with the settlement agreement. As a result, we advocate for funding to support systemic change to the epidemic.

Why This Matters

The opioid crisis represents a multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive response. By ensuring the strategic use of settlement funds, we not only address the immediate impacts of the epidemic but also lay the foundation for a healthier, safer future for all Michiganders. It's about creating lasting change, fostering a community where recovery is accessible to everyone, and where each step forward is a step towards healing and resilience.

The path to "Recovery for All" is paved with collective action, empathy, and the strategic use of resources. MIASAP is committed to this journey, ready to work alongside all stakeholders to turn this vision into a reality. Together, we can overcome the opioid crisis and build a future marked by hope, health, and recovery for every Michigander.

Thank you for your attention, your compassion, and your commitment to this vital cause.

Daniel Cherrin is lead facilitator of the Michigan Association of Substance Addiction Providers.