

**Item Title:** Approval of Wake County Opioid Settlement Funding Plan FY23-FY24

**Specific Action Requested:**  
**That the Board of Commissioners:**

- 1. Approves the Wake County Opioid Settlement Funding Plan for FY23 and FY24, and**
- 2. Accepts and appropriates \$4,850,000 from the NC Department of Justice's National Opioid Settlement into the Wake County Opioid Settlement Fund.**

**Item Summary:**

**Purpose:** The Board of Commissioners is required to approve the use of National Opioid Settlement funds per the North Carolina Memorandum of Agreement and must also approve additional appropriations for the FY23 budget.

**Background:** Lawsuits aimed at several companies involved in manufacturing and distributing prescription opioid drugs have been settled in federal court. Under the terms of the settlement, North Carolina will receive approximately \$750 million and Wake County will receive \$36 million over 18 years to address the opioid epidemic. Wake County agreed to be part of the settlement agreement in November 2021 and agreed to the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement that establishes the terms for oversight and use of settlement funds in North Carolina.

Wake County has conducted a process to review authorized uses of settlement funds, engaged the community in priority assessment, and worked with stakeholders to identify key areas of investment. A Wake County Opioid Settlement Funding Plan has been developed outlining the priority setting process and intended use of funds for the period FY23 through FY24.

Survey respondents identified five top strategies for focus in the early years of settlement funding: criminal justice diversion, evidence-based addiction treatment, early intervention, recovery support services and recovery housing. The plan recommends an appropriation of \$4,850,000 for use through FY24 to achieve improvements in these key strategic areas including initiatives that will fund opioid use disorder treatment, care navigation, early identification and intervention and housing access and support.

**Board Goal:** This action supports Community Health and Vitality Goal 1: Improve residents' health and well-being by promoting healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

**Fiscal Impact:** The FY 2023 and 2024 revenues and expenditures related to this effort are estimated to total \$4,850,000 and will be appropriated within the multi-year Opioid Settlement Fund. Future appropriations for the remainder of the 18-year plan will be brought to the Board of Commissioners for consideration.

**Additional Information:**

The opioid crisis is one of the worst public health emergencies our country has faced in decades. In 2021, over 90,000 people died of a drug overdose in the United States, including over 198 individuals in Wake County. Opioids were involved in over three quarters of those deaths. Counties are on the front lines of this crisis, providing public services that make it possible to survive and recover from a substance use disorder.

North Carolina is part of a historic \$26 billion agreement that will help bring desperately needed relief to communities impacted by opioids. These funds will be used to support prevention, treatment, recovery, and other life-saving programs and services in communities throughout the state. In November 2021, Wake County agreed to participate in the national settlement and will receive a total of \$36.1 Million over the next 18 years. These funds may only be used to address the opioid epidemic. Use of the funds requires formal approval and authorization of an expenditure plan by the Wake County Board of Commissioners, consistent with the settlement agreement.

Plan development requires public participation to ensure funds are used to address community priorities and is representative of the full county geography. The public participation requirement was met after extensive publicity on the county website and through an in-person and virtual community stakeholder meeting that was held on August 2, 2022. More than 250 individuals participated in the three-hour meeting. Following the meeting, an online survey – available to anyone -- was open until close of business on August 5 for respondents to prioritize eligible strategies.

A planning team, led by the Wake County Manager's Office staff with assistance from knowledgeable stakeholders has developed this draft plan that reflects this public input. The plan recommends allocating \$4.85 million over the period FY23 and FY24 to support the five highest priority strategies identified by survey respondents:

1. Criminal justice diversion
2. Evidence-based addiction treatment
3. Early intervention
4. Recovery support services
5. Recovery housing

To support these top strategies, the plan recommends providing fund to four key initiatives:

- **Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Treatment (FY23 through FY24 = \$2M)**
  - Provide funding for Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for uninsured or underinsured individual with any medication approved for this purpose by the FDA and assist continuity of care for these individuals among community providers.

- Provide flexible resources to support needs of individuals while engaged in OUD treatment.
- **Care Navigation (FY23 through FY24 = \$1.5M)**
  - Establish and equip team of navigators to support three target populations to help individuals access addiction treatment, recovery support, harm reduction services, primary healthcare or other services or supports they need to improve their health or well-being.
    - Geographically identified communities
    - Criminal justice involved
    - Youth and their families
  - Provide flexible resources to navigators to prevent harm and to help individuals overcome barriers to accessing and continuing with treatment services.
- **Early Identification and Intervention (FY23 through FY24 = \$600,000)**
  - Expand education and training programs for youth, parents, community groups, coaches, youth ministers, employers, and others who encounter young people. Training would include Youth Mental Health First Aid, Adverse Childhood Experiences and other educational programs targeting early identification and intervention of problematic use of drugs or mental health conditions.
- **Housing Access and Support (FY23 through FY24 = \$750,000)**
  - Provide access to housing for people with OUD including supportive housing, recovery housing, housing assistance programs, training for housing providers or recovery housing program that allow or integrate FDA-approved medication with other support services.

Funding estimates include administrative costs to oversee and operate the proposed initiatives. Transparency is a key element of the settlement, and there is a requirement for annual reporting by Wake County that includes how the funds were spent and impact information.

The Board's action will accept and appropriate \$4,850,000 of the total \$6,856,730 that is available for FY23 and FY24 based on North Carolina's settlement payment schedule. The uncommitted funding for FY23 and FY24 will be deferred for future year funding to help sustain start-up operations to align with future year funding levels.

The Board of Commissioners received an overview of the planning process and plan recommendations at the August 22, 2022 Human Services Committee. The plan has been amended to reflect the feedback from Commissioners.

**Attachments:**

1. Presentation
2. Wake County Opioid Settlement Funding Plan FY23-FY24
3. NC Opioid Settlement Payment Schedule to Wake County
4. Budget Memo – FY 2023 Opioid Settlement Fund