

Dept. of Health Services: Seeks ideas for \$8 million in opioid settlement funds

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is asking the public to share thoughts on how to use a second round of opioid settlement funds to provide guidance on where money should be spent to reduce harms associated with opioid use disorder. Approximately \$8 million will be available to support existing or new projects and programs in communities across Wisconsin. People can make their recommendations in a survey starting today through February 17, 2023. The survey is available in [English\(link is external\)](#) and [Spanish\(link is external\)](#).

“The responses we received from the public and partners during listening sessions last year reminded us that addressing opioid use disorder in communities is not one-size-fits-all,” said Paul Krupski, DHS Director of Opioid Initiatives. “Our plan reflects the specific needs of Wisconsinites, and we intend to use feedback from this year’s survey to do the same.”

In 2022, the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) announced final approval of an agreement with the nation’s three major pharmaceutical distributors (Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen) and Johnson & Johnson. Payments from the distributors will continue for 18 years. Payments from Johnson & Johnson will continue for nine years.

“The funds that Wisconsin DOJ helped secure from opioid companies will aid communities across Wisconsin in combating the opioid epidemic,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Input from those impacted by the epidemic will help maximize the good that these funds can do for Wisconsinites.”

DHS is required to submit a plan for anticipated settlement funds to the Joint Committee on Finance every year. [The plan submitted to JFC in July 2022](#) included strategies to support data collection and surveillance, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, capital projects, and funding for tribal nations. The legislature's Joint Committee on Finance approved a modified version of the \$31 million plan for 2022 which included funds for:

- Supporting school-based prevention programs - \$250,000
- Supporting community-based prevention programs - \$750,000
- Expanding the NARCAN® Direct Program - \$3 million
- Establishing and fund a program to distribute fentanyl test strips - \$2 million
- Supporting medication-assisted treatment - \$2 million
- Expanding the hub-and-spoke health home pilot program - \$1 million
- Supporting room and board costs for Medicaid members in residential substance use disorder treatment - \$2.5 million
- Supporting renovations or construction of care and treatment facilities - \$10 million
- Creating an overdose alert system - \$500,000
- Supporting tribal nations - \$6 million
- Supporting law enforcement agencies - \$3 million

The second year of funding can be used for existing programs or toward new projects to address impacts of the opioid epidemic in communities statewide.

Wisconsin has made huge strides to address opioid use disorder in the state since a nationwide opioid epidemic was identified in the early 2000s. This includes immediate and long-term projects like expanding the availability of NARCAN® to reverse opioid overdoses, making fentanyl strips more widely available, and planning to expand the hub-and-spoke health program which treats the whole person, not just the substance use disorder.

While data for 2022 has yet to be finalized, 2021 [data show](#) there were 1,427 opioid overdose deaths in Wisconsin. An increase in overdose deaths can be traced in large part to the addition of fentanyl, a powerful, synthetic drug, in substances like opioids.

“Deaths from opioids are preventable and Governor Evers and DHS remain focused on our mission to provide hope and healing to the Wisconsinites affected by opioid use disorder,” Krupski said. “We look forward to hearing ideas for using this next

round of settlement funds toward that goal.”

If you or someone you love needs help for an opioid use disorder or other substance use issue, contact the [Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline\(link is external\)](#). Call 211 or 877-947-2211.

For more information on opioid use disorder, prevention, and treatment options, visit the [Dose of Reality webpages](#).