



OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND **ADVISORY COUNCIL**

2026 Recommendations

Background

Maryland's Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) was created in 2019 to receive all funds awarded to the State of Maryland through legal settlements with prescription opioid manufacturers, distributors, and retail pharmacies. In 2022, Maryland established the ORF Advisory Council (ORFAC) to provide annual recommendations regarding the use of the settlement funds. These recommendations are specifically for the state share of settlement proceeds, which is approximately 30% of the funds that Maryland will receive.

ORF Advisory Council Members

- Senator Dawn Gile
- Delegate Samuel Rosenberg
- Special Secretary of Overdose Response Emily Keller, Maryland's Office of Overdose Response
- Perrie Briskin, Maryland Department of Health, Medicaid Administration
- Brendan Welsh, Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration
- Lauren Levy, Maryland Association of Counties (chair)
- Dr. David Myles, Maryland Municipal League
- Appointed by the Governor: Dr. Malik Burnett, Meghan Westwood, and Dr. Sherri Holt
- Appointed by the Secretary of Health: Angel Traynor, Rachel Pederson, and Pete Fitzpatrick

2026 Recommendations

Transportation

- Increase support for transportation to treatment services, including Opioid Treatment Programs.
- Consider models, such as the [Compass Model](#) in Cecil County, that include transportation to employment opportunities, healthcare appointments, support meetings, education, wraparound services, etc.

Treatment in Correctional Settings

- Continue to fund and support efforts that expand access to evidence-based treatment in correctional settings, including treatment with medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), substance use disorder screening services (such as Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment, or “SBIRT”), counseling services, re-entry planning and peer support.
- Create a sustainability plan for program funding requirements related to the Opioid Use Disorder Examinations and Treatment Act (House Bill 116) of 2019 that incorporates working with local governments. The sustainability plan should include the cost of MOUD treatment in correctional facilities in their healthcare service contracts.

Access to Treatment

- Expand the MOUD Access Hotline currently operating in Baltimore City statewide.
- Require programs receiving ORF funding that offer MOUD to focus on low-barrier access to care, including same-day initiation and walk-up appointments.

Peer Workforce

- Incentivize organizations to hire peers while they are seeking certification.
- Work with the Maryland Department of Labor’s Recovery Friendly Workplace program to incorporate hiring peers seeking certification into their program.

Importance of Harm Reduction

- The federal government has published guidance that has caused concerns for the availability and sustainability of harm reduction services. The council recommends that this issue be closely watched and ORF funds be considered if major access gaps are identified. Educational outreach may be needed at the local level about these services in order to fill gaps.
- Support access to safe use supplies, specifically drug testing strips and safer smoking materials.
- Ensure the Rapid Analysis of Drugs program continues.



Housing during or after Substance Use Treatment

- Support increased access to quality and certified recovery housing and long-term housing options beyond recovery housing, to include supportive housing options.
- Ensure housing options support multiple pathways to recovery.

Evidence-Based Primary Prevention

- Encourage prevention programming that is evidence-based and not fear-focused, such as but not limited to Botvin Life Skills, Project Alert, and the Hope Model.
- Support programs that are trauma-informed, address ACEs, and build resiliency.
- Include youth voices in the development of programming.

“Post-vention”

- Expand family support, to include grief counseling or other services after a loved one experiences a fatal or nonfatal overdose.
- Expand support for caregivers and emergency responders exposed to overdose events.

Process Recommendations

- Ensure the Opioid Restitution Fund is protected from state budget balancing measures.
- Provide stipends to people with lived or living experience participating in stakeholder workgroups.
- Remove barriers to state grant funding so that small community based organizations can access opportunities (e.g., provide support for grant writing, invoicing, and meeting administrative requirements through fund matching).