

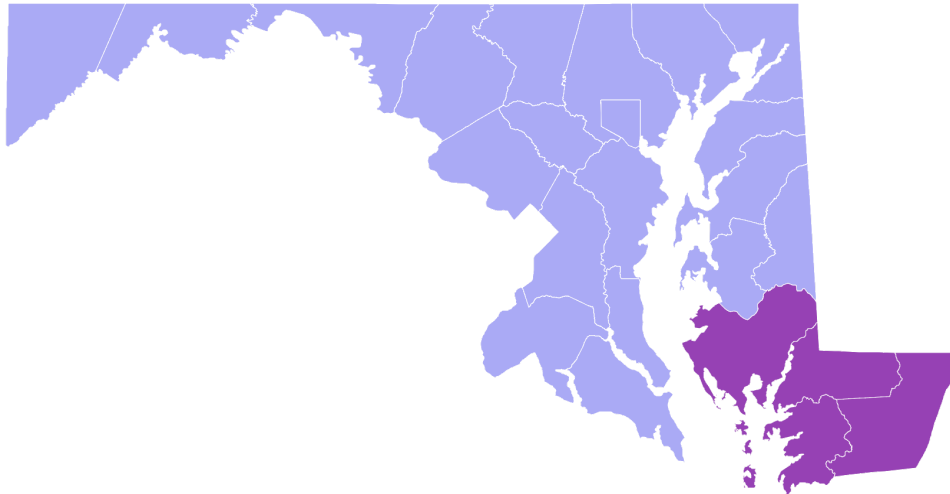


Maryland's Office of
Overdose Response

Community Overdose Action

Town Hall Series

Regional Event Summary Lower Eastern Shore



Dorchester County

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

The Packing House, Cambridge

Worcester County

Thursday, September 7, 2023

Ocean City Convention Center

Somerset County

Thursday, September 6, 2023

Crisfield Library

Wicomico County

Friday, September 8, 2023

Wor-Wic Community College

Overview

In September 2023, Maryland's Office of Overdose Response launched our Community Overdose Action Town Hall Series, through which we are visiting each of Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions to hear community feedback about how Maryland can do more to address the overdose crisis. Through these events, we received a tremendous amount of feedback from Marylanders about how overdose has affected their lives and their communities. We also heard their ideas for how state and local leaders can do more to expand access to care and save lives.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in our town hall series. Public input will be a key consideration for informing Maryland's strategic policy priorities for addressing overdose morbidity and mortality throughout the state. Each community has its own specific needs, and it is important that these needs be considered in the formulation of state and local-level policy.

Lower Eastern Shore Events

The first four stops of our tour included jurisdictions across Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore.

Dorchester County (Tuesday, September 5, 2023): This event was held in the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development offices located at the Packing House in Cambridge. Here, we were joined by Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, Dorchester County Health Officer Roger Harrell, and Dorchester County Circuit Court Judge William Jones.

Somerset County (Wednesday, September 6, 2023): The second stop on our tour was the Crisfield Library in Somerset County. Guest speakers included Somerset County Health Officer Danielle Weber and Crisfield Mayor Darlene Taylor.

Worcester County (Thursday, September 7, 2023): Our third town hall was held at the Ocean City Convention Center. Guest speakers included Worcester County Local Behavioral Health Director Jessica Sexauer, Sandy Kerrigan of the Worcester County Health Department, and Tamera Mills of Worcester County Public Schools.

Wicomico County (Friday, September 8, 2023): The fourth town hall in the Lower Eastern Shore was held at Wor-Wic Community College. Special guests included Wicomico County Health Officer Matthew McConaughy, Salisbury Assistant EMS Chief Christopher Truitt, and Derrick Faulcon.

Community Feedback

Individuals who spoke during our first four town halls across the Lower Eastern Shore addressed many common themes as well as county-specific challenges to addressing the overdose crisis. Individuals who shared their stories and their feedback included people in recovery, family members of individuals who use drugs, family members who have lost loved ones to overdose, representatives of community organizations, local government representatives, individuals experiencing homelessness, members of faith-based communities, representatives of treatment and recovery providers, students, and others. Their input is summarized below.

Note: The views summarized here are those of the individuals who participated in our town hall series. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Maryland Department of Health or the Moore-Miller

administration. Feedback has been anonymized and summarized for concision while preserving the intent of the speakers to the greatest extent possible. Feedback regarding similar themes has been combined where appropriate.

- Interagency partnerships and public-private partnerships with community organizations are essential for providing services for individuals with substance use disorders.
- More capacity is needed to provide care for individuals with co-occurring mental and behavioral health needs.
- Increasing support for low-income individuals and individuals experiencing homelessness cannot be separated from addressing the needs of people who use drugs and those with substance use disorders.
- Care coordination and increasing connections to care are essential, especially for incarcerated individuals and those leaving incarceration.
- Additional substance use supports are needed for young Marylanders, including those with criminal justice involvement.
- Greater treatment capacity is needed within detention facilities, which need more resources to implement programming.
- Maryland lacks capacity for youth substance use treatment services.
- More youth-focused prevention programming is needed to educate young people about the negative consequences of substance use.
- Greater support is needed for children of individuals with substance use disorders and those who have lost parents to overdose.
- More youth-focused programs and activities are needed to provide young people with alternatives to substance use.
- Greater engagement is needed with Maryland's faith-based communities.
- Greater financial assistance is needed across the board to increase substance use programming.
- Substance use programming and opportunities to access care need to be universally available so that it is available to those who need it whenever they need it.
- More transitional support is needed to assist individuals exiting treatment.
- Housing support is essential for individuals in recovery. Supports need to address the needs of the whole person, not just those specific to substance use.
- Decriminalization will not solve the overdose crisis. More is needed to take drugs off the streets.
- Transportation is a significant barrier to accessing treatment for individuals in rural areas. Public transportation is difficult to access on the Lower Eastern Shore.
- Telehealth services are not effective when broadband access remains lacking in rural areas.

- Greater support is needed to support behavioral health workforce staffing.
- In Somerset County specifically, there is a greater need for more peer support groups, such as AA and NA groups.
- Maryland needs a whole family, whole community approach to providing care for individuals with substance use disorders.
- The Lower Eastern Shore has very little access to crisis stabilization services.
- Drug courts can help individuals involved in the criminal justice system access treatment services.
- Greater coordination is needed across the criminal justice system, from law enforcement to the judiciary.
- More is needed to address trauma, which is strongly linked to substance use.
- More education is needed regarding xylazine for people who use drugs. Maryland also needs greater capacity to address xylazine-related wounds, which can inhibit access to treatment. Most treatment providers are not equipped to treat wounds and cannot accept patients seeking treatment who have open wounds.
- Maryland needs greater access to treatment with medications for opioid use disorder.
- Telehealth for behavioral health services can increase access to care.
- Behavioral health services need to be integrated into care in hospital settings.
- The Lower Eastern Shore has very few options for recovery housing. Regulatory barriers, NIMBYism, and housing market shortages, and high home prices make it difficult to establish recovery homes.
- More is needed to support the needs of people in recovery, including housing support, employment opportunities, and access to education.
- The price of over-the-counter naloxone is too high. Individuals who need it the most cannot afford it.
- Lack of insurance coverage can prevent individuals from accessing treatment.
- Harm reduction language is dangerous. We should not encourage substance use. Fentanyl poisoning is tantamount to murder.
- Harm reduction programming helps save lives.
- Maryland needs greater support for families of people who use drugs, including grief counseling services for those who have lost loved ones to overdose.
- More education is needed about fentanyl being mixed with other substances.
- Decriminalization and regulation of substances would save lives. The war on drugs has been a failure.