

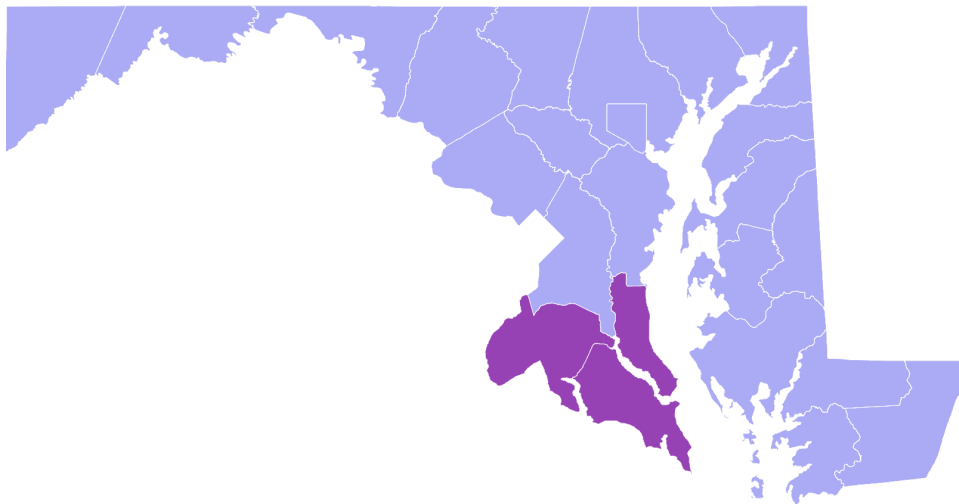


**Maryland's Office of
Overdose Response**

Community Overdose Action

Town Hall Series

Regional Event Summary Southern Maryland



St. Mary's County

Wednesday, November 29, 2023
St. Mary's County Library – Lexington

Calvert County

Tuesday, February 13, 2024
Virtual

Charles County

Thursday, January 25, 2024
Charles Co. Board of Education Building

Overview

In September 2023, Maryland's Office of Overdose Response launched our Community Overdose Action Town Hall Series, through which we visited 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.

Southern Maryland Events

St. Mary's County (Wednesday, November 29, 2023): Our first town hall in Southern Maryland was held at the St. Mary's County Library in Lexington Park, Maryland. Here, we were joined by Dr. Meenakshi Brewster, St. Mary's County Health Officer.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fPrERIk840>

Charles County (Thursday, January 25, 2024): Our second town hall in Southern Maryland was held at the Charles County Board of Education Building in La Plata, Maryland. Special guests for this event included Dr. Dianna Abney, Charles County health officer, Dr. Maria Navarro, Charles County Public Schools superintendent, and Charles County Sheriff Troy Berry.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgxfHH7wS94>

Calvert County (Tuesday, February 13, 2024): Our final town hall for Southern Maryland was held virtually. For this event, we were joined by Dr. Lawrence Polsky, Calvert County Health Officer.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBbhosodNtM>

Community Feedback

Individuals who shared their feedback throughout our town hall series have 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. The input we received during our Southern Maryland events 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.

- Southern Maryland needs more options for adolescent substance use treatment.
- Maryland needs more youth-focused substance use prevention efforts, including peer-to-peer messaging informed by young people.
- Maryland should engage more peer recovery specialists in school-based education and prevention efforts.
- Maryland needs more life skills education to help young people understand the risks of substance use, especially for kids in transitional years.
- Aniline is increasingly being seen as an adulterant in the illicit drug market in Southern Maryland. Maryland needs to sustain its focus on drug testing.
- Maryland needs more treatment providers that accept Medicaid.
- Maryland should invest more in wraparound services, including low-barrier dental care, for individuals who use drugs and those in recovery.
- Maryland needs more substance use services for older individuals, who may not be comfortable accessing care in environments that are predominantly utilized by young individuals
- Transportation is a barrier to accessing treatment, especially for seniors, some of whom may not feel comfortable traveling far from their place of residence to access care.
- Medicaid reimbursement rates make it very difficult for private treatment providers to accept patients with Medicaid.
- Maryland should increase outreach efforts and support (such as health care system navigators) for communities affected by the overdose crisis and structural health inequalities.
- Maryland should leverage local organizations and individuals with lived experience to conduct outreach to local communities.
- Maryland needs more providers for substance use treatment and recovery services in rural areas.
- Grant writing requirements can often act as a barrier for small nonprofits with limited staffing to access funding for recovery services or in general.
- Maryland should work to destigmatize the role of law enforcement agencies in connecting individuals to substance use care.
- Need more resources for pregnant and parenting people with substance use disorders.
- Maryland needs to address stigma associated with substance use in the business community and work to encourage more businesses to keep naloxone on site.
- Maryland state and local agencies should work to convert vacant, government-owned facilities into centers that can provide substance use services.

- Maryland should increase support services for family members of people with substance use disorders. More attention is needed to address trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Substance use services need to address the needs of the whole family.
- More treatment services are needed for individuals with young children.
- Maryland should invest more in peer recovery services.
- Need more money for recovery services in general, and Maryland should increase investments in wraparound services and case management services. The amount that Medicaid reimburses for these services is insufficient to meet the actual needs of individuals who use drugs and those in recovery.
- Maryland needs more mobile crisis services, especially in rural areas.
- Maryland needs more low-barrier, mobile buprenorphine treatment options. Maryland should work to increase access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in general.
- Maryland should legalize safe consumption sites.
- State and local agencies should work to incorporate funding for behavioral health staffing into their budgets. Local organizations frequently face barriers when attempting to use grant funds for staffing.
- More psychiatric treatment capacity is needed in local hospitals to better address the needs of individuals with co-occurring mental health and behavioral health disorders.
- Maryland should provide transportation services for individuals leaving incarceration so that they can immediately access MOUD treatment services.
- Maryland should increase access to apprenticeship programs for justice-involved individuals, which can help develop career skills that can be used after release from incarceration.
- More work needs to be done to educate Marylanders about stigmatizing language.
- Maryland should work to increase engagement with faith-based community partners to increase support for people with substance use disorders. More outreach is needed to educate faith-based partners about substance use disorders.
- Maryland should increase screening services in schools.
- Maryland should enact harsher sentences for people who sell substances.