

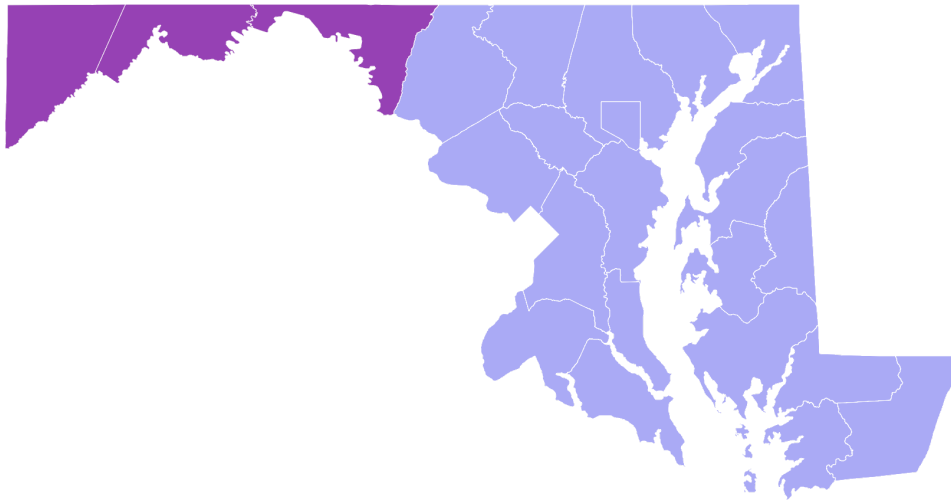


Maryland's Office of
Overdose Response

Community Overdose Action

Town Hall Series

Regional Event Summary Western Maryland



Washington County

Wednesday, October 11, 2023
USMH Hospitality Center

Garrett County

Monday, January 22, 2024
Garrett College

Allegany County

Thursday, October 12, 2023
Allegany College of Maryland

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 have 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.

Western Maryland Events

Washington County (Wednesday, October 11, 2023): Our first town hall in Western Maryland was held at the Hospitality Center of the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown. Here, we were joined by Washington County Director of Behavioral Health Services Vicky Sterling, Lt. Josh McCauley of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, and Melanie Watts, co-chair of Washington Goes Purple.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/DEmbK2WslXs?si=dZj2nzhVrKvVOSWy>

(Note: Audio for this recording is distorted during the first 15 minutes of the town hall. Public comment begins at minute 26.)

Allegany County (Tuesday, October 12, 2023): Our second town hall in Western Maryland was held at the Allegany College of Maryland in Cumberland, Maryland. Special guests for this event included Allegany Health Officer Junie Delizo, State's Attorney for Allegany County James Elliott, Allegany County Sheriff Craig Robertson, and Susan Stewart representing Maryland Area Health Education Center West.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/2z8BOQg5Bt8?si=uEqOfhUiTyPmZU5k>

Garrett County (Monday, January 22, 2024): Our final town hall for Western Maryland was held at the Performing Arts Center of Garrett College in McHenry, Maryland. Here, we were joined by Garrett County Health Officer Bob Stephens and State's Attorney for Garrett County Christian Mash.

Video Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/4QkSjgHJnfU?si=6XTg36orXqAnTqpi>

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 Western 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.

- Maryland needs to address the presence of xylazine in the supply of illicit opioids.
- More support is needed to address trauma experienced by family members of individuals who use drugs.
- More treatment options are needed for individuals with children, including both single mothers and single fathers.
- Maryland needs more juvenile and adolescent treatment options.
- More training in overdose response and naloxone administration is needed for friends and family members of people who use drugs.
- More substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery resources are needed for children in schools to prevent overdoses.
- Maryland should invest in more recovery-friendly community spaces and resource hubs to help support individuals exiting treatment.
- Libraries can provide support structures and alternatives to substance use for young people.
- Maryland needs more treatment options for men.
- Maryland should enact stricter punishments for drug dealers.
- More attention is needed to address the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.
- More support services are needed for individuals actively using substances.
- Incarceration will not solve the overdose crisis.
- Maryland should invest in more care coordination services for individuals in recovery.
- More attention is needed to address the long-term impacts that substance use and policies designed to combat substance use (such as those implemented during the 1980s and 1990s) have had on communities.
- Maryland needs more affordable housing options. The overdose crisis cannot be solved without addressing housing availability and affordability.
- Marylanders need greater access to fentanyl test strips because fentanyl has become increasingly common in the supply of illicit drugs and is frequently mixed with other substances.
- Overdose prevention sites may help save lives, but policymakers should not condone substance use.

- Prescribers in Maryland should not need prior authorization in order to prescribe medications for opioid use disorder.
- More resources should be used to support community-based peer recovery services.
- Transportation services can be unreliable in rural areas, which can make accessing substance use services more difficult.
- Peer recovery specialists cannot be reimbursed for transportation services if they are provided using a personal vehicle. This can hinder the ability of small community-based organizations to make connections to substance use treatment services.
- Maryland needs more treatment options in rural areas.
- Methamphetamine and alcohol use are significant issues in Western Maryland.
- Maryland should expand access to 24-hour crisis services in rural areas.
- Stigma surrounding substance use, substance use treatment (such as medications for opioid use disorder), and recovery housing are significant barriers to addressing substance use and overdose in Maryland.
- Maryland needs more second-chance employers and recovery-friendly workplaces that are willing to hire individuals in recovery.
- Maryland should expand access to meaningful employment opportunities for individuals in recovery so that they can address their fundamental human needs.
- Maryland needs more recovery residences that accept insurance.
- Maryland should increase investments in case management services and wraparound services.
- Maryland needs to address the improper disposal of used syringes in the community.
- Regulatory barriers prevent pharmacists from fulfilling too many prescriptions for medications for opioid use disorder. This can hinder pharmacists in rural areas from providing care.
- Syringe services programs can help provide essential support for individuals who use drugs, facilitating connections to care and providing harm reduction information, such as drug testing results, for their clients.
- Maryland should provide more grant opportunities with terms longer than one year to allow local organizations more time and flexibility to establish programs.
- Grant programs should not require local organizations to furnish matching funds to receive support, which imposes significant burdens on small community-based organizations.
- Collaborative relationships, sharing resources, and sharing best practices are crucial for rural areas where resources are limited.
- Requirements to support evidence-based practices can be restrictive for local agencies and community organizations when accessing and utilizing grant funds.