

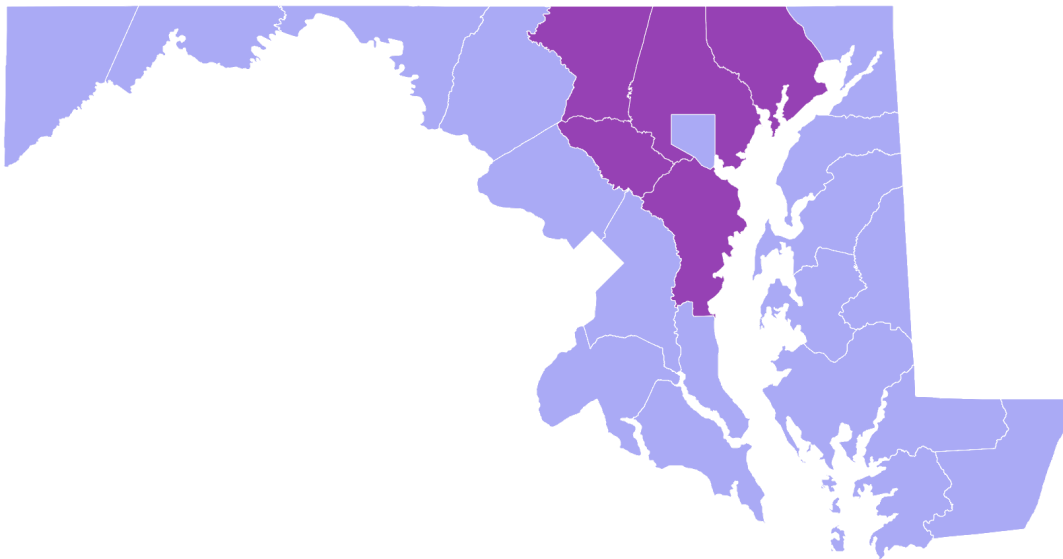


Maryland's Office of
Overdose Response

Community Overdose Action

Town Hall Series

Regional Event Summary Central Maryland



Anne Arundel County
Tuesday, September 12, 2023

Baltimore County
Thursday, September 14, 2023

Harford County
Tuesday, September 26, 2023

Howard County
Thursday, November 30, 2023

Carroll County
Tuesday, February 6, 2023

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.

Central Maryland Events

Anne Arundel (Tuesday, September 12, 2023): This event was held in the Health Life Sciences Building of the Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Maryland. Here, we were joined by Sandy O'Neill, Director of Behavioral Health Services at the Anne Arundel County Health Department, and author and community activist, Jessie Dunleavy.

Baltimore County (Thursday, September 14, 2023): Our town hall for Baltimore County was held at the Dundalk campus of the Baltimore County Community College. Guest speakers included Dr. Gregory Branch, Baltimore County Health Officer, Elise Andrews, Opioid Strategy Coordinator for Baltimore County, and Toni Torsch, representing the Daniel Carl Torsch Foundation.

Harford County (Tuesday, September 26, 2023): The next town hall held in Central Maryland was in Harford County at the Harford County Emergency Operations Command Center in Forest Hill, Maryland. This event was held in combination with a standing, joint meeting of the Harford County Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council, Local Health Improvement Coalition, Behavioral Health Workgroup, and Overdose Prevention Team (formerly the Opioid Intervention Team). Speakers during this event included Harford County Executive Robert Cassilly, Harford County Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler, Harford County Health Department Behavioral Health Bureau Director Andrea Pappas, Shawn Martin, Local Addictions Authority for Harford County, Jennifer Redding, executive director of Behavioral Health Services University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health Klein Family Harford Crisis Center, and Harford County Director of Emergency Services Richard Ayers.

Howard County (Thursday, November 30, 2023): The event was held at Wilde Lake Community Association's Slaton House in Columbia, Maryland. Here, we were joined by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, Dr. Maura Rossman, health officer for Howard County, and Howard County Director of Policy and Programs Carl DeLorenzo.

Carroll County (Tuesday, February 6, 2024): Our town hall for Carroll County was held at the Carroll County Office Building in Westminster, Maryland. Guest speakers for this event included Carroll County Health Officer Susan Doyle.

Note: A town hall was held for Baltimore City on Monday, September 18, 2023. While Baltimore City is also located in Maryland's Central Region, the opioid and overdose crisis has had more severe impacts in

Baltimore City compared to surrounding jurisdictions. Baltimore also has unique challenges and unique opportunities to provide care to individuals who have been impacted by substance use. As such, feedback from the Baltimore City town hall is presented independently from the town halls held in the rest of Maryland's Central Region. You can view the town hall summary for Baltimore City at the link below:

<https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/01/COATHS-Baltimore-City-Summary.pdf>

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 Central 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 invest more in harm reduction services in general, including naloxone distribution, fentanyl test strip distribution, and syringe services.
- Harm reduction efforts are vital for building relationships with people who use drugs, which increases the chances of making connections to care.
- The cost associated with treatment for substance use disorders, including treatment with medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), can be a significant barrier for individuals seeking care. Uninsured and underinsured individuals can struggle to afford treatment.
- Maryland needs to increase access to adolescent treatment services.
- Maryland needs more treatment capacity. Long waitlists can deter individuals from accessing care when they decide they are ready.
- Maryland needs to increase oversight of unregulated recovery residences. Maryland needs to clarify guidelines regarding what qualifies as a recovery residence.
- Government regulations (including building safety requirements) make it difficult to establish new recovery residences.
- Stigma and “not-in-my-back-yard” attitudes are significant barriers to establishing recovery residences.

- Central Maryland needs more recovery residences. Maryland needs to expand access to recovery resources more broadly.
- Maryland needs to invest more in housing supports for low-income individuals and individuals experiencing homelessness, including those with substance use disorders.
- Maryland needs to expand access to substance use care for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Maryland should invest in recovery-oriented community centers and peer recovery services.
- Maryland should work to increase access to meaningful employment opportunities for individuals in recovery. Maryland should engage more with the business community to foster recovery-friendly workplaces.
- Maryland should work to increase care coordination among providers serving patients with substance use disorders.
- Safe stations can help individuals in crisis access substance use care. Safe stations can be a model for other counties across Maryland.
- Maryland needs to do more to address co-occurring mental health and behavioral health disorders. More focus is needed on educating Marylanders about mental health. Maryland needs more capacity to treat mental health conditions.
- It can be difficult for providers to offer services to address co-occurring disorders due to insurance rules. Not many organizations can handle the increased financial burden.
- Maryland should increase substance use screening in primary care settings.
- Maryland should increase efforts to educate people about the dangers of mixing opioids and benzodiazepines, which substantially increase overdose risk when used simultaneously.
- Maryland needs to address licensing application backlogs at the Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists, which is exasperating behavioral health workforce shortages.
- Stigma associated with substance use can act as a barrier to expanding access to care.
- Baltimore County should adopt a law enforcement assisted diversion (LEAD) program. LEAD programs in other local Maryland jurisdictions help individuals with substance use disorder access treatment as an alternative to criminal justice involvement.
- More attention is needed to address the trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) during adolescence. Maryland should provide greater support for family members of individuals who use drugs, especially children who have lost a parent to an overdose.
- Grant writing is a significant barrier for small organizations attempting to access funding. Maryland needs to increase support for smaller, community-based organizations.
- Maryland needs more crisis stabilization centers that can be alternatives to hospital emergency departments. Crisis stabilization centers can provide services that address a person's fundamental needs, such as hygiene and nutrition, in addition to substance use care.

- Maryland needs to increase substance use care, including access to MOUD, in detention facilities, re-entry planning services, and peer recovery services. Maryland can use funds from the Opioid Restitution Fund to support these efforts.
- Drug court programs can help individuals access care while decreasing recidivism and increasing access to wraparound services.
- Staffing and providing necessary staff training are significant challenges for increasing the provision of substance use services in criminal justice settings.
- Maryland should engage more people with lived experience, such as peer recovery specialists, in school-based education efforts. Maryland needs more youth-focused prevention efforts in general. Primary prevention efforts can save lives.
- Maryland needs to do more to increase awareness regarding fentanyl and to educate people, especially young Marylanders, about the dangers posed by the presence of fentanyl in the illicit drug supply.
- Maryland needs to increase collaboration with faith-based organizations to reach people with substance use disorders.
- Emergency medical services need more support from local governments to be able to address calls related to substance use.
- Maryland's Opioid Restitution Fund should be used to support organizations that provide services for individuals with substance use disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maryland's Opioid Restitution Fund should be used to support recovery organizations, peer recovery services, and harm reduction services through community-based organizations.
- Lack of transportation is a significant barrier for individuals accessing care. Transportation is a barrier in rural areas of the state without rideshare providers.
- Maryland needs to do more to address the presence of xylazine in the supply of illicit drugs.
- More attention is needed to ensure that medical professionals do not overprescribe opioids and to ensure that pharmacies do not over-dispense opioids. Primary care providers need more education for treating individuals in long-term recovery and when writing prescriptions.
- Maryland needs to promote interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration to address the overdose crisis.
- Cannabis can be an alternative treatment to opioids for chronic pain.
- The United States needs to do more to stop the flow of fentanyl across our borders.