



OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

Monday, September 15, 2025

1pm-2pm

I. Welcome & Introductions

Special Secretary of Overdose Response Emily Keller (Chair) welcomed the council and public to the Opioid Restitution Fund Advisory Council meeting. She did roll call to ensure there was a quorum of members to conduct council business.

II. Public Feedback Survey Review

The ORF Advisory Council's survey regarding recommended uses received 229 responses.

Key themes in survey responses included:

- Support the recovery continuum of care
- Build up the SUD workforce
- Housing (recovery housing and general housing support for those with OUD)
- Transportation
- Supporting families
- Access to treatment on demand and financial support for treatment
- Low-barrier harm reduction services
- Peer staffing and training
- Sustainable and systematic solutions, not just one-off programming
- Training on overdose/SUD/MOUD
- Evidence-based prevention
- Anti-stigma and recovery-focused messaging

III. Council Discussion

Marcus Webster highlighted the need for technical assistance and education on the ORF, to include Exhibit E. Special Secretary Keller agreed, noting that there is misinformation and confusion about the fund. She shared that the public ORF dashboard is underway currently.

Howard Ashkin elevated the need for focus on developing the substance use workforce to include funding education and addressing lag times with the credentialing board. He also highlighted the need for treatment in corrections and shared a NEJM article showing a decrease in overdose and post-release retention in cases when incarcerated individuals had access to

substance use treatment. Meghan Westwood agreed with Howard's comments about the workforce and shared that her organization has trouble with recruitment.

Special Secretary Keller raised housing and harm reduction as issues to focus on, given potential impacts with changes in federal funding. Marcus Webster agreed and stressed fear about how locals will respond, as education for harm reduction is needed at that level.

Lauren Levy agreed with concerns about housing, to include housing after recovery housing.

Special Secretary Keller shared that DCHD's member of the Maryland Overdose Response Advisory Council is doing work on this, and the option to bring them in for a presentation to this council so they can learn more.

Special Secretary Keller highlighted topics from the survey that were not yet covered, including prevention messaging and the recovery continuum. Marcus Webster agreed with comments from the survey on this topic and encouraged focus on evidence-based prevention and not fear-focused programs, as well as upstream efforts. Howard Ashkin shared positive comments on the public messaging he has seen, highlighting people in recovery. Marcus Webster said that, in addition, he thinks training and education at the local government level can also impact stigma.

Marcus Webster raised the idea of an in-person meeting on some cadence to improve council member attendance. Emily Keller agreed to facilitate this.

IV. Public Comment

Beth Schmidt touched on the issue of family and grief support. She shared that this can be considered prevention, as families often use substances to cope with the loss of family members due to substance use or overdose.

Debbie Santini seconded Beth's comments and inquired about the next steps for these recommendations. Emily Keller shared a draft report that will be developed for the next stage of council member feedback, and then the recommendations will be submitted to the Governor. She shared these will be considered in future grant opportunities.

Next meeting: Friday, September 26, 2025. Goal: To finalize recommendations.