

Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board Meeting

August 29, 2022- SUNY H. Carl McCall Building 353 Broadway, Albany, NY 12246; Nancy L. Zimpher Boardroom

Introductions and Attendance

Present in person

Chair Dr. Stephen Giordano, Vice Chair Deborah Pantin, Dr. Lawrence Brown, Dr. Joshua Lynch, Suzanne Lavigne, OMH Commissioner Sullivan, OASAS Commissioner Cunningham, Dr. Tisha Smith, Avi Israel, Ashley Livingston, Anne Constantino, Dr. Kevin Watkins, Joanne Morne (DOH), Deborah Davis (OASAS), Trishia Allen (OASAS), Tracy Collins (OASAS).

Present virtually

Carmen Rivera, Joyce Rivera, Cheryl Moore, Stephanie Marquesano, Dr. Justine Waldman, Lisa Landau (NYCDOHMH), Sami Jarrah (NYCDOHMH), Connie Burke (OASAS), Dr. Tom Smith (OMH), Peggy O'Shea (DOB).

Housekeeping

Chair Giordano gave an overview of the agenda items including: OASAS presentation, September scheduling and drafting of the Board's annual report and recommendations.

Chair and Vice Chair set a deadline to start the annual report on October 15, 2022, with the report to be drafted by the Chair and Vice Chair with certain sections of report to be assigned to other members for drafting.

There was discussion regarding the letter from the Mid-Hudson Region Commissioners that Board member Marquesano had emailed to everyone prior to the meeting, as well as general discussion regarding the dissemination and review of documents shared by members.

The Chair reminded members that all conflict-of-interest forms need to be submitted prior to making recommendations.

During review of meeting minutes from the two-day session on July 18, 2022, and July 19, 2022, Dr. Lawrence Brown noted he made an in-person appearance the first day and a virtual appearance the second day. There was member discussion about the level of detail in July meeting minutes in which several members requested meeting minutes have more specific detail around items discussed. Further discussion of the level of detail and approval of the minutes tabled for review by the Chair.

OASAS System Overview and Data Presentation

OASAS Associate Commissioner Connie Burke gave a detailed presentation to provide members with an OASAS system overview and data on OASAS services.

Following the presentation there was member discussion regarding the large number of services provided by OASAS as well as concerns regarding geographic (Western NY and Eastern Long Island) and racial disparities (Black and Latino communities). Members discussed the importance of addressing the “service deserts” within the OASAS system and stressed the need for innovative ideas to combat and address them. Members requested clarification around the data presented with specific concerns around the data problems in tracking co-occurring Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and mental health conditions within the OASAS system.

Members discussed the need for expanded access to Methadone through Opioid Treatment Programs, community push back to siting new OTPs, use of mobile OTPs and potentially using existing underutilized Addiction Treatment Centers (ATCs) to provide methadone, crisis centers and detox in service desert areas.

In response to a question from Board member Avi Israel, Deborah Davis from OASAS provided a brief overview of how Opioid Stewardship Funds would be spent and that funds would be spent on harm reduction, treatment affordability and medication affordability.

There was additional discussion about having a better understanding of what needs are unmet by the current processes and structures in place and how to utilize community organizations to fill the need.

Members discussed avoiding duplication of services by government agencies and working collaboratively on new initiatives and consideration of other substances in addition to opioids that contribute to overdose deaths such as stimulants. There was also discussion on the importance of tracking and sharing necessary data and a request for OMH and OASAS to partner to track claims and other data to help inform innovative initiatives to better assist individuals with co-occurring SUD/mental health issues.

Public Comment

Time was provided for public comments, which included representatives from the following community organizations: Truth Pharm and Legal Action Center. Comments focused on the need for innovation and addressing geographic and racial disparities in data and outcomes and overall Board member engagement.

Recommendations

There was Board discussion on how to approach making recommendations and which subject areas would be the focus of recommendations for the next meeting. There was member consensus that the Board should focus on making recommendations with respect to harm reduction and workforce issues with the overlay of racial and geographic equity and integration of SUD/mental health. Members agreed to be prepared with recommendations in line with those parameters at the next meeting. Members also discussed the need to involve more agencies, specifically DOCCS, and more community-based organizations into the process.

Closing Comments

Members discussed meeting at least twice next month. The next scheduled date would be September 30, 2022, with the hopes of adding another meeting prior to that date.