

# Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Wednesday, June 25, 2025, 12pm

Virtual Meeting

Co-Chairs:

Rev. Robyn Anderson, MS, LPC, LMFT, LADC  
Executive Director, Ministerial Health Fellowship

Kevin Elak, RS/REHS, CP-FS, Director of Health, City of  
Middletown Department of Health



# Member Organizations

- Alliance for Living Program
- All-In Recovery
- BHcare
- CCAR
- Chatham Health District
- City of Middletown
- City of Middletown Department of Health
- City of Middletown Fire Department
- City of Middletown Police Department
- Carelon Behavioral Health
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County
- Community Health Center (CHC)
- Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH)
- CT Harm Reduction Alliance (CTHRA)
- DCF Region 3 (Norwich, Willimantic, Middletown)
- Department of Children and Families
- DMHAS (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services)
- Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition / DMYFS
- Gilead Community Services
- Hartford Health Department
- Hunter's Ambulance Service / Hartford Healthcare
- Middlesex Community College
- Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Middlesex Health
- Middlesex YMCA
- Middletown Harm Reduction Initiative (MHRI)
- Middletown Public School System
- Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Council
- Ministerial Health Fellowship
- Overdose Response Strategy | New England HIDTA
- River Valley Services, DMHAS
- Root Center for Advanced Recovery
- Rushford
- St. Vincent de Paul Middletown
- Street Fire Ministries
- The Connection, Women's REACH Program
- The Village for Families & Children
- Town of Cromwell Department of Health
- Town of Cromwell Police Department
- Wesleyan University

# Agenda

- Welcome New Members
- Data Review
- Updates
- Workgroup / Committee Updates
- Member Spotlight:
  - Erin Ortega, Chief Operating Officer, Middlesex YMCA
- Standing Agenda Items
- Member Announcements



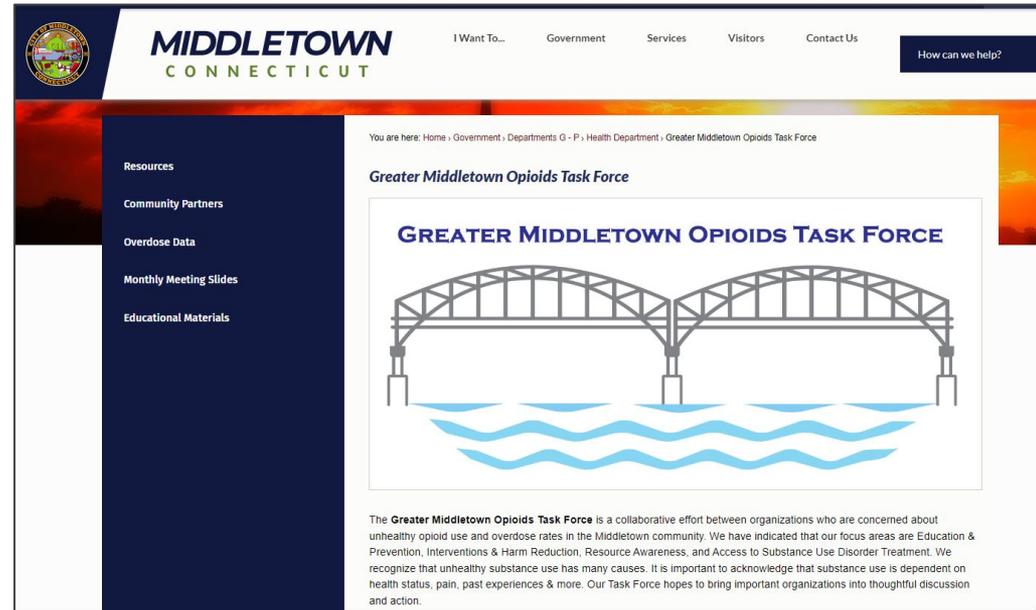
# Mission & Vision Statement

- **Mission:** To engage the Greater Middletown community in working together to promote opioid awareness, education, prevention, harm reduction and access to treatment thereby reducing opioid-related overdoses and deaths and building a healthy, safe and drug-free community.
- **Vision:** A community working together to prevent opioid use and to help people experiencing opioid use challenges.



# For New Members

- Website:  
<https://www.middletownct.gov/1336/Greater-Middletown-Opioids-Task-Force>
- Includes resources and educational material

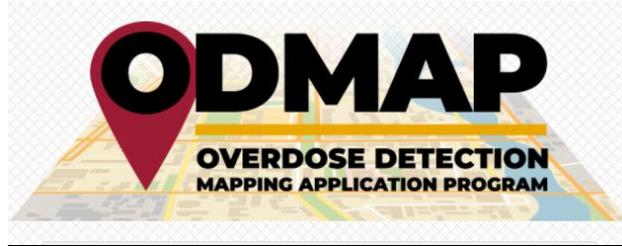


The screenshot shows the website for the Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force. At the top left is the Middletown Connecticut seal. The header includes the text "MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT" and navigation links: "I Want To...", "Government", "Services", "Visitors", and "Contact Us". A dark blue button on the right says "How can we help?". Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: "You are here: Home > Government > Departments G - P > Health Department > Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force". A dark blue sidebar on the left contains a menu with the following items: "Resources", "Community Partners", "Overdose Data", "Monthly Meeting Slides", and "Educational Materials". The main content area features the title "Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force" above a logo depicting a bridge over water. Below the logo is a paragraph of text: "The **Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force** is a collaborative effort between organizations who are concerned about unhealthy opioid use and overdose rates in the Middletown community. We have indicated that our focus areas are Education & Prevention, Interventions & Harm Reduction, Resource Awareness, and Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment. We recognize that unhealthy substance use has many causes. It is important to acknowledge that substance use is dependent on health status, pain, past experiences & more. Our Task Force hopes to bring important organizations into thoughtful discussion and action."



# Opioid Overdoses Nonfatal and Fatal

Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown and Portland



### Changes to ODMAP Reporting as of July 1, 2024:

- ▶ Overdoses are no longer reported to Connecticut Poison Control Center.
- ▶ The CT Department of Public Health developed a new program called API to capture overdose information in Connecticut.
- ▶ API used ImageTrend using data from Electronic Patient Care Records

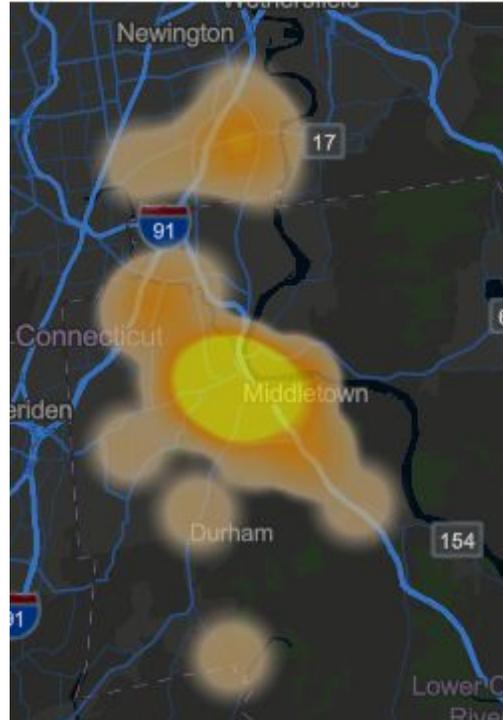
Overdoses from January 1 - June 23, 2025

Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown and  
Portland

<b>Total Suspected Overdoses</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Fatal Overdoses</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Naloxone Administered</b>	<b>3*</b>

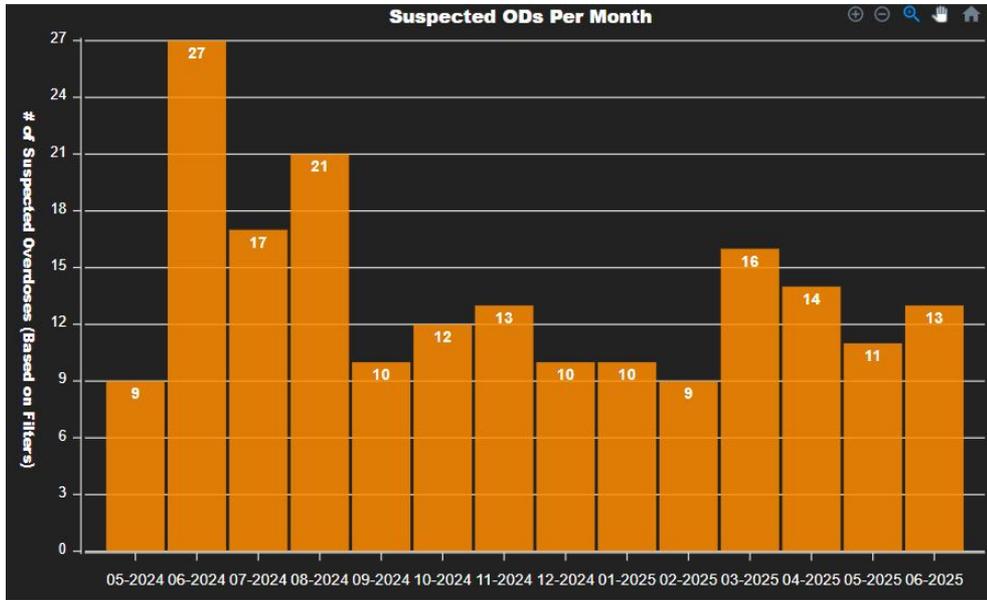
\*Naloxone Administered data not available after 6/30/24

Overdose Heatmap from 1/1/25 - 6/24/25  
Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Portland



# Suspected Overdoses per Month

## May 2024 - June 23, 2025

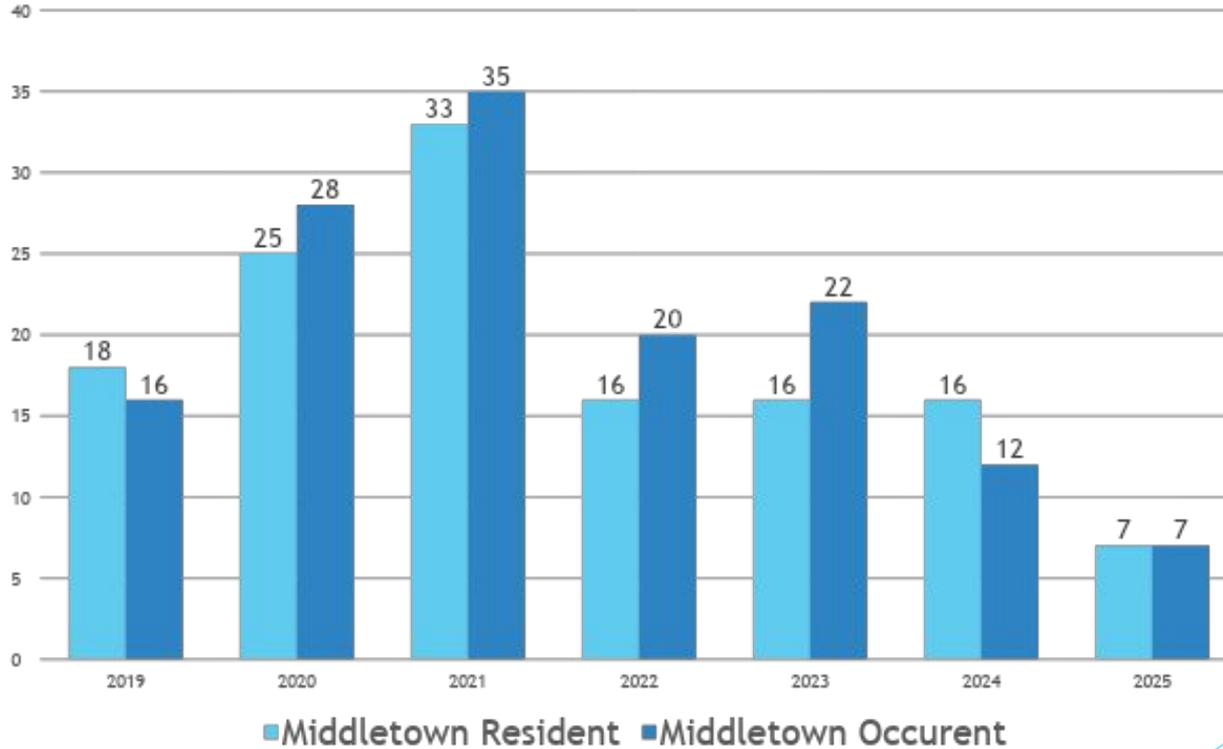


# Middletown Unintentional Overdose Deaths

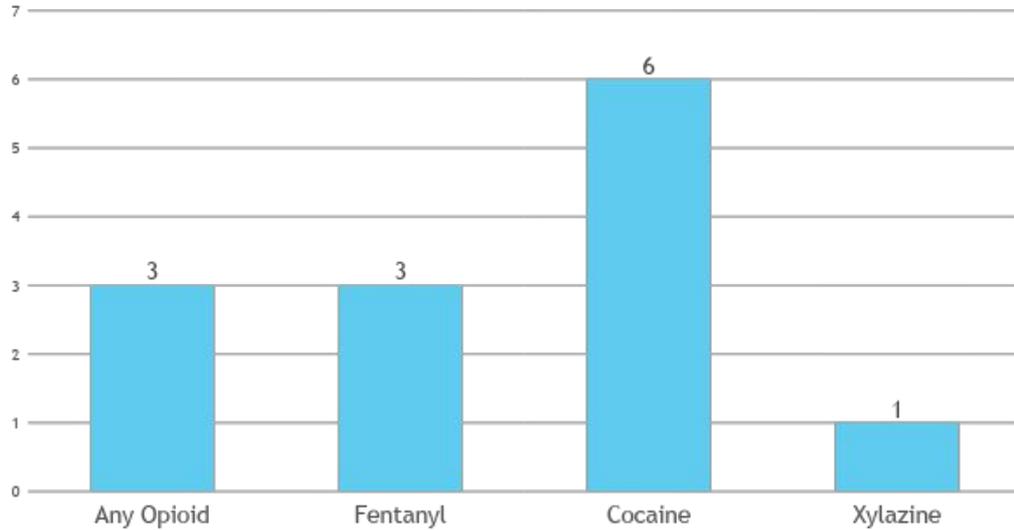
2019 - 2025  
(as of 5-1-25)

Source: Office of the CT Chief Medical  
Examiner

## Middletown Unintentional Overdose Deaths 2019-2025



# 2025 Unintentional Fatal Overdoses 7 Middletown Residents Cause of Death (by substance)



# OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP

## Situational Alert: Fatal Overdose Spike—May 16 to June 6, 2025

Connecticut Overdose Response Strategy (CT ORS)



*June 6, 2025*

# OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

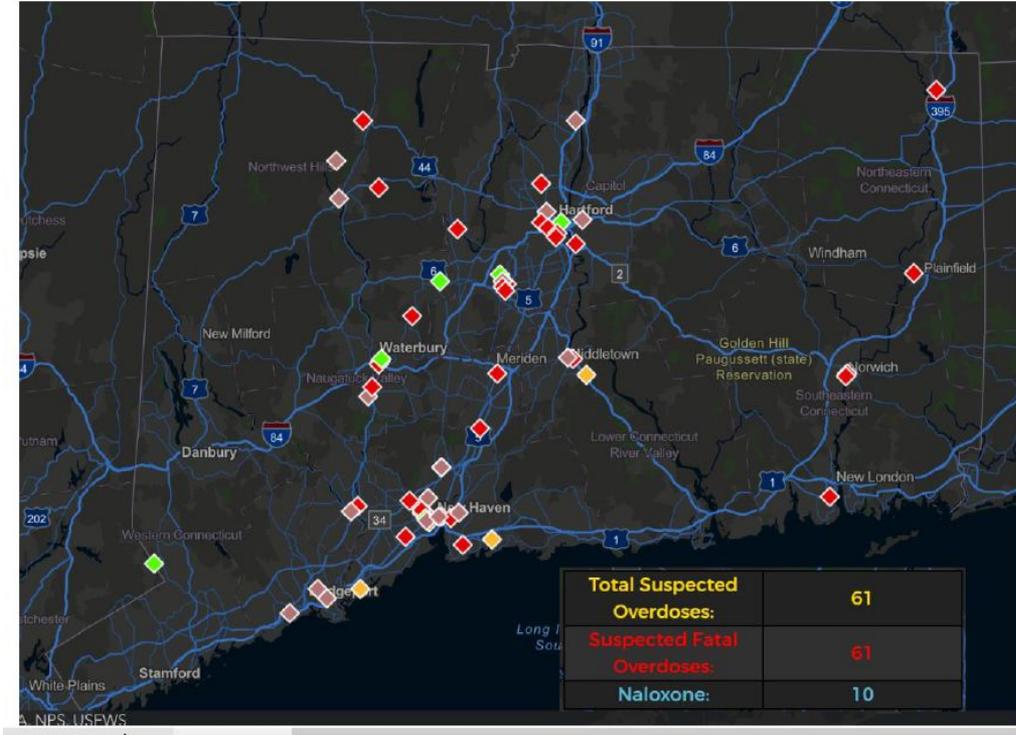
PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



## Substance Composition and Toxicology Insights

In a unique collaboration between law enforcement and harm reduction partners, testing on overdose-related evidence revealed a combination of illicitly manufactured fentanyl (an illicit synthetic opioid), medetomidine (a veterinary anesthetic and sedative) and procaine (a local anesthetic and common adulterant in the drug supply) in samples collected on May 25, 2025 in New Haven. Additional testing conducted on June 3, 2025 in New Haven, showed fentanyl concentrations significantly higher than previously seen within the past 6 to 8 months. These findings suggest that polysubstance combinations and higher concentrations of fentanyl may be contributing factors to the current spike in overdoses.

## Statewide Fatal Overdoses from 5/16/2025 to 6/6/2025:



# Connecticut Unintentional Overdose Deaths 2020 - 2024

Data compiled by:

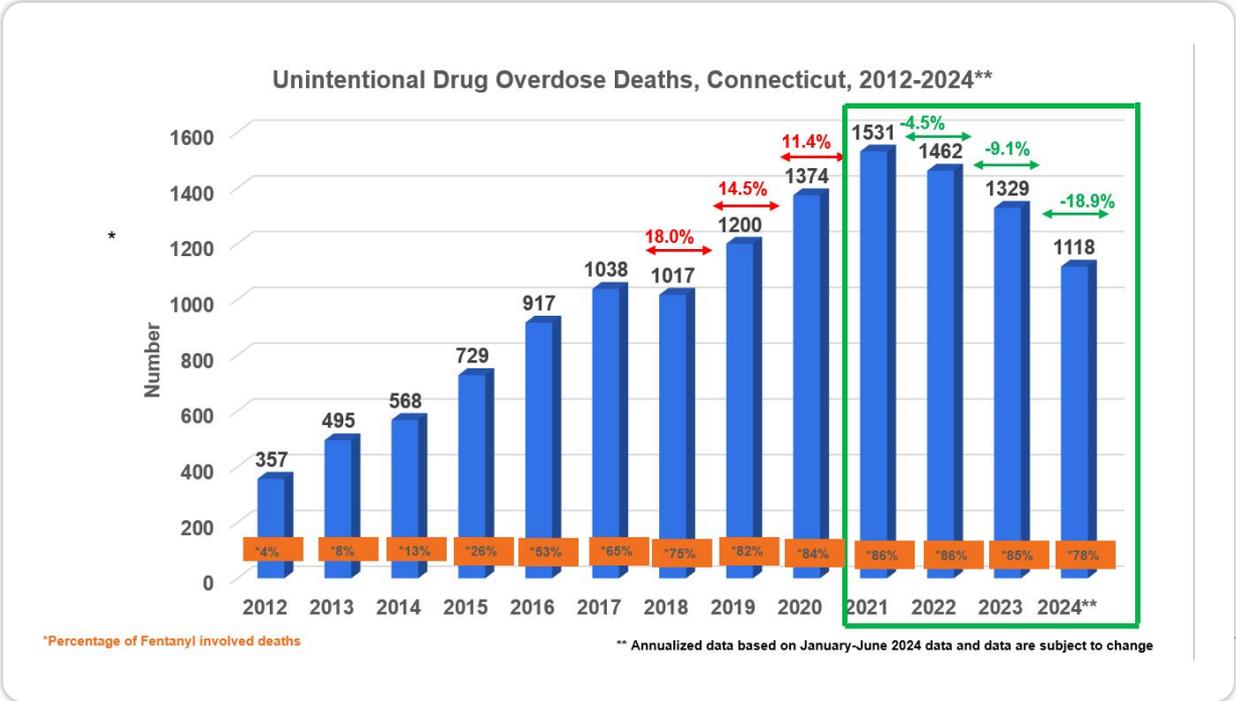
Shobha Thangada

Epidemiologist

Injury & Violence Surveillance Unit

Connecticut Department of Public Health

# Connecticut Unintentional Overdose Deaths 2020 - 2024



# Circumstances of Fatal Drug Overdoses - 2024

<b>Percentages</b>	<b>2020 (N=1374)</b>	<b>2021 (N=1531)</b>	<b>2022 (N=1462)</b>	<b>2023 (N=1329)</b>	<b>2024* (N=1118)</b>
Injury place as residence (own or someone else's)	72.0	72.0	76.0	74.0	71.7
Death location as residence (own or someone else's)	53.0	60.0	64.0	59.0	57.0
Potential opportunities for intervention to prevent death	74.7	75.7	78.1	74.7	N/A
Bystander Presence	55.4	54.6	53.1	49.7	47.7
Prior mental health diagnosis	30.3	34.2	36.3	34.0	30.2
Fatal drug overdose witnessed	11.5	10.8	8.7	8.4	8.1
Prior overdose	10.7	11.8	12.9	12.2	13.1
Current treatment for Substance use disorder	9.6	10.1	9.8	10.0	11.8
Homeless	3.2	2.7	4.1	5.0	4.4

# Circumstances of Fatal Drug Overdoses - 2024

As of 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December there were 928 drug overdose deaths in 2024\*  
Additional circumstances for 2024\* –Number/Percentage of decedents

- Prior substance use/problem = 731 (78.8%)
- Decedent known to local authorities = 171 (18%)
- Chronic health problem = 136 (15%)
- Recent death of a family member or friend = 7
- Depressed mood at the time of OD = 11
- Other crisis (e.g., argument with girlfriend, court date) = 4
- Suicide attempt = 13
- Suicide thoughts/ideation = 50 (5.4%)

# Committee / Workgroup Updates

# Committee / Workgroup Updates

## Harm Reduction / Intervention Workgroup

- Recovery Friendly Community - work continues
- Group meets: 4th Tuesday of the month @ 10am, Zoom
- Interested in joining? Email Catherine Rees  
[catherine.rees@midhosp.org](mailto:catherine.rees@midhosp.org)



# Committee / Workgroup Updates

## Recovery Coach / Peer Support Workgroup

- Resource awareness
- Community service utilization
- Group meets: 3rd Thursday of the month @ 3pm, Zoom
- Interested in joining? Email Rev. Anderson  
[revrmanderson@gmail.com](mailto:revrmanderson@gmail.com)





Spotlight

# Member Spotlight

**Erin Ortega**, Chief Operating Officer, Middlesex YMCA

<https://www.midymca.org/>





# Underway & Standing Agenda Items

# Underway, Considerations & Standing Agenda Items

Planned / Underway	Standing Agenda Items	Future Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No new updates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC) Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">OSAC Website</a></li><li><a href="#">OSAC Bylaws</a></li></ul></li><li>Legislative / Policy Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Opioid Prevention Center in Connecticut</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Definition of Task Force geographic area</li><li>CLEAR-type concept</li></ul>





# Update - CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC)

# Connecticut Opioid Settlement Fund

## Overview and Approved Recommendations

Updated 5/13/25

## Overview

- Connecticut is expected to receive over \$600 million over 18 years (approx. \$33 million per year) as part of the nationwide opioid litigation settlement agreements with various pharmaceutical distributors and opioid manufacturers
- Proceeds will be spent on substance use disorder abatement infrastructure, programs, services, supports, and resources for prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction with public involvement, transparency, and accountability
- As of 5/13/25, the State has received a total of \$161,184,046, with funding recommendations having passed for \$110,818,461 leaving a balance in the fund of \$50,365,584
- The estimated annual budget is \$33,333,333 and the estimated approved recommendations amount is \$34,267,675

# Recovery Centers Continuation Approved May 2025

- 2 year continuation of existing CCAR Recovery Center Programming
  - Recovery Centers in Torrington, Danbury, and New London
  - Extended Hours at Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Torrington locations
  - Young People & Family Services
- Followed by a competitive bidding process for 3 Recovery Centers for 3 additional years
- Total funding amount (5 years): \$6,059,891

# Connecticut Drug Data Collaborative (CT-DDC)

## Approved May 2025

- Data platform designed to provide a near real-time, comprehensive view of the substances present in the state, enabling harm reduction, treatment, and other public health organizations to engage more effectively with their clients and empowering policymakers to make data-driven decisions on resource allocation and intervention strategies
- Integrate drug checking data from five existing community drug testing sites, confirmatory testing results from the CT DPH Laboratory, and information from other CT data sources
- Includes an Administrator Dashboard (Phase 1) and Public-Facing Website (Phase 2)
- A Data Scientist will provide statewide analysis, trend identification, and coordination of resources across regions
- Total funding amount (3 years): \$1,269,413.68

# Opioid Treatment Program Access Expansion

## Approved May 2025

- Increase access to admission and same-day provision of Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) at all eight existing non-profit agencies that have Outpatient Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP) in Connecticut
- Specific operational expansions and changes will vary depending existing practices and area need
- Intended to ensure OTPs have admission hours with same-day MOUD prescription at least 5 days a week and address gaps in areas without on-site admissions
- Total funding amount (3 years): \$10,050,000

# Updates

# Updates

- **What's Driving the Drop in Overdose Deaths?**
  - <https://www.acsh.org/news/2025/05/16/whats-driving-drop-overdose-deaths-49482>
- **U.S. overdose deaths declined by nearly 27% last year, CDC data show**
  - The AP (5/14, Stobbe, Mulvihill) reports early CDC data released Wednesday indicate “there were 30,000 fewer U.S. drug overdose deaths in 2024,” a decline of 27% from the 110,000 in 2023 and the “largest one-year decline ever recorded.” The previous one-year decline was 4% in 2017, “according to the agency’s National Center for Health Statistics.” All states but Nevada and South Dakota saw declines last year, with some of the most significant drops in Ohio, West Virginia, “and other states that have been hard-hit in the nation’s decades-long overdose epidemic.” Among the factors experts cited to explain the decline were the increased availability of naloxone, expanded addiction treatment, a shift in how people use drugs, and the “growing impact of billions of dollars in opioid lawsuit settlement money.” Nevertheless, “annual overdose deaths are higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic.”
  - <https://apnews.com/article/us-overdose-deaths-opioids-1561a9f189255ad60c533462f10490a2>



# Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Middletown Opioids Settlement  
Needs Survey  
Presentation for GMOTF Task  
Force Meeting January 21, 2025





# Goals for 2025 Survey Themes

# Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey Results

- Themes:
  - Access / Resource Availability and Awareness
  - Training
  - Collaboration
- Using the results of the Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey to guide the GMOTF areas of focus / goals.



## Survey Theme: Access / Resource Availability and Awareness Themes

### Barriers / Suggestions

#### Access to Care:

- Access to appointments.
- Availability of medications, including pain medication.
- "Good" treatment.
- Not enough beds; long wait times.
- Van hours are limited and Reach Navigators cut down on length of service.
- Uninsured / Cost

#### Navigators / Coaches:

- More community navigators are needed.
- More recovery coaches.
- Funding towards case management and social work and housing navigators.
- Peer support program.
- Outreach and support to individuals hanging out on Main Street.

#### Social Drivers of Health:

- Transportation:
  - Provide bus passes to social service agencies to distribute in support of wellness needs not covered by NEMT.
  - Free transportation for non-medical needs (to access other services, parks, social activities, shopping).
- Housing:
  - Affordable housing.
  - Homelessness.
- Unmet basic needs (including income; transportation).
- Help individuals who used opiates and are out of work pay bills.

#### Internal motivation:

- Testing for accountability and a gauge on treatment levels.

## Survey Theme: Access / Resource Availability and Awareness Themes

### Barriers / Suggestions

#### Resources:

- Advertising existing resources.
- Limited free resources.
- Free harm reduction.
- Places to hold support meetings.

#### Resource Awareness:

- Awareness of the community of where free products are available
- Unaware of a peer recovery program, if there is one it isn't well advertised but I believe it would be very beneficial.
- Visible care and support; where are the lawn signs or storefront flyers in support of harm reduction around here?

#### Provider Education on Resources:

- Distribution of information to inform care providers of resources for access to harm reduction products at no cost or covered by insurance with no copay for those insured.

#### Programming:

- Create person centered holistic programs.
- Free safe recreation center for day and evening hours.
- Educational programs

#### Personal Feelings:

- Shame / Guilt.
- Loneliness / Lack of healthy socialization.

#### Other:

- Everything a person dealing with substance misuse needs.
- Afraid of being reported.
- Funding to methadone clinics and suboxone for more frequent testing to determine effectiveness of treatment vs. harm reduction model.

# Survey Theme: Training

## Suggestions

### General:

- Stigma
- Lack of empathy / feeling judged
- Have people care.
- Caring & understanding of the what, where and why's of their mental and physical issues.
- Getting to know the individuals using drugs and the issues leading to drug use.
- They don't take the time to understand what people are going through and why it has happened to them.

### Community:

- More public awareness trainings.
- Training for how to use Narcan.

### Providers / Healthcare Organizations:

- More trainings for providers on how to work collaboratively with all providers to fully serve the client.
- Many service providers are not trained properly or don't know of the exact needs of clients.
- More education & classes for all doctors & patients for mental and physical issues.
- Learn individuality. Each patient is different, one program doesn't fit all.

### Pay Equity:

- Pay people to do the training.

### Other:

- Confidentiality / Privacy.



## Survey Theme: Collaboration

### Suggestions

- Communication.
- They need more staff and a more cohesive work with the methadone and suboxone providers versus siloed services.





# Member Announcements

## Any Member Announcements?



## Task Force Member Spotlight



Please contact Catherine Rees at [catherine.rees@midhosp.org](mailto:catherine.rees@midhosp.org)  
if you would like to give a member spotlight



# Annual Dates

## Annual Dates

- SAMSHA's Prevention Day - February 3, 2025
- National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day - April 2025 (date TBD)
- National Prevention Week - May 11-17, 2025
- Overdose Awareness Day - August 31st
- Substance Use Prevention Month - October
- National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day - October 2025 (date TBD)

# Work Status / Tracking

# Completed Work

## Completed 2025

- Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey Analysis & Presentation (January 2025)
- Formation of Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Grant Advisory Committee (February 2025)
- Shared Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey & Presentation of Results with GMOTF members to share with their networks (February 2025)
- City of Middletown Common Council Finance and Government Operations Committee meeting - approved GMOTF Grants Committee recommendations (2.26.25)
- City of Middletown Common Council meeting - approved GMOTF Grants Committee recommendations; (3) GMOTF members spoke in support of the recommendations (3.3.25)
- City of Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Round 1 grant awards completed (March 2025)
- Pending Completion:
  - Formation of Fentanyl test strip GMOTF branded use instructions (English and Spanish)
  - Fentanyl test strip bags distribution and education
  - Formation of Recovery Support / Peer Support Workgroup



# Completed Work

## Completed 2024

- Formation of Middletown Opioids Settlement Funds Ad Hoc Committee (February 2024)
- Task Force Logo developed (March 2024)
- Development of Narcan How To educational piece in English and Spanish (August 2024)
- Participation in The Governor's Prevention Partnership Overdose Awareness Day Press Conference (8.28.24)
- Leave Behind Kits Project Launch (September 2024)
- Middletown Opioids Settlement Needs Survey - centering voices with lived experience to identify needs to guide distribution of Middletown opioids settlement funds (October 2024)
- Grants application process for Middletown opioids settlement funds (December 2024)
- Leave Behind Kit Distribution (December 2024)



# Completed Work

Completed 2022	Completed 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Formation of Task Force (January 2022)</li><li>● Member Prioritization Survey (April 2022)</li><li>● Formation of 4 Workgroups (Access to Treatment; Education &amp; Prevention; Intervention / Harm Reduction; Resource Awareness)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Flier for Narcan Leave Behind Kits (April 2023)</li><li>● Narcan Leave Behind Kits partnership with South Fire District, Middletown (April 2023)</li><li>● Xylazine Informational piece (May 2023)</li><li>● Harm Reduction Training by Mark Jenkins, Executive Director, CT Harm Reduction Coalition at Cross Street A.M.E. Zion Church (8.16.23)</li><li>● Harm Reduction RV - Village Expanded Recovery Vehicle (VERV) (Launched 9.6.23; Ribbon Cutting 10.25.23)</li><li>● Resource Guide (9.30.23)</li></ul>



## Next Meeting

- Wednesday, July 16, 2025, 12pm, Zoom

