

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Wednesday, December 17, 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
- Alliance for Prevention & Wellness Program of BHcare
- 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
- Presentation:
 - Sarah Blodgett, Drug Demand Reduction Outreach CT Army National Guard, Alliance for Prevention & Wellness Program of BHcare
- Updates
- Workgroup / Committee Updates
- 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.middletonct.gov/1336/Greater-Middletown-Opioids-Task-Force>
- Includes resources and educational material

MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT

I Want To... Government Services Visitors Contact Us

How can we help?

You are here: Home > Government > Departments G - P > Health Department > Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

GREATER MIDDLETOWN OPIOIDS TASK FORCE

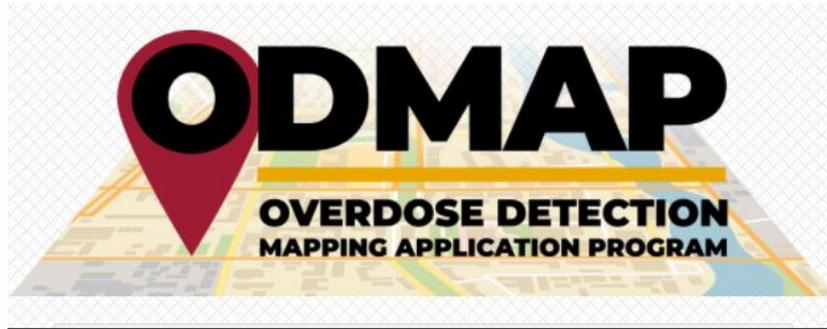
The **Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force** is a collaborative effort between organizations who are concerned about unhealthy opioid use and overdose rates in the Middletown community. We have indicated that our focus areas are Education & Prevention, Interventions & Harm Reduction, Resource Awareness, 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

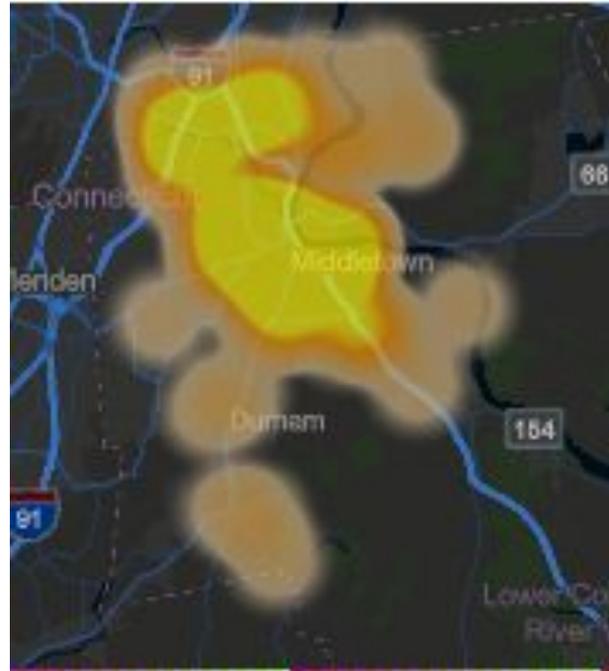


Overdoses from January 1 - December 17, 2025
Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown and
Portland

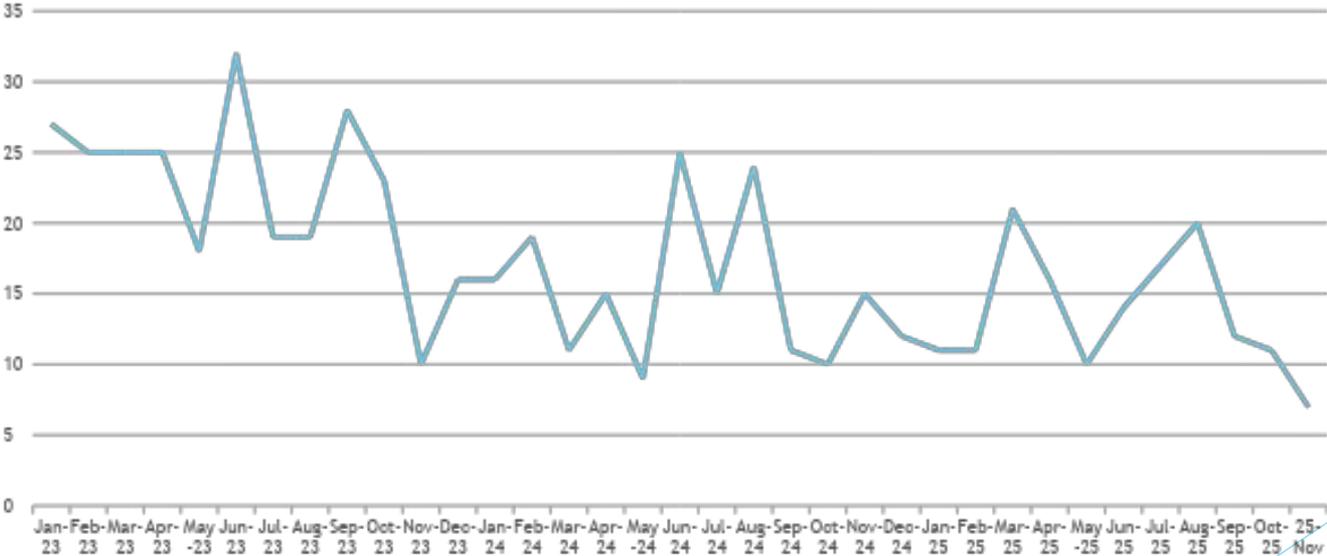
Total Suspected Overdoses	131
Fatal Overdoses	22
Naloxone Administered	5*

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

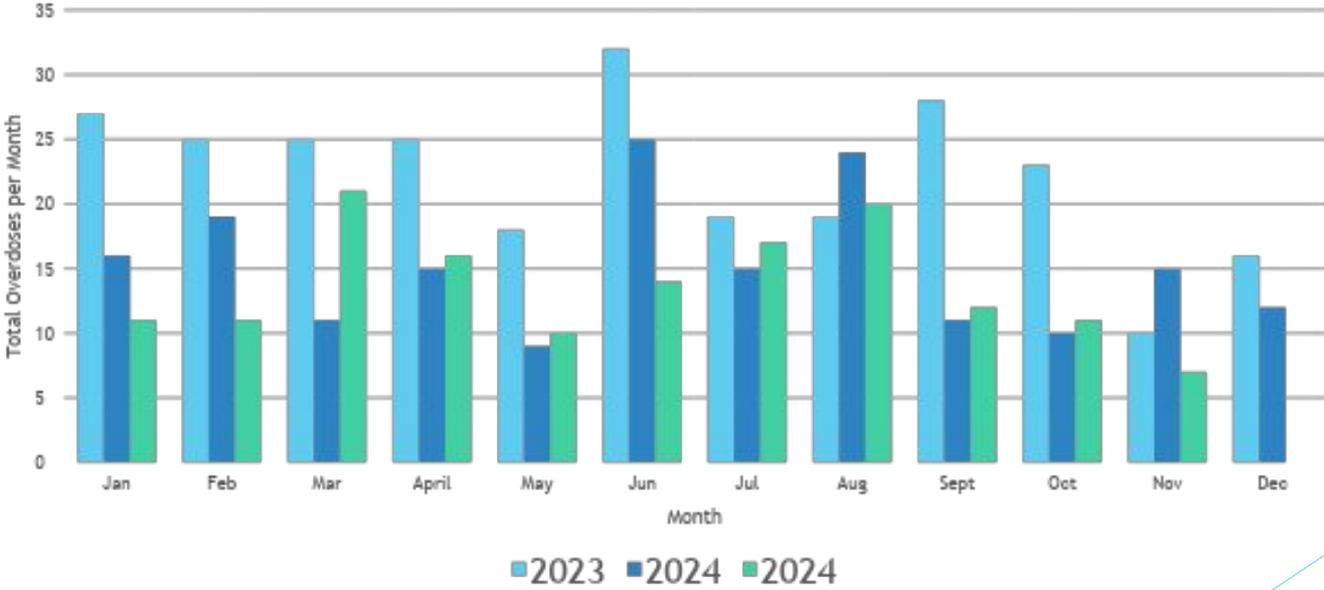
Overdose Heatmap from 1/1/25 - 12/17/25
Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Portland



Suspected Overdoses per Month October 2023 - November 2025



Suspected Overdoses per Month January 1, 2023 - November 30, 2025

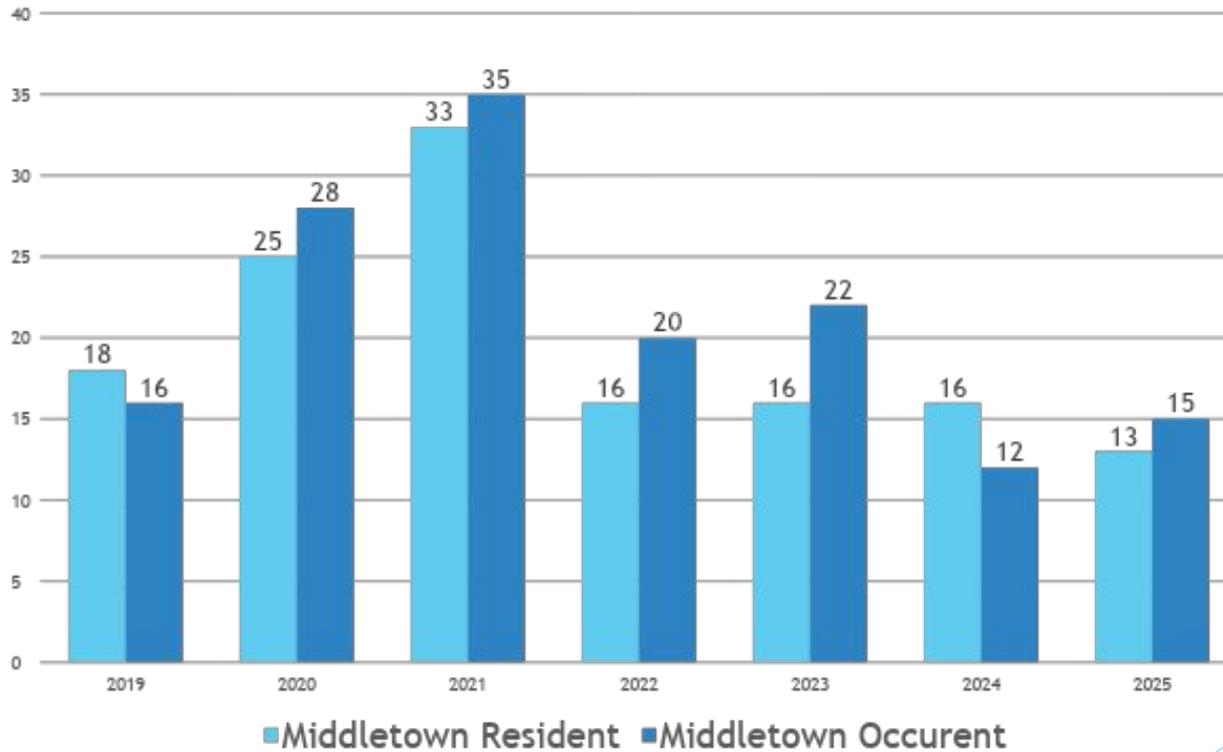


Middletown Unintentional Overdose Deaths

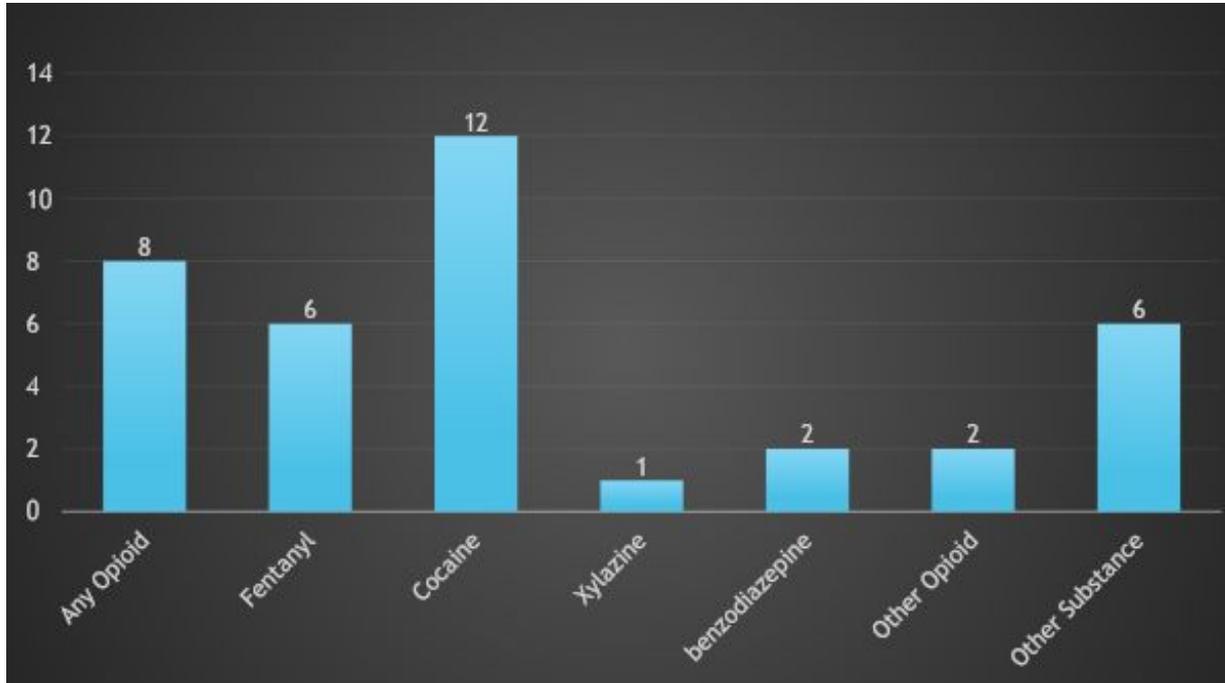
2019 - 2025
(as of 11-5-25)

Source: Office of the CT Chief Medical
Examiner

Middletown Unintentional Overdose Deaths 2019-2025



2025 Unintentional Fatal Overdoses 14 Occurrences in Middletown Cause of Death (by substance)





Spotlight

Presentation

Sarah Blodgett

Drug Demand Reduction Outreach CT Army National Guard
Alliance for Prevention & Wellness Program of BHcare

<https://www.apw-ct.org/>



Workgroup Updates

Committee / Workgroup Updates - Harm Reduction / Intervention Workgroup

- Recovery Friendly Community - Informational sheet completed

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Recovery Friendly Community Introduction

What is a Recovery Friendly Community?
A Recovery Friendly Community is an initiative in the State of Connecticut that is supported by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) in partnership with municipal and community leaders. The purpose is to create a local supportive and destigmatized environment for those who are in recovery or hope to be in recovery from substance use.

Recovery Friendly Communities are achieved by

- 1 Raising awareness and providing education about substance use.
- 2 Promoting health and recovery.
- 3 Reducing stigma and discrimination.
- 4 Creating an environment where those in recovery can flourish.

What Partners are necessary for supporting a Recovery Friendly Community?

- Middletown municipal leadership, including the Mayor, City Council, Director of Health, Board of Health Commissioners
- Middletown Parks and Recreation Department
- Middletown schools, colleges and universities
- Middletown Police and Fire Departments
- People with lived and living experience
- Community based organizations
- Local businesses / Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Healthcare organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Middletown Prevention Council
- Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council

Page 1 of 2 Rev. 121605

Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force

Recovery Friendly Community Introduction

What entity would be tasked with creating and overseeing the Recovery Friendly Community designation in Middletown?
We envision that the Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force (GMOTF) will create and oversee the implementation and ongoing support for the Middletown Recovery Friendly Community as the purpose of the GMOTF is to build healthy and safe drug-free communities by raising awareness, providing educating, promoting prevention, increasing access to harm reduction resources and increasing access to treatment. Additionally, GMOTF has the infrastructure in place to effectively manage this initiative.

What are the immediate next steps?
To move forward, Middletown municipal leadership, including the Mayor, City Council, Director of Health, Board of Health Commissioners would need to approve Middletown's becoming a Recovery Friendly Community and charge the Greater Middletown Opioids Task Force with overseeing the initiative.

Is a financial investment necessary to become a Recovery Friendly Community?
No, becoming a Recovery Friendly Community does not require a financial investment, rather, becoming a Recovery Friendly Community is achieved through planning, implementation and maintenance by a designated entity.

Contact Information:
Kevin Elak, MPH, REHS, CP-PS, Director of Health, City of Middletown, Kevin.Elak@middletownct.gov
Rev. Robyn Anderson, MS, LPC, LMFT, LADC, Executive Director, Ministerial Health Fellowship, revmanderson@gmail.com

Page 2 of 2

- Group meets: 4th Tuesday of the month @ 10am, Zoom
- Interested in joining? Email Catherine Rees catherine.rees@midhosp.org



Committee / Workgroup Updates - Harm Reduction / Intervention Workgroup



Harm reduction vending machine; partnership with Mark Jenkins, Executive Director, CT Harm Reduction Alliance (CTHRA)



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





Underway & Standing Agenda Items

Underway, Considerations & Standing Agenda Items

Planned / Underway	Standing Agenda Items	Future Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">No new updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CT Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC) Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">OSAC WebsiteOSAC BylawsLegislative / Policy Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">Opioid Prevention Center in Connecticut	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Definition of Task Force geographic areaCLEAR-type concept





Member Announcements

Any Member Announcements?



Task Force Member Spotlight



Please contact Catherine Rees at 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)

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.



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)
- Formation of Fentanyl test strip GMOTF branded use instructions (English); Spanish - to be completed
- Fentanyl test strip bags distribution and education
- Formation of Recovery Support / Peer Support Workgroup
- Recovery Friendly Community Informational Sheet (December 2025)



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



Next Meeting

- Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 12pm, Zoom

