

PROPOSED BY: Executive
INTRODUCTION DATE: 11/05/25

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**ESTABLISHING THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND AND ESTABLISHING A BUDGET FOR
THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND**

WHEREAS, Whatcom County is involved as a plaintiff in several class action Washington State Attorney General lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors; and

WHEREAS, those lawsuits have resulted in settlements that will be paid out to municipalities, including Whatcom County, throughout the state over a period of several years; and

WHEREAS, the settlements received by Whatcom County and all other municipalities must comply with the terms and spending restrictions specified in the various participation forms and allocation agreements governing each respective settlement, as well as applicable memorandums of understanding (MOUs) such as the One Washington MOU; and

WHEREAS, those terms and restrictions require the funds to be spent for the specific opioid remediation uses listed in the agreements; and

WHEREAS, the County needs a separate fund to separately track and account for these revenues until funds can be properly expended; and

WHEREAS, the County has approximately \$1,381,940 in opioid settlement monies residing in the General Fund.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that a new fund is hereby established effective January 1, 2026 titled Opioid Settlement Fund to account for revenues and expenditures in accordance with the One Washington Memorandum of Understanding between Washington Municipalities; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that the balance of opioid settlement funds in the General Fund be transferred into the Opioid Settlement Fund; and

BE IT FINALLY ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that the Fund is approved with a budget of \$438,494 as described in Exhibit A.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2025

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Chair of the Council

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

() Approved () Denied

Approved by email/B Waldron/A Tan
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

Date:_____

EXHIBIT A

Supplemental Budget Request

Health

Community Health

Suppl ID # 5273

Fund

Cost Center

Originator: Brad Bennett

Year 2 2026

Add'l FTE ☐

Priority 1

Name of Request: Opioid Fund

X

Department Head Signature (Required on Hard Copy Submission)

Date

Costs:	Object	Object Description	Amount Requested
	4369.4000	Judgments and settlements	(\$438,494)
	6190	Direct billing rate	\$223,494
	6370	Medical supplies	\$25,000
	6610	Contractual services	\$190,000
	Request Total		\$0

1a. Description of request:

Whatcom County has received approximately \$2.4 million to date in funds from the opioid settlement agreements with opioid distributors and manufacturers. \$1 million in funding has been allocated to the 23 Hour Crisis Center.

Health & Community Services requests expenditure authority for 2026 personnel costs as well as funding to provide opioid prevention and mitigation strategies in accordance with the Washington State Opioid & Overdose Response Plan, as well as local priorities identified by the Whatcom County Opioid

Task Force and through the County's Fentanyl Operations Plan. This request aligns with the One WA Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines the requirements of the opioid settlement spending for communities.

This spending request will address locally identified needs along the Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare continuum of care (PITA).

Funding is currently anticipated to go to some of the following activities:

Direct billing of one Public Health Nurse, a portion of a Health Officer, and a portion of a Preventions Specialist.

Youth Substance Use & Mental Health Services (UWill)

Public Education and Marketing (WTA & Media)

Community Supported training and programming (All Hands Whatcom, NWYS, WRIC)

Coalition prevention strategies (Birch Bay Thrives and Mt. Baker Coalition)

Supported employment services

Medication lock bags

Naloxon

1b. Primary customers:

Whatcom County Residents and community, with a particular focus on those impacted by the opioid crisis and youth at risk of opioid use.

2. Problem to be solved:

Like communities across Washington, Whatcom County has seen a dramatic rise in fentanyl-related fatalities in recent years. With high potency opioids more available and poly drug use on the rise, overdose

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incidences and overdose deaths have been a concern. Whatcom County fatal overdoses increased nearly 50% from 2022 to 2023, and non-fatal overdoses have increased significantly as well. In the first six months of 2023, 478 Emergency Department visits were reported for drug overdoses. Of that number, 264 were attributed to opioids. In April 2024, responding to the growing problem in the community, Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu issued an Executive Order outlining specific actions each County department must do to address the fentanyl crisis. Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) has developed an Operations Plan to take steps to support the executive order. The plan highlights key items that were identified from both the MAC group and the Opioid Task Force as a necessary focus and effective use of the subsequent opioid settlement funds.

3a. Options / Advantages:

Community Health and Human Services staff has identified a broad range of strategies through the Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare (PITA) continuum of care and has a history of coordinating strategies around the current opioid and fentanyl crisis. Staff have also met with Whatcom County departments serving community impacted by the opioid crisis, such as the Public Defender's office, Juvenile Justice, the Sheriff's Office and the Response Systems Division to name a few. Collaboration across the county departments such as this, will have a positive impact on the planning for incarceration and reduction of use of the justice system, as well as increasing protective factors for families involved in the criminal justice system. This current spending focuses on prevention strategies and will better work towards addressing the current opioid crisis as well as prevention of future use in the community.

3b. Cost savings:

With the majority of this funding supporting the prevention of opioid use, future use by community members will be reduced and individuals will be able to avoid overdoses, as well as entering the justice system and the behavioral health systems. Without proper interventions and expanded supports, these issues increase the need for more expensive and intensive supports (treatment, emergency room visits, jail, etc.). Additionally, many evidence-based strategies possess their own cost savings analysis.

4a. Outcomes:

Whatcom County Health and Community Services will increase access to core public health services to address this need in our community. Strategies will have a positive impact on families, healthcare, schools, emergency medical services, community groups, criminal justice systems, including law enforcement, courts, and jails by reducing the burdens created by the opioid and fentanyl crisis. Outcomes will include but are not limited to, a 2026 All Hands Summit and programming, updated and ongoing support for a resource guide of treatment options, additional community access to substance use counseling and prevention programs in schools and tools such as lock bags to prevent future harm in individual households and Naloxone to prevent overdose deaths.

4b. Measures:

Evidence-based practices have been scientifically validated to yield positive outcomes. Their implementation includes evaluation methods to assess changes in behavior, knowledge, and access to services. These evaluations provide data to measure impact, ensuring effectiveness and facilitating continuous improvement.

5a. Other Departments/Agencies:

None.

5b. Name the person in charge of implementation and what they are responsible for:

None.

6. Funding Source:

New Opioid Fund.