



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FROM: Joe Fuller, Program Specialist
DATE: November 8, 2022
RE: Presentation from Health Department on Opioid Settlements

The Health Department continues to work with local partners to coordinate efforts to address the ongoing opioid crisis, along with other substance misuse concerns, and have been asked to present an update on opioid settlements at the December 6th Public Works and Health Committee meeting.

Opioid misuse has been a growing concern in Whatcom County, consistent with the national epidemic. While abuse of prescription opioids have trended downward for the past few years, other synthetic opioids (e.g. Fentanyl) have experienced significant growth. With high potency opioids more available, overdose deaths and responses to overdose crises have increased. Poly drug use (use of opioids with other substances) has also been a growing concern.

Many strategies are necessary to address the scope of issues created from the opioid crisis. Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare are all key components of the continuum of care that provides a comprehensive approach to achieving positive impacts. New or expanded services within this framework are possible with additional resources.

In late February 2022, several pharmaceutical companies reached a \$26 billion settlement to compensate state and local governments for the costs incurred as a part of the opioid epidemic in the United States. The State of Washington will be receiving a settlement of \$518 million over the next 18 years to support and coordinate strategies to mitigate the impact of opioid misuse. The Washington State Health Care Authority will lead efforts identified in the Washington State Opioid & Overdose Response Plan, and direct allocations to participating counties and cities will also impact locally identified priorities. Planning is ongoing and community input is being collected.

Please call Joe Fuller at ext. 6045 if there are any questions. Thank you.

