

**Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes (draft)**  
**September 15, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee was held on Monday, September 15, 2025, at the County Health Department in Sault Ste. Marie, MI with a virtual option. Committee Chair Justin Knepper called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm with a quorum present.

**Members present:** Justin Knepper, Michelle Benson, Derek Causley, Melissa Colby, Kelly Freeman, Lucas Gardiner, Natasha Halonen, Trista LeBlanc, Maggie Merchberger, Mary Michaels, Sabrina Neveu, Karen Senkus

**Members absent:** Shawn Baker, Brook Bergsma, Ciara Saint, Pat Shannon

**Others present:** None

Introductions were made.

**Approval of the Agenda**

**It was moved by Melissa and supported by Derek to approve the agenda with the addition of the 7 Norms of Collaboration to be presented by Sabrina. On a voice vote the motion carried.**

**Approval of August 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

**It was moved by Melissa and supported by Sabrina to approve the August 7, 2025, minutes as written. On a voice vote the motion carried.**

**Public Comment:** No public members were present.

**Agenda Items**

**7 Norms of Collaboration**

Sabrina presented the 7 Norms of Collaboration to committee members.

**Review Assessment Data**

Sabrina led the discussion on the assessment results and encouraged committee members to share initial thoughts on the data presented. Sabrina pointed out the primary themes, assets and challenges that were revealed; these points are noted on page 8 in the data report. Recommendations noted in the report were reviewed; these are noted on page 30 in the data report. Discussion ensued regarding gaps in service when an individual needs immediate intervention, timeliness of and access to treatment facilities/services.

It was agreed that the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners should receive the full report for review.

**Priorities for Funding in 2026**

Upon review of the assessment data, committee members reported top priorities that they identified, with common threads appearing: basic needs (housing/sober living options and transportation); access to care (immediate access, barriers to treatment); collaboration across service providers; education directed at youth and recovery-oriented events. Discussion ensued in regard to capturing this information in a straightforward manner within the RFP.

**It was moved by Melissa and supported by Derek to prioritize the following in the FY 2026 RFP: efforts that focus on youth and prevention; efforts that focus on access to care, including immediate access to treatment; efforts that focus on expanding access to basic needs, including transportation and housing.**

**On a voice vote, the motion carried.**

### **Review and Approval of RFP**

Suggestions to modify the language in the RFP were brought forth. Discussion ensued regarding the inclusion of clearer eligibility guidelines, updated criteria scores to reflect collaboration, updated timelines and the addition of the Chippewa County logo rather than the MAC logo. Karen invited committee members to email her with suggested changes, and she will email the draft RFP to the committee for approval. Discussion ensued regarding the distribution of the RFP; the RFP will be posted on the county website; Karen will send it out via email and committee members are invited to distribute the RFP to eligible applicants.

**It was moved by Michelle and supported by Sabrina to approve the 2026 RFP pending updated language reflecting the priorities and scoring; scoring will include additional points for the inclusion of collaboration with partnering organizations.**

**On a voice vote, the motion carried.**

### **Proposed Timeline for Release of FY 2026 RFP**

The committee discussed the proposed timeline for the release of the RFP and due date.

**It was moved by Melissa and supported by Mary to establish the following timeline for the FY 26 RFP: release date of October 1, 2025; due date of November 21, 2025; committee member review December 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025; notice of award December 18, 2025.**

**On a voice vote, the motion carried.**

### **Establish Next Meeting Date and Time**

December 1<sup>st</sup> at 3:30 and December 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:30. The focus of the meetings will be review and selection of awards.

### **Committee Member Comments**

Sabrina suggested that the committee continue to meet on a regular basis after the awards are announced to stay abreast of community issues and opportunities surrounding this issue.

### **Adjournment**

**It was moved to adjourn by Maggie and supported by Derek.**

**On a voice vote the motion carried; meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.**