

**Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 1, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee was held on Monday, December 1, 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 3:34 pm with a quorum present.

Members present: Justin Knepper, Shawn Baker, Michelle Benson, Melissa Colby, Kelly Freeman, Lucas Gardiner, Natasha Halonen, Trista LeBlanc, Mary Michaels, Sabrina Neveu, Karen Senkus, Patrick Shannon

Members absent: Brook Bergsma, Ciara Saint, Derek Causley, Maggie Merchberger

Others present: None

*Chairperson Knepper noted the absence of committee member Ciara Saint as there has been no communication from her nor has she attended any meetings. It was noted by committee member Gardiner that she has moved from the area and could be removed from the committee.

Approval of the Agenda

It was moved by Kelly and supported by Melissa to approve the agenda with the addition of the following at Sabrina's suggestion: Consideration of reserving some funds for the committee to hold informational/educational sessions to foster collaboration among area partners that work in the field of SUD/OD. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Approval of August 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Michelle and supported by Kelly to approve the September 15, 2025 minutes as written. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Public Comment: No public members were present.

Agenda Items

Discussion on Committee Use of Funds for Collaborative Efforts

Sabrina led the discussion by offering suggestions to hold two sessions per year to foster collaboration among SUD/OD providers and community/county partners. It was the consensus of the committee to put this on hold until the current funds were distributed and revisit at a later date.

Review 2026 Applications for Opioid Settlement Funds

Chairperson Knepper requested that committee members introduce themselves and report any conflicts regarding the applications that have been submitted. Sabrina reported conflicts with EUPISD, FAN and St. Mary's School; Shawn reported a conflict with GLRC; Natasha reported a conflict with Mental Health Court; Michelle reported a conflict with FAN; Mary reported a conflict with FAN.

Committee member Shannon reported that Montcalm County has combined their opioid settlement funds with the funds received through Marijuana licenses; Kelly described the process of how the funds are collected and the amounts collected by the city and county. It was noted that prior to the previous City Manager's exit, the city had agreed to match the amount that the county was distributing; Kelly will follow up on this issue and provide an update at the next meeting.

Applications from the following organizations were received and reviewed:

St. Mary's School: the committee reviewed and held discussion; clarification was requested on the following: the TRAILS program highlighted in the application does not directly address opioid issues; how will opioid issues be addressed? Would the program be implemented with partial funding?

Medical Examiner: the committee reviewed and held discussion; clarification was requested on the following: how does toxicology testing on deceased individuals benefit the community?

CLMCAA: the committee reviewed and held discussion; clarification was requested on the following: Is this position already existing?

How many residents are in Westbridge and what is the ratio of those with opioid use disorder?

Would it be possible to provide the service to other housing units?

If partially funded, would you be able to implement the program?

How will you sustain this position once this funding is exhausted?

EUPISD: the committee reviewed and held discussion; clarification was requested on the following:

Is it possible to expand this program beyond the LGBTQ+ population?

Are you able to implement the program with partial funding?

Does the program content have a direct focus on opioid misuse/disorders?

GLRC: the committee reviewed and held discussion; Shawn Baker was present and answered the following for clarification: the staffing would include one or two part-time employees that would preferably be a person in recovery and would become certified as a community health worker; the employees would work a regular shift and respond to calls from the hospital ED as well as work in partnership with the jail to support those with addiction issues; in regard to sustaining the position, Shawn stated that he is looking at a blended budget with opioid monies, funds from MyMichigan and GLRC.

Mental Health Court: the committee reviewed and held discussion; Natasha Halonen was present and answered the following for clarification: the program would still be implemented with partial funding; she supplements the funding she receives with opioid monies to meet the needs of her clients for items that her grant will not allow; training funds would be used for Natasha to attend Motivational Interviewing Training and other training focused on SUD/OD.

FAN: the committee reviewed and held discussion; Mary, Michelle and Sabrina were present and answered the following for clarification: the cost of medication lock pouches appeared high; FAN representatives are open to researching other types to lower the cost; the line item for outreach, education and recovery support was questioned \$8,000; FAN representatives noted that this cost includes the attorney fees for the expungement program. It was noted that the plan could be carried out with partial funding.

Karen will reach out to the applicants that were not present to get clarification on the items noted.

Discussion ensued as to how to address voting, since several committee members have conflicts and submitted applications. It was suggested by Kelly that those members submitting applications refrain from voting for all submissions. All present agreed. Voting members at the December 8th meeting will be: Justin, Brook, Derek, Kelly, Lucas, Trista, Maggie, Karen and Pat.

Next Meeting Date and Time: December 8, 2025, at 3:30; virtual and in-person options; bring a snack!

Committee Member Comments: None

Adjournment

It was moved to adjourn by Mary and supported by Kelly. On a voice vote the motion carried;

Meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm.