

Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2026

A regular meeting of the Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee was held on Monday, February 9, 2026, at the County Health Department in Sault Ste. Marie, MI with a virtual option. Committee Chair Justin Knepper called the meeting to order at 3:37 pm with a quorum present.

Members present: Justin Knepper, Shawn Baker, Derek Causley, Melissa Colby, Kelly Freeman, Natasha Halonen, Trista LeBlanc, Maggie Merchberger, Mary Michaels, Sabrina Neveu, Karen Senkus, Patrick Shannon

Members absent: Michelle Benson, Lucas Gardiner

Others present: None

Approval of the Agenda

The following additions were made to the agenda:

- c. City funding available – Kelly Freeman
- d. Re-entry Simulation and community collaboration – Sabrina Neveu

It was moved to approve the amended agenda by Kelly; supported by Mary; on a voice vote the motion carried.

Approval of December 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Mary and supported by Melissa to approve the December 8, 2025, minutes; on a voice vote the motion carried.

Public Comment: No public members were present.

Agenda Items

General Updates on Current Grant Awards: Karen reported that she should have the fully executed agreements to all awardees by the end of the week

Chairman Knepper switched the order of the agenda items as it made sense to discuss the additional items prior to funding strategies.

City Funding: Kelly Freeman announced that the City of Sault Ste. Marie has received just under \$234,000 in opioid settlement funds. He suggested that the County Commission make a request to the City to combine the funds; Justin Knepper will take the lead on this item. It was suggested that the funds be combined in preparation for the distribution of funds in 2027.

Re-entry simulation and community collaboration: Sabrina presented several events that FAN will be hosting over the next few months and spoke specifically about a Re-Entry Simulation that will be held on March 20th from 9:00 am until 2 or 3 pm. This event is designed to show people the difficulty encountered by those re-entering society after incarceration. The re-entry event will be followed by an opportunity for community partners to engage in collaboration/sharing based upon the intercept model. The goal is to bring community partners together such as law enforcement, treatment and prevention professionals, housing personnel, recovery coaches, etc. to identify gaps in service and potential opportunities for opioid funds awards.

Discussion on committee strategies/goals going into 2027: Committee members discussed the following ideas for future funding: focus on prevention and education in schools; discussion ensued regarding the changes in drug trends, importance of early education with elementary-aged students, impact of programs such as DARE; point made that education with youth should be direct and short (TikTok); discussion regarding community collaboration and the need to get partners together; Communities that Cares (CTC) coalition model is designed to involve community representatives on a regular basis – the health department holds the contract to implement CTC in Chippewa County but is experiencing staffing shortages. Suggestion to reach out to Amy with the MI Association of Counties to get additional information on preventative activities that have been funded.

Suggestion to form a subcommittee was made; Justin and Natasha will work together to form a committee that will work to identify specific activities that will direct funding in 2027.

Next Meeting Date and Time:

April 13, 2026 3:30; virtual and in-person options.

Committee Member Comments:

None

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

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.