

Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2026

A regular meeting of the Chippewa County Opioid Settlement Funds Steering Committee was held on Monday, April 13, 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 3:35 pm with a quorum present.

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

Members absent: Trista LeBlanc, Maggie Merchberger

Others present: None

Approval of the Agenda

It was moved to approve the agenda as presented by Kelly; supported by Shawn; on a voice vote the motion carried.

Approval of February 9, 2026 Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Mary and supported by Michelle to approve the February 6, 2026, minutes; on a voice vote the motion carried.

Public Comment: No public members were present.

Agenda Items

Updates on Prevention Subcommittee: Natasha reported that she has not yet held a subcommittee meeting but will do so prior to the next Steering Committee meeting. Sabrina reported that she received a technical assistance report from FAN Central which highlights allowable prevention activities under the opioid settlement funds. **The report is attached to these minutes.** Discussion ensued regarding allowable services and the reasons as to why previous applicants did not receive awards.

Reports from current grantees: The committee heard from FAN and Mental Health Court regarding the 2025 awards received. Natasha (Mental Health Court) reported that the funding was valuable for clients through assistance with housing and transportation costs as well as costs for treatment.

Mary and Michelle (FAN) reported that the funds allowed them to host several community events (Re-Entry simulation and Expungement fair); they remarked that the funds helped kick-start projects that have been in limbo for a few years. Pat reported that he had resources (law students) for future expungement fairs through U of D and suggested partnering with the county and local tribes.

Shawn (GLRC) reported that his organization is in the process of hiring staff; MyMichigan is not able to offer funds to assist with the personnel costs, but GLRC is hoping to hire two part-time staff to work between the hospital and jail. Project Assert training is scheduled.

Natasha reported that AA and NA meetings are being offered in the jail.

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.

Committee Member Comments:

Justin reported that the Sheriff's office is working towards implementing youth programming with the help of the Community Foundation

Justin inquired about Steering Committee term limits; **By-Laws are attached to the minutes** for reference.

Just and Kelly reported that there has been communication between the city and county in regard to combining funds. No decisions have been made; city and county officials will be meeting to discuss detail and an update will be made at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Sabrina offered suggestions for city funds.

Karen reported that she will attend a meeting on May 1st in Escanaba hosted by the Michigan Association of Counties; the meeting will focus on opioid funds within the UP. **Meeting announcement is attached to the minutes for reference.**

Next Meeting Date and Time:

June 8, 2026 at 3:30; virtual and in-person options.

Adjournment: It was moved to adjourn by Mary; on a voice vote the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.