

Port Huron, Michigan—Blue Water Recovery & Outreach Center (BWROC)

Session Date: January 6, 2024

Summary

A listening session was held in Port Huron, Michigan on January 6, 2024. The session was open to the public and promoted as a “listening session on the use of state opioid settlement funds”.¹

The session was held at Blue Water Recovery & Outreach Center (BWROC), a “non – profit 501(c)3 recovery community organization (RCO)²” with the following vision and mission: “To be the hub of recovery in the heart of community...” and to “provide the face and voice of recovery, promote community wellness and engagement, and support all recovery pathways.”³ BWROC is located within the 48060 ZIP code; St. Clair County.⁴

The community listening session was 120 minutes in length and held at a time that aligned with an existing community meeting schedule at BWROC. An estimated 65+ individuals attended the listening session; noting that most participants sharing lived experience with substance use, substance use disorder(s), mental health conditions, and/or involvement in the criminal-legal system. Additional representation was noted from recovery, prevention, harm reduction, local government, health, behavioral health, and legal sectors.

Attendees were provided a brief overview of the Opioid Advisory Commission (OAC) and the Community Voices initiative. Facilitation format and participation expectations were discussed at the beginning of the session. Session structure was flexible, allowing for roundtable discussion, with voluntary participation, as desired. Clarifying questions from the OAC facilitator(s) were permitted by the group. Attendees were provided with the following considerations for discussion:

Your experience—*What would you like to share about your experience(s)?
Professionally and/or personally*

Your observations—*What are you seeing in your community?
Strengths/Benefits; Needs/Gaps*

Your input—*How should the State be spending [state share] opioid settlement dollars?*

¹ https://council.legislature.mi.gov/Content/Files/OAC/OAC_Port%20Huron_1.6.2024.pdf

² <https://www.bwroc.org/>

³ <https://www.bwroc.org/>

⁴ “48060” ZIP Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) ranked in the 77th percentile per the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Use Vulnerability Index (2020 MI-SUVI ZCTA Results). <https://www.michigan.gov/opioids/category-data>

Your questions—What questions do you have for the Opioid Advisory Commission or state government officials?

The following themes were identified from discussion with participating attendees. A “Recommendations” category was developed by OAC staff to capture thematic elements shared during the Port Huron/BWROC community session.

Recommendations

Increase family-centered supports across the care continuum

Recommendations were made to increase “family-centered” supports across the care continuum. Noting that a “family-centered” approach to recovery, was identified as a significant need across housing, prevention, treatment, and recovery sectors. Participants spoke to the impact of addiction and co-occurring mental health needs on the family unit and identified the importance of programming that allowed for preservation of familial relationships, by providing services to support the whole family, including but not limited to (a) spouses and partners, and/or (b) children.

Of note, consideration for family support services across care sectors (housing, health, behavioral health, recovery, etc.) that accommodate “family”, as defined and identified by the individual; with recognition that marital status (as a sole determinant for service eligibility) creates barriers for many families participating in care.

Improve immediate access to care; establish a community engagement center

Recommendations were made for increasing linkages to care and improving immediate service access during critical times, including when an individual elects to receive services and/or enter treatment. Further recommendation was made for establishing an engagement center(s) to improve service linkages, build on individual motivation to receive care, and provide a safe and centralized access point (available 24/7) for engagement and further service coordination.

Increase support for Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs)

Recommendations were made to increase support to local Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) as a key entity within local treatment and recovery ecosystems. Discussion was had around the array of services and supports offered by the local RCO and the necessity that this organization played in (a) engaging individuals at various points (from active use/illness to long-term sustained recovery); (b) continuing to support linkages to care, while also helping (c) cultivate a safe and healthy recovery community, enhance social connectedness, and support recovery maintenance.

Increase supportive housing options, especially those for women and families

Recommendations were made to increase supports to address emergent, transitional, recovery, and long-term housing needs, with emphasis on the need for local housing to support (a) women and (b) families.

Noting that further recommendations were made for ancillary supports to be expanded and offered in conjunction with housing programs (e.g., case management services, life skills classes, employment supports, transportation), to support comprehensive needs often experienced by those utilizing housing supports.

Increase supports for youth prevention, including supports for justice-impacted youth

Recommendations were made to increase supports for youth prevention services, education and early intervention services, and youth enrichment programming. Further recommendation was made to increase specialized supports for justice-impacted youth (and transitional aged youth), as well as youth-specific treatment programming and/or inpatient treatment facilities (for substance use disorders and/or co-occurring mental health conditions).

Increase supports for individuals with multi-systems involvement, especially justice-impacted individuals

Recommendations were made to increase supports for individuals involved in multiple systems (e.g., SUD treatment, criminal-legal, mental health, emergency housing), with an emphasis on improving supports for justice-impacted individuals. Discussion was held around the need for service coordination across sectors, with acknowledgement of the role that RCOs play in assisting with cross-system linkages.

Noting further discussion around the importance of establishing “realistic expectations” within the criminal-legal system (e.g., conditions for community supervision; considerations for individuals with current legal involvement) and to the extent possible, removing administrative barriers that disproportionately impact individuals with limited supports/resources and/or those in early recovery.

Increase anti-stigma efforts

Cultural considerations were discussed related to stigma surrounding addiction, mental illness, and medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). Recommendations were made to increase anti-stigma efforts, including outreach to and education within key systems and community organizations, supporting early intervention and anti-stigma efforts within the K-12 education system, and efforts that challenge stereotypes related to addiction and mental illness.

Additional Considerations

The following items represent additional considerations and recommended strategies/services shared by participants:

- Expand the use of medications for opioid use disorders (MOUD); increase access to MOUD and lateral supports (e.g., transportation).
- Expand existing supports for life skills/support services, including but not limited to budgeting/financial management.

- Increase supports delivered at critical times (e.g., transitions from carceral or treatment settings; post-incident/post-overdose) and at critical intervention points (e.g., recovery community organizations, carceral settings, crisis residential and/or engagement centers; emergency housing).
- Increase SUD and mental health services offered in carceral settings; ensure that services are in place for continuation of necessary medications in carceral settings, including psychiatric medications and MOUD. Provide supports that assist justice-impacted individuals in navigating multiple systems and promote recovery maintenance.

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