

Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC)

Meeting Minutes for December 6, 2024

Meeting Location: Hybrid meeting using WebEx and in-person at Board of Pharmacy RM 104- 335 Randolph Avenue St. Paul, MN.

Members present: (Names in italics are non-voting OERAC members)

Remote: Rep. Robert Bierman, Peter Carlson, Curtis Jackson, Toni Napier, Brock Reed, Dr. Charles Reznikoff

In person: Joe Clubb, Sarah Grosshuesch, Dr. Kathy Nevins, Rep. Dave Baker, Dr. Heather Bell, Dr. Ashwin George, Jack Martin, *Deepa McGriff, Jolene Rebertus, Teresa Steinmetz*

Members not present: Sadie Broekemeier, Senator Bill Lieske, Senator Zaynab Mohamed, Kristi Schoen, Judge Nicole Starr, Dr. Antony Stately

State Staff Members Present: Jen Sather, Alicia Baker, Laura Farlow

Call to order

Facilitator Stacy Sjogren began the meeting at 10:00 am, reviewed the OERAC mission, the meeting ground rules and gave a guest welcome. The meeting agenda was confirmed, and a roll call followed. Quorum was secured. See voting log for details.

Business items

Minutes approval: Toni Napier moved to approve the minutes from the October 25, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Peter Carlson. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

New Council Member welcome: Curtis Jackson has been appointed to the Minnesota Ojibwe Tribe Representative seat. He was welcomed and gave an introduction.

Presentation on Tribal Consultations: Past OERAC Chair, Kathy Nevins, presented information from the Tribal Consultations that OERAC Leadership attended in 2024. Key topics included behavioral health needs, housing, treatment, family unity, traditional healing, technology, and relationships with counties and state governments.

Deepa McGriff, Minnesota Department of Health representative, provided insight from a meeting with Dr. Antony Stately, Joe Clubb, and MDH Tribal Relations Specialists, that focused on Urban Indigenous populations. The group discussed Tribal Nation's responsibility for Urban populations, the importance of community resource sharing, and the unique barriers to healthcare access for Urban American Indians. It was identified that there is a preference for Tribal Nations and Urban Indian populations to receive OERAC funding through direct allocations, as opposed to participating in the RFP process. Notes from this meeting will be sent to council members.

Council discussion on the need for transparency across the state to identify what is being funded and how the projects work together to minimize the high overdose mortality rates of American Indian and African American populations.

OERAC Special Allocation to Tribal Nations Update: 9 Tribal Nations have accepted the funds. Next steps will be to explore flexibility of the funding and continue relationship building.

Public Comment

Facilitator, Stacy Sjogren, welcomed public comment at 10:10AM.

- **Carl White, Chair of the American Indian Advisory Council and Project Director of Red Lake Chemical Health Programs.** He spoke on the percentages of funding that have been given to Tribes and Urban Tribal programs by OERAC from 2021 to 2023. He brought awareness of the lack of funding American Indians have received, alongside the information that in Minnesota, American Indians were 10x more likely to die from a drug overdose compared to their white counterparts in 2021. He encourages OERAC to find ways to support Tribal Programs and Urban Indian programs more, outside of traditional healing funds.

Legislative Recommendations Discussion and Vote

DHS staff, Alicia Baker, provided background to begin the Legislative Recommendations discussion. OERAC presents a report to the Minnesota Legislature yearly. The Department of Human Services formats the report and submits on the behalf of OERAC, with the distinction that the report is not reflective of DHS's legislative priorities. Legislative recommendations are suggested and approved by OERAC members, and are then incorporated into the report.

Council members were asked to speak to the inclusion, removal, or adjustment of previous 2023 recommendations and proposed 2024 recommendations. The following items were identified for *adjustment*. There was unanimous approval through a hand vote on the below items.

- Council approved the removal of all redundant recommendations and the removal of any 2023 recommendations that were enacted by the Legislature or were reflected in the 2024 recommendations.
- Council approves for DHS to adjust language as needed.
- Ongoing need for expansion of **Managed Alcohol Programs** ~~wet houses~~, particularly in areas outside the metro.
- **Recommend** Require MOUD access prior to reentry, addressing a critical treatment gap for incarcerated individuals.

- ~~Support the Expanding 1115 SUD re-entry demonstration waiver through application, implementation, and expansion. which allows incarcerated individuals to access Medicaid 90 days before reentry into the community, facilitating medical planning and providing 30-day prescriptions.~~
- ~~Recommend Requiring access to MOUD for incarcerated individuals in prisons.~~
- ~~Ensuring consistency between treatment in prisons and reentry programs.~~
- Removal of prior authorization (PA) requirements for all **naltrexone and buprenorphine products** FDA-approved treatments for substance use disorders.
 - ~~Remove PAs for naltrexone (Vivitrol) IM, an FDA-approved treatment for alcohol use disorder.~~
 - ~~Remove PAs for all SQ formulations of buprenorphine, FDA-approved treatment for opioid use disorder.~~
 - ~~Remove PAs for all buprenorphine products used in the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD), such as buprenorphine patches.~~

Member comments: McGriff, Rebertus, Grosshuesch, Clubb, Martin, Reznikoff, Bell, Baker, Nevins, Bierman

- Setting timelines for recommendations. While this would increase accountability, representatives advise that high level recommendations would be better at this time.
- Discussion about 1115 waiver and language change, reflected above.
- Council discussed importance of OERAC leadership to present these recommendations during testimony of the Minnesota legislature.
- Discussion on the benefits of prioritizing recommendations. Prioritization could happen in advance of testimony.
- When discussing prior authorizations (PAs), it was emphasized that PA's also impact patients who are not diagnosed with a substance use disorder. Noted the importance of removing PAs for the treatment of chronic pain.

Kathy Nevins moved to approve the 2024 Legislative Recommendations with minor revisions on language as necessary and the addition of the 2023 recommendations that were not acted upon. Seconded by Dave Baker. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

Naloxone Saturation Strategy Development Update

Jeremy Drucker, the Director of the Office of Addiction and Recovery, presented information on the initial draft of the Naloxone Saturation Strategy.

Quarterly Financial Status Report

Kate Mayer, Budget Director of the Behavioral Health Administration at DHS, presented the OERAC quarterly financial update.

Available funding for OERAC Distribution

Chair, Joe Clubb, announced that approximately \$527,000 will soon become available for distribution by OERAC. Council members were encouraged to suggest ideas for how this funding could be used. The funding must be encumbered by June 2025 and then spent by June 2026.

- Source of funding is a 2023 OERAC grantee in the Primary Prevention and Education category that was not able to complete the terms of their contract.
- Suggestion to allocate this to the Naloxone Standing Order Portal. Noted that this portal distributes nasal naloxone only. If full amount is placed into the portal, 15,150 kits of naloxone could be purchased.
 - The status of the portal: will open by the end of the year and fund all the current standing orders. 3 million dollars will be available for new orders once the SOR contract is executed.
- Support for allocating directly to Tribal Nations or Urban Indian organizations.
 - Allocation to each Tribal Nation would be approximately \$40,000 to each Tribe.
 - Fund 2024 OERAC RFP applicants in the Harm Reduction category that are Urban Indian organizations.
 - Incorporate into existing Special Allocation to Tribal Nations.
- Suggestion to give funds to the Community Naloxone Storage Box project. DHS has received reports that many of the boxes installed across Minnesota have been used in overdose events.
- Important awareness that OERAC can give additional funding to current grantees, RFP applicants, and Tribal Nations, but cannot give an allocation to a new entity.

Agreement to discuss at next meeting, once there is more information on restrictions.

MMB Presentation

Weston Merrick from Minnesota Management and Budget provided an overview of the initial reports from the OERAC 2023 grantees, as well as a presentation on substance use disorder in perinatal populations in Minnesota.

RFP Lessons Learned and Looking Forward

DHS staff, Laura Farlow, presented OERAC's responsibility for granting from the bylaws and in Minnesota Statute. Feedback from grant reviewers, council members, and staff were presented. Council members were invited to discuss and suggest any changes to the RFP's structure, funding, questions, and review period.

Member comments: Clubb, Grosshuesch, McGriff, Nevins, Baker, Bell, George, Martin, Steinmetz, Napier, Reznikoff, Reed

- Community and Cultural Relevance
 - Feedback from Tribal listening sessions emphasized the need to evaluate if organizations are in and culturally serving the communities they list.
 - Importance of defining "partnerships" and requiring letters of support when applicants cite partnerships.
 - Highlighted the need for projects addressing opioid challenges in Greater Minnesota.
- Point Allocation

- Council emphasized aligning points with questions essential for decision making, such as if applicants are culturally serving organizations.
- Discussion to include weighted scoring in the form of the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) or MDH's new tool, Substance Use Vulnerability Index (SUVI).
- 2024 RFP's 5-point Target Organization question increased awardees meeting this criterion but needs clearer submission guidelines.
- Discussion on assigning points to smaller organizations, with concerns that this would not remove review bias.
- Grant Review Process
 - Provide examples to community grant reviewers.
 - Suggestion to blind scores during subcommittee and council deliberations.
 - Discussion on if DHS staff could assign categories to applicants to remove the barrier of being disqualified if an applicant is in wrong category. Staff input that it would be difficult to know the intent of the applicant and staff do not read applications until after grant review process, to limit bias.
 - Legal concerns about if exceptions should be allowed for late submissions.
 - Reflection on the first year of applicant interviews by reviewers, noting resource constraints with the increased number of applicants in recent cycles.
- Funding Caps
 - Strong support for a proposed funding cap proportional to expected awards per category. Example: If 5-7 awards are anticipated, a single applicant could request up to 1/7th of the category's allocated funds.
- Support for Smaller Organization
 - Discussion on creating organization-specific category or RFP to better support smaller organizations and culturally specific providers.
 - Proposed separate RFP for micro-grants (\$5K) or mini grants (\$25k) to build capacity. This would require increased staff resources, as current staff can manage 20 contracts per cycle.
- Strategic Planning
 - Importance of aligning RFP with a state-level plan for combating the opioid epidemic, considering the decreasing funding over time.
 - Proposal to consult resources to define key strategies and best practices.

Suggestion by council to have a 2-hour January meeting to further discuss the 2025 RFP and changes that could be made. Joe Clubb asks for DHS to come back with one recommendation for the 2025 RFP, along with best practices and how OERAC can incorporate this.

Adjourn

OERAC Chair Joe Clubb adjourned the December 2024 meeting.

Next meeting: 2-hour meeting on January 17th, 11AM – 1PM in St. Paul, MN.

Next full meeting: February 21st, 10AM – 3:30PM in St. Paul, MN.

Roll Call and Voting Log

December 6, 2024

P = in person R = remote participant A = absent Y = yes (approve)

Member	Attendance status	Minutes approval	Vote: Approve 2024 Legislative Recommendations with minor revisions on language as necessary and addition of 2023 recommendations that were not acted on.
Joe Clubb	P	Y	Y
Sarah Grosshuesch	P	Y	Y
Dr. Kathy Nevins	P	Y	Y
Rep. Dave Baker	P	Y	Y
Dr. Heather Bell	P	Y	Y
Rep. Robert Bierman	R	Y	Y
Sadie Broekemeier	A	-	-
Peter Carlson	R	Y	Y
Dr. Ashwin George	P	Y	Y
Curtis Jackson	R	Y	Y
Senator Bill Lieske	A	-	-
Jack Martin	P	Y	ABSTAIN
Senator Zaynab Mohamed	A	-	-
Toni Napier	R	Y	Y
Brock Reed	R	Y	Y
Dr. Charlie Reznikoff	R	Y	Y
Kristi Schoen	A	-	-
Judge Nicole Starr	A	-	-
Dr. Antony Stately	R	-	-
Deepa McGriff	P		
Jolene Rebertus	P		
Teresa Steinmetz	P		
Tally	voting members present= 15 absent= 4	Motion to approve: Toni Napier Second: Peter Carlson 13 = yes 0 = no	Motion: Kathy Nevins Second: Dave Baker