

# OPIOID COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## *Results and Recommendations*



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# Background

## Opioid Settlement Funding Overview:

- Belmont will receive on average \$46,000–\$59,000 annually until 2038 from Opioid Settlement Funds.
- There is currently over \$250,000 available for use\*

## Current Status

- Belmont engaged a consultant to conduct a Community Needs Assessment to determine how to best allocate funding
- On March 17 consultant delivered recommendations to the Board of Health, who unanimously voted their support

## Next Steps

- Share Community Needs Assessment Results and Recommendations with Select Board on March 24
- Request Select Board approval for funding approach

\*<https://www.mass.gov/lists/municipal-abatement-payments>



# Approach

Analyzed data from multiple sources including the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Dashboard.



Developed and distributed survey available to all residents online, on paper and in different languages.

Conducted one on one interviews with key stakeholders including residents directly impacted by opioids, Police Dept, Fire Dept, Health Care Professionals and School Staff.

Conducted focus groups with people who have been directly impacted by opioids or work with people who have been impacted to get guidance on how the settlement money should be spent.

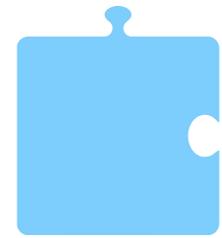


# Belmont Data Reported by State

- **9** Opioid Related Deaths 2019-2023\*
- **78** residents received prescriptions for Buprenorphine/BUP (Subutex and Suboxone) in July 2023-June 2024\*\*; this treats Opioid Use Disorder
- **64** Opioid Related EMS visits 2020-2023\*\*

\*<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/bureau-of-substance-addiction-services-bsas-dashboard>

\*\*<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ems-regional-opioid-related-incident-dashboard>



# Summary of Interview Themes

## Recovery Coach

- ▶ Additional local resources needed
- ▶ Peer and mentor support is a successful model

## Family Support

- ▶ Families need education and support to heal themselves and ultimately to heal their loved ones who bear the symptoms., educating and supporting families is the best way to guide loved ones into accepting the help they need

## Collaboration

- ▶ Desire for more collaboration with Health Dept, Community Services Dept, Schools, Senior Center and organizations supporting substance related effort

## Barriers to Rehab

- ▶ Financial
- ▶ Transportation

## Resources

- ▶ Need for local resources on mental health and substance/opioid use disorder to be concise, accessible and publicized broadly

## Transparency

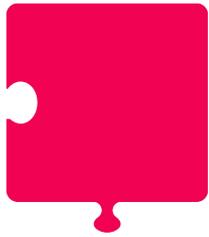
- ▶ Lack of public awareness and acknowledgement, which contributes to stigma
- ▶ Need for people to understand risks caused by childhood trauma

## Harm Reduction

- ▶ Narcan awareness, distribution and CPR Training
- ▶ Needle collection at the Health Dept is limiting due to hours and location - should move to Police

## Education

- ▶ School Resource Officer covers 7 schools, leaving little time for education due to daily incidents
- ▶ Chief of Police once spoke at the high school about opioid risks and first hand experience with athlete addiction. Re-launching this initiative is seen as valuable.
- ▶ Look at needs of all age groups
- ▶ Educate community on how to cope with pain
- ▶ Target high risk populations
- ▶ Leverage Belmont Wellness Coalition (providing substance misuse prevention education since 2017)



# Survey Overview

## Participation:

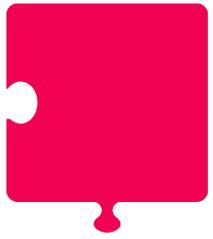
- 574 responses from 10,358 households (5.5% response rate).
- Data validity and reliability supported by similar findings in Winchester

**Ancillary Benefit:** Raised public awareness on opioid settlements, prescription drop off and local 24-hour crisis support line, run by [Advocates](#)

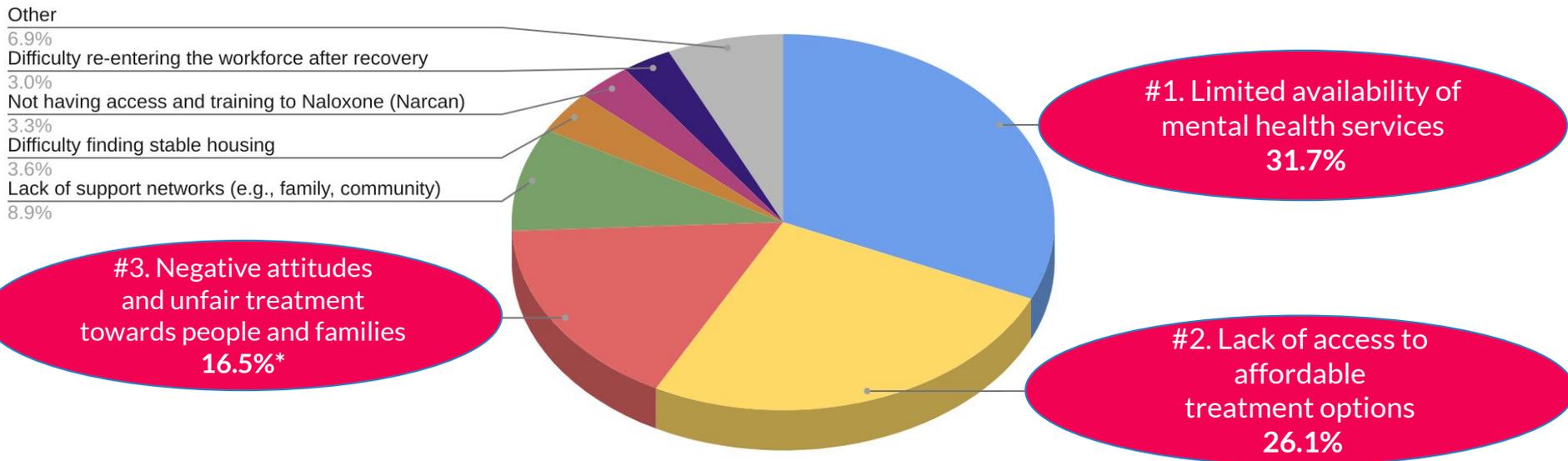
## Respondents Impacted by Opioids:

- 42 Had a family member die from Opioid Use Disorder/overdose
- 39 Have a family member who has Opioid Use Disorder
- 35 Impacted by Opioid Use Disorder but prefer not to say how
- 32 Have a family member in recovery for Opioid Use Disorder
- 5 In recovery themselves from Opioid Use Disorder

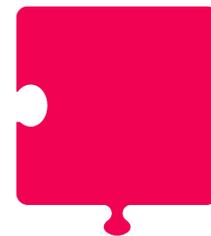
This was 7.3%  
of Survey  
Respondents



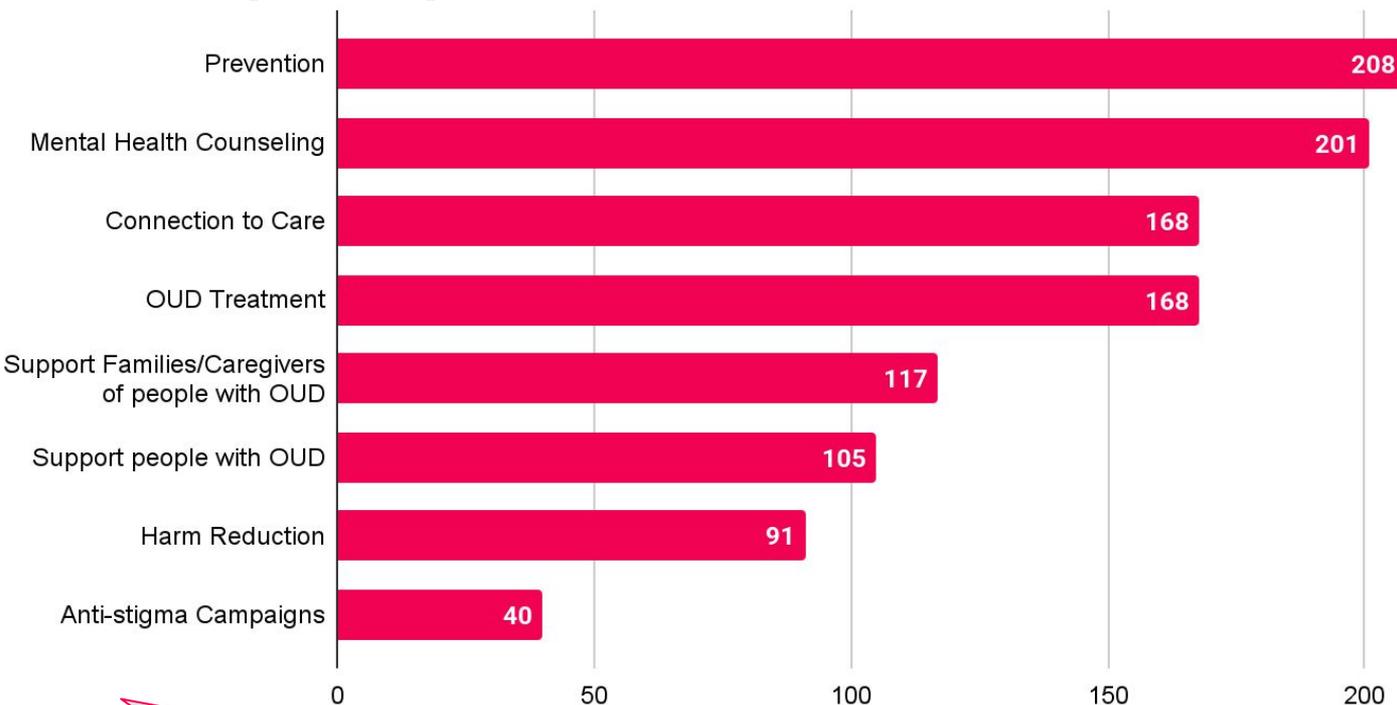
## What Belmont residents see as **BIGGEST** challenge to individuals with Opioid Use Disorder in their community:



\*This was significantly higher for those who identified as LGBTQ+ and was their #1 concern



## Programs or services seen as the greatest need for Belmont residents impacted by opioids (could pick up to 3):



Prevention is a broad category that can range from proactive education to prevention strategies for those at high risk or with opioid use disorder (including connections to care, Narcan access, and behavioral therapies. Early intervention, family support and education, and addressing social factors can help prevent relapse and overdose.)

**Anti-Stigma Campaigns** was rated the lowest while **Negative attitudes and unfair treatment towards people and families** was considered the third biggest concern. This disconnect could stem from doubts about the effectiveness of campaigns, the complexity of the issue, or a sense that more direct action is needed.

# Additional Survey Statistics



## Substances of Greatest Concern for misuse in Belmont

- ▷ Illegal opioids (40%) *Includes heroin and fentanyl compounds.*
- ▷ Prescription Opioids (19%) *Includes morphine, oxycodone and hydrocodone (i.e., Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin)*
- ▷ Alcohol (14%)
- ▷ Marijuana/Cannabis (13.1%)

## Awareness of Harm Reduction tools in Belmont

- ▷ 91% aware of Narcan and 41% knew it was available at the Health Dept.
- ▷ 49% of respondents knew about the prescription drug drop-off box at the Police Department

## Overdose Response

- ▷ 19% knew what to do including administering CPR and Narcan
- ▷ Majority of respondents know the basic steps but they do not know CPR or how to administer Narcan

## Informed by Prescribers of Opioid Risks

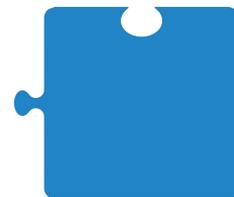
- ▷ 27% prescribed opioids for pain management in the past 5 years
- ▷ Of those, 41% did not feel they were adequately informed about potential risks of opioids

## Comfort Seeking Support Services within Belmont:

- ▷ 50% were moderately comfortable or very comfortable seeking support services within Belmont for themselves or someone in their family

## Families impacted by substance use interested in support group

- ▷ While most respondents were not interested, 8 people said they or someone in their family would be interested and we have already been in direct contact with them



# Key Focus Group Takeaways

## Navigating care is a struggle

- ▶ Difficult to find appropriate treatment options, navigate systems, and understand costs.
- ▶ Some noted a shortage of mental health providers while others indicated there are resources available, it is just getting to connected to the right ones.

## Immediate access to treatment is key

- ▶ When someone is ready to seek treatment it is crucial they go and having a recovery coach or trusted liaison to guide individuals is essential.
- ▶ Delays can hinder recovery and in some cases be deadly.

## Families need support

- ▶ Families are not only victims but primary caregivers, educators, and life-savers.
- ▶ They are at high risk for addiction. Support groups emphasizing camaraderie and understanding needed.
- ▶ One professional said “Biggest bang for the buck is targeting families.”
- ▶ Support for families who have lost a loved one, esp. children who have lost a parent identified as a critical gap.

## Narcan saves lives

- ▶ Stories shared about how Narcan has repeatedly saved lives (even several of the participants themselves).
- ▶ Access to Narcan and training for first responders and residents is critical and education about it can help with normalization and reduce stigma.

**Note:** While prevention was said to be important, it was viewed as less urgent compared to immediate needs for care connection and harm reduction.

# Recommendations

# Approved strategies for settlement funds:



## TREAT

Enhance opioid use disorder treatment



## SUPPORT

Support individuals and families in treatment and recovery



## CONNECT

Facilitate connections to care



## REDUCE

Promote harm reduction



## PREVENT

Prevent misuse of opioids and implement prevention education



## Enhance opioid use disorder treatment

- ▶ **Fund Recovery Coach (part-time consultant)**
  - Provide peer support to individuals with substance use disorder (SUD), help with treatment engagement, assist with community reintegration, time sensitive crisis intervention and support individuals post-crisis.
  - Collaborate with other Town Mental Health providers
  
- ▶ **Provide direct support for opioid treatment based on need**
  - Recommend up to \$4000 per individual but evaluate on a case by case basis
  - Create application process and policies to distribute funds equitably and sustainably



## Support individuals and families in treatment and recovery

- ▶ **Financial support for families who have lost a family member to opioids**
  - Cover approved services including childcare costs, clinical therapy or behavioral health support, and legal assistance.
  - Recommend up to \$1000 per year per family
  - Create application process and policies to distribute funds equitably and sustainably
- ▶ **Launch weekly support group for families and caregivers**
- ▶ **Distribute copies of the [The Complete Family Guide to Addiction](#) to equip families with strategies to help themselves and their loved ones.**



## Facilitate connections to care

- ▶ **Substance Use Coordinator (part-time consultant shared with other towns):** Hire someone with “lived experience” and credentials to run a support group
  - Create and manage substance use programs
  - Facilitate distribution and use of opioid settlement funds
  - Lead and facilitate a weekly family support group to help families affected by substance use
  - Create more opportunities for Belmont first responders, recovery coaches, town mental health providers and clergy to collaborate on addressing substance use disorder
  
- ▶ **Local Resources:** Create an easy to access online local resource tool (with a printable version) to highlight recovery coaches, local meetings and Services. Direct people to existing well vetted website for broader resources so not duplicating efforts.



## Promote harm reduction

- ▶ **Move collection of Needles/Sharps from the Health Dept to the Police Dept to increase accessibility**
- ▶ **Raise awareness about prescription medicine at the Police Dept and Narcan availability at Health Dept:**
  - Create a multi-faceted and creative communication campaign (Note: many people did not know where the Health Dept was)
  - Target high risk populations
  - Make available in multiple mediums and languages
  - Use detailed survey results to guide outreach approach
- ▶ **Increase availability of Narcan Training**
  - Recommend including CPR training and Narcan education in the high school health curriculum, which is currently done in 10th grade at Winchester High School
  - Provide more opportunities for CPR and Narcan training throughout the community in collaboration with Fire Department



# Prevent misuse of opioids and implement prevention education

- ▶ **Allocate \$8000 annually to support opioid specific education and prevention related activities and evaluate additional needs as they arise**
  - These can be implemented by the Substance Use Coordinator, Schools, Belmont Wellness Coalition or other local organizations as determined by the Health Director
- ▶ **Dedicate \$5000 every other year for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey**
- ▶ **Substance Use Coordinator Opportunities:**
  - Engage in the schools Health and Wellness Curriculum as it relates to substance use, and evaluate the possible role for [idecidemyfuture](#) program to empower high risk students to engage in healthy decision making.
  - Collaborate with Police Chief and High School to re-launch program where Police Chief came into the school to discuss opioid risks and first hand experience with athlete addiction.
  - Collaborate with Belmont Wellness Coalition on their high school student group *Mental Health Advocates* as it relates to Substance Use and Stigma.
- ▶ **Promote benefits of wellness to those impacted by opioids**
  - Pay for immediate families/caregivers in Belmont who have lost a family member to opioids or have a family member or currently using/in recovery to access services (e.g. meditation, sound healing, yoga, reiki). Recommend \$300 per family per year.

## Funding Request to Support Recommendations

- **Request approval to dedicate the following opioid settlement funding through 2030 to implement recommendations:**
  - Remainder of FY2025: \$30,000
  - FY2026: \$100,000
  - FY2027: \$90,000
  - FY2028: \$90,000
  - FY2029: \$90,000
  - FY2030: \$90,000
- **Funds to be managed by Town Administration in collaboration with the Health Director, with input and guidance from the Recovery Coach, Substance Use Coordinator, and other key stakeholders as necessary**
  - Present progress reports 2x/year to Board of Health and Select Board
  - Evaluate success and opportunities annually and adjust as needed
  - Revisit overall recommendations and funding in 2030 for subsequent years
- **Consultant Next Step:** Complete project close-out activities including outline of implementation plan and project resources.