



Allegheny County Opioid Settlement Annual Report — 2024

June 2024

Substance use and the associated harms persist in Allegheny County, and we have the opportunity to address these concerns

Allegheny County, as with other parts of Pennsylvania and the United States, faces ongoing challenges with substance use among residents and the consequent adverse effects, including overdoses, unemployment and economic hardship, and involvement with the criminal legal or other punitive systems. Families have been greatly impacted through loss of parents and extended family, reduced economic security and destabilized family supports such as housing, employment, health care and education. In Allegheny County, the number of overdose deaths peaked in 2017 at 835; however, since 2019, fatal overdoses have increased 19% from 570 to 689 (See **Figure 1**). In addition, Black residents are disproportionately represented in both fatal and nonfatal overdose incidents. In 2023, for example, the rate of overdose deaths among Black individuals in Allegheny County was more than three times higher than the rate among White individuals (See **Figure 2**).¹ The reasons for this racial disparity likely have to do with less access to mitigating factors like quality SUD treatment, naloxone for overdose reversal, drug testing technology (fentanyl test strips) and other harm reduction interventions. Higher rates of incarceration, poverty and poor access to health care also likely play a role.

1 Allegheny County developed this [interactive dashboard](#) for the public to explore information about people who have experienced an accidental overdose.

FIGURE 1: Count of Fatal Overdoses, by Race, 2008–2023

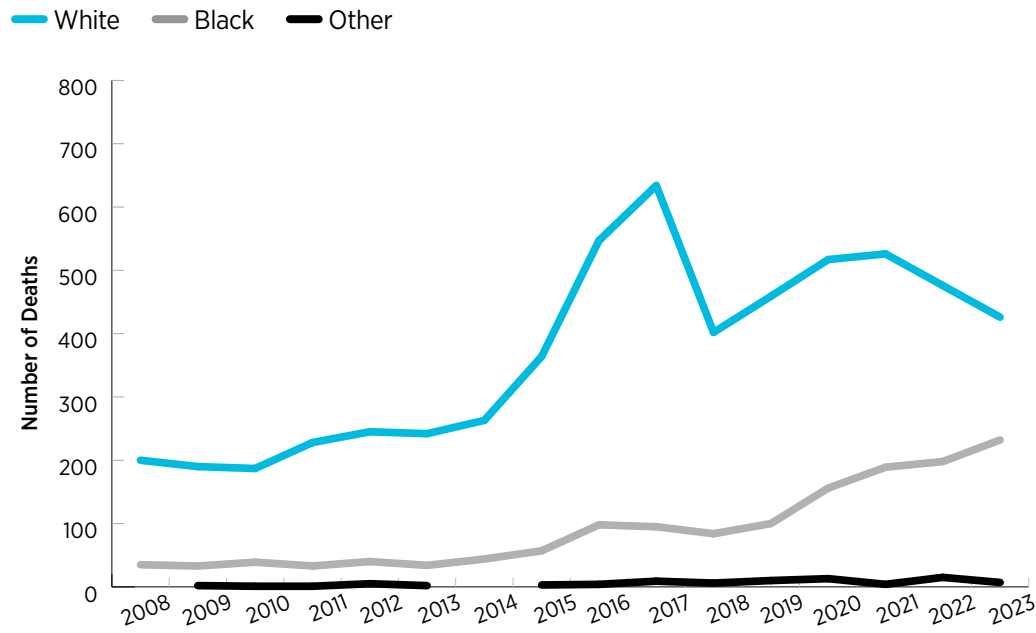
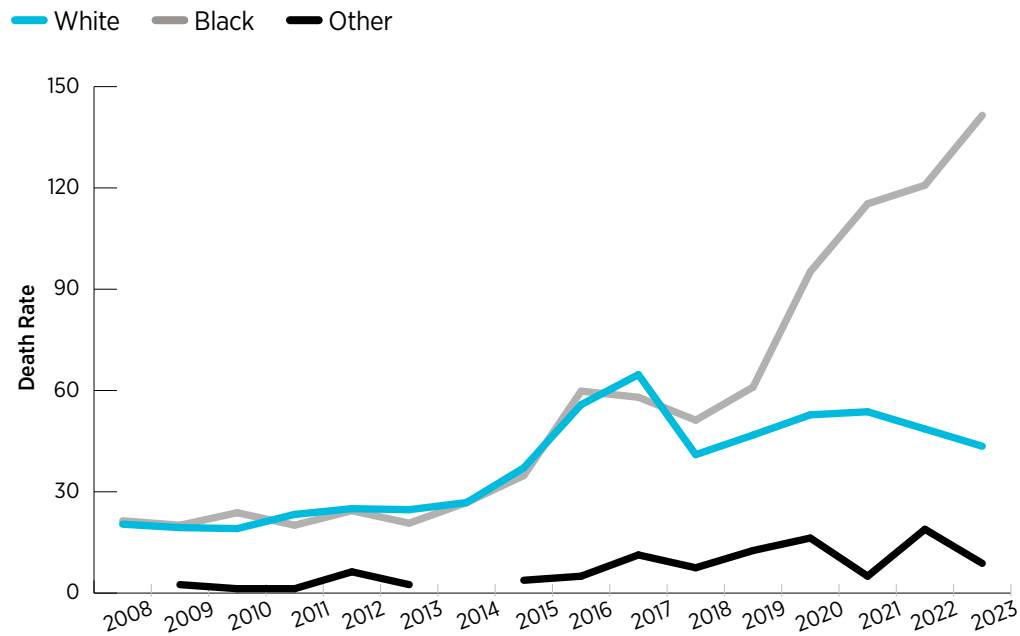
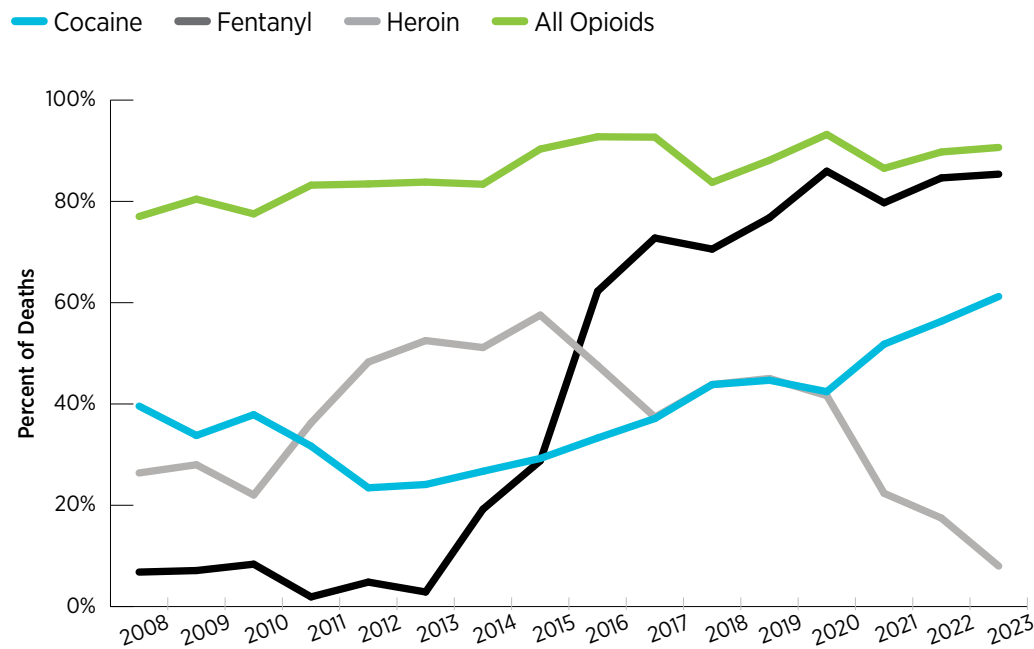


FIGURE 2: Fatal Overdose Rates per 100,000 population, by Race, 2008–2023



The evolution of the drug supply in Allegheny County presents additional challenges to community health and safety, including the of more potent and cheaper synthetic or laboratory-made opioids, such as fentanyl, and xylazine, a sedative approved only for veterinary use. Over time, fentanyl has increasingly dominated the illicit drug supply as its high potency makes drugs cheaper and more addictive. In 2020, 86% of fatal overdoses involved fentanyl, and over half of overdose deaths with an opioid also contained a stimulant (e.g., cocaine or methamphetamines) (See **Figure 3**).² Xylazine is now seen in the drug supply in larger amounts and is predominantly mixed into the illicit drug supply without consumers' knowledge. Xylazine is not an opioid and therefore not reversible with naloxone.³ Further, xylazine is associated with serious wounds that can lead to local infections, sepsis and even amputation. More research and monitoring are needed to understand the impact of these supply changes in the region.

FIGURE 3: Percent of Fatal Overdoses, by Substance Involved, 2008–2023



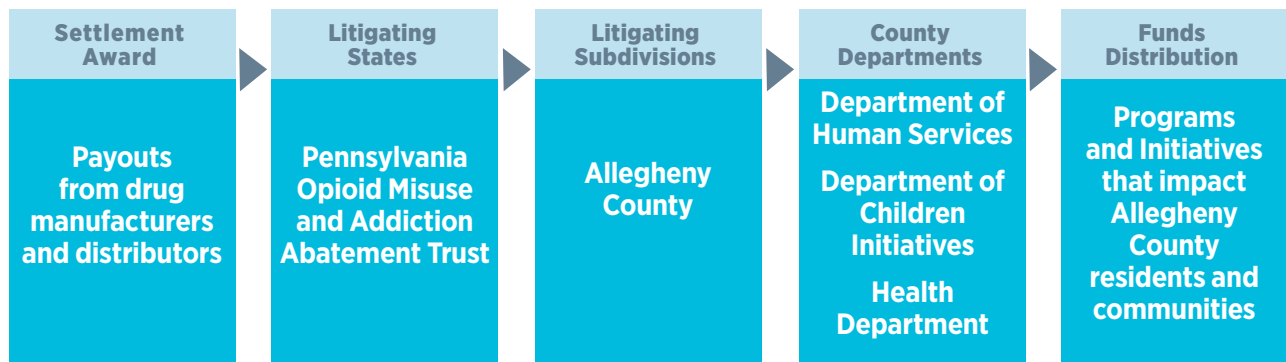
2 **Figure 3** includes four categorizations of substance that are most prevalent in fatal overdoses in Allegheny County. Data describing the involvement of additional substances can be found on Allegheny Analytics.

3 Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is an opioid antagonist, meaning that it binds to opioid receptors and can reverse and block the effects of other opioids, such as heroin, morphine, and oxycodone.

Allegheny County receives annual payouts from Opioid manufacturers and distributors through 2038

In 2021 and 2022, states and localities reached historic settlements⁴ with manufacturers and distributors of opioids, as well as pharmacy chains and a consulting firm, for their roles in the opioid epidemic. The settlement funds were designed to promote the long-term goals of (1) reducing fatal overdoses and (2) reducing the harms from opioid use disorder. As a result of these settlements, through the process depicted in **Figure 4**, Allegheny County will receive annual payments in varying amounts through at least 2038. As can be seen in **Figure 5**, Allegheny County received two payments totaling \$8.4M in 2022, and payments will level out to around \$4 million annually over time. Additional funding from future lawsuit settlements is possible but at this time it is unknown whether this will increase the total amount flowing to the county.

FIGURE 4: Process for distribution of Opioid Settlement Funds



The Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust distributes Pennsylvania’s funds to Counties and litigating subdivisions

The Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust⁵, governed by a Board of 12 Trustees, is responsible for distributing settlement funds to each of the participating counties, District Attorney’s offices and municipal subdivisions (e.g., townships, boroughs and cities).⁶ Resources are prioritized to communities most impacted by the opioid crisis, as measured by overdose deaths, rate of opioid use disorder hospitalizations, naloxone administrations and opioids dispensed, adjusted for severity. Of the \$2.2 billion that is estimated to be paid to Pennsylvania,

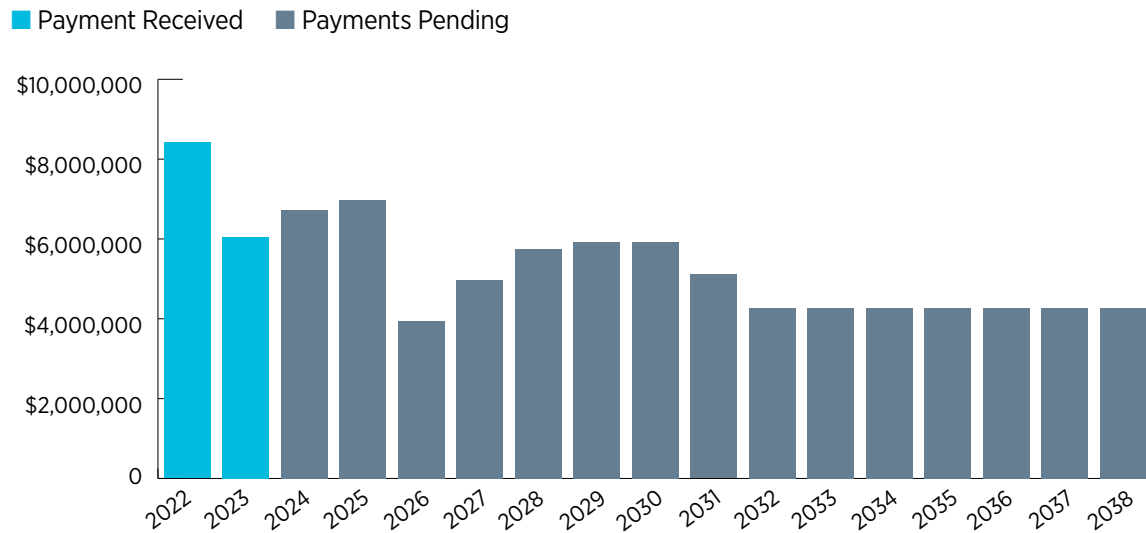
4 For more information about the national settlements, visit <https://nationalopioidsettlement.com/executive-summary/>

5 For more information about the Trust, visit <https://paopioidtrust.org/>

6 The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania Court issued an [Order](#) that governs the Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust and the distribution of funds to the participating, litigating subdivisions.

4% will be distributed to Allegheny County over the life of the Settlement. The City of Pittsburgh also receives payments from opioid settlements as a litigating subdivision and is estimated to receive annual payments totaling \$2.02M over the life of the settlement with the same spending expectations as Allegheny County.

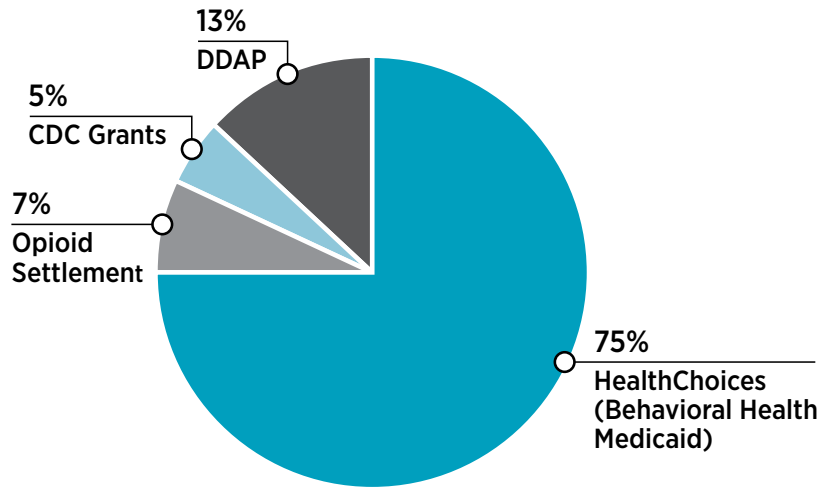
FIGURE 5: Allegheny County Estimated Payment Amounts, 2022–2038



Allegheny County distributes Opioid Settlement funds to the community through its Departments of Human Services, Health, and Children Initiatives

In Allegheny County, funds are distributed to the community through multiple Departments, including but not limited to the Health Department (ACHD), the Department of Children Initiatives (DCI) and the Department of Human Services (DHS). As depicted in **Figure 5**, Allegheny County has received its 2022 and 2023 payments, in the amounts of \$8.42 million and \$6.05 million, respectively. Settlement funds must be spent for authorized uses in the settlement agreements and in accordance with [Exhibit E](#) of the National Opioid Settlement to support “opioid remediation,” which is defined as: “Care, treatment, and other programs and expenditures designed to (1) address the misuse and abuse of opioid products, (2) treat or mitigate opioid use or related disorders, or (3) mitigate other alleged effects of, including on those injured as a result of, the opioid epidemic.”

FIGURE 6: County-wide Substance Use Investments, by Funding Source, FY23



Opioid Settlement funds help improve existing systems that treat and prevent substance use disorders

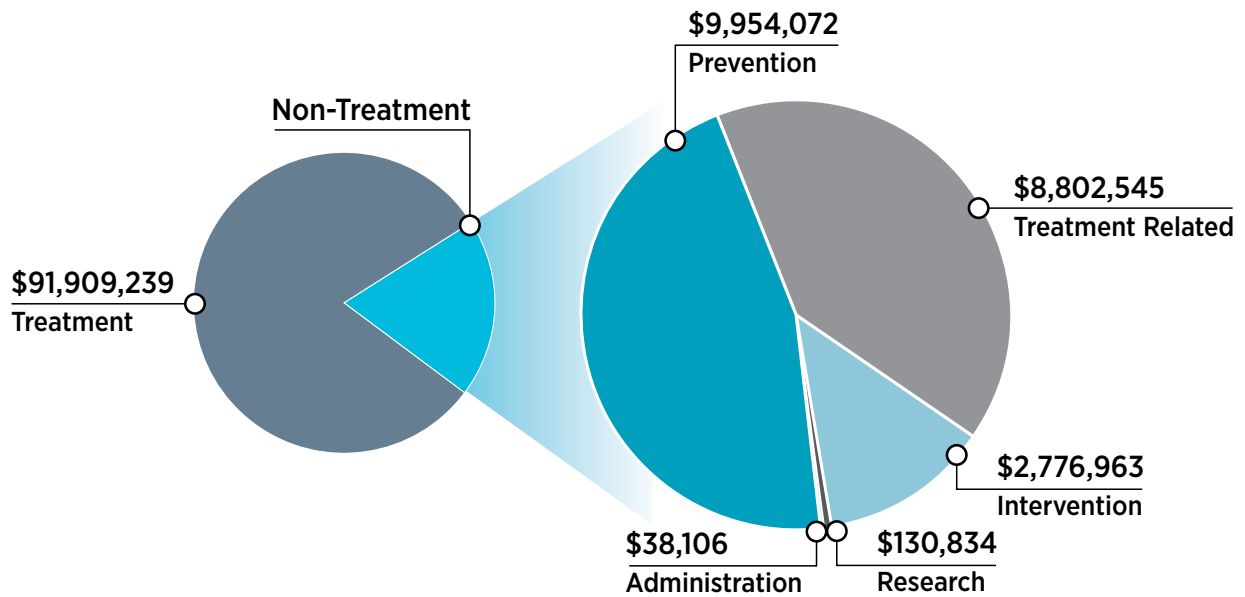
Allegheny County has made significant efforts through coordinated activities and multiple funding streams to address the needs of those impacted by opioid use disorder. Existing funding streams include Medicaid, PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), and grants from the Centers for Disease Control (**Figure 6**)⁷. Each of the funding streams that support Allegheny County's substance use continuum of care have specific allowable costs and eligibility criteria that define how the funds can be used. For example, Medicaid can only be used for treatment services provided to residents with an active Medicaid enrollment and DDAP funding is used for treatment services for residents who are uninsured as well as a small portion for prevention and recovery supports that cannot be billed to Medicaid. While most of the programs and services in the County's existing substance abuse continuum of care are eligible for Opioid Settlement funding, Allegheny County aims to allocate these newly available resources to incubate and expand new services that are difficult to fund through other sources and test potentially high-impact solutions to address the opioid crisis in our region.

⁷ Since 2019, Allegheny County through its Health Department (ACHD) has received \$5.3M per year from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Overdose Data to Action grant opportunity to improve

the surveillance of nonfatal and fatal drug overdoses and to collect and access data to inform and enhance local prevention activities. As of September 2023, ACHD will receive \$2.9M each year from this opportunity.

Allegheny County, through DHS as the Single County Authority, is responsible for planning and monitoring substance use prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services. Additionally, the Health Department provides overdose information and prevention. The County invests more than \$500 million in its behavioral health system annually, including more than \$110 million in substance use treatment and prevention in support of the County’s long-term goals of increasing access to treatment, reducing the harms from substance use disorders, preventing the initiation of substance use, and supporting residents in recovery (**Figure 7**)⁸.

FIGURE 7: County-wide Substance Use Investments, by Allowable Cost, all Funding Sources, FY23



The County’s substance use continuum of care is built upon partnerships with health and social service providers, consumers, and funders. These partnerships leverage community resources so that the county’s children, youth, adults and families have a network of services and supports that can make a positive impact in their lives. The continuum includes initiatives that mitigate the risk factors that can lead to a person using substances or to substance use becoming problematic. The continuum also aims to strengthen protective factors such as housing, access to quality low

8 Funding sources include expenses incurred through HealthChoices and the PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), allocations made from Opioid Settlement payments 1 and 2 between

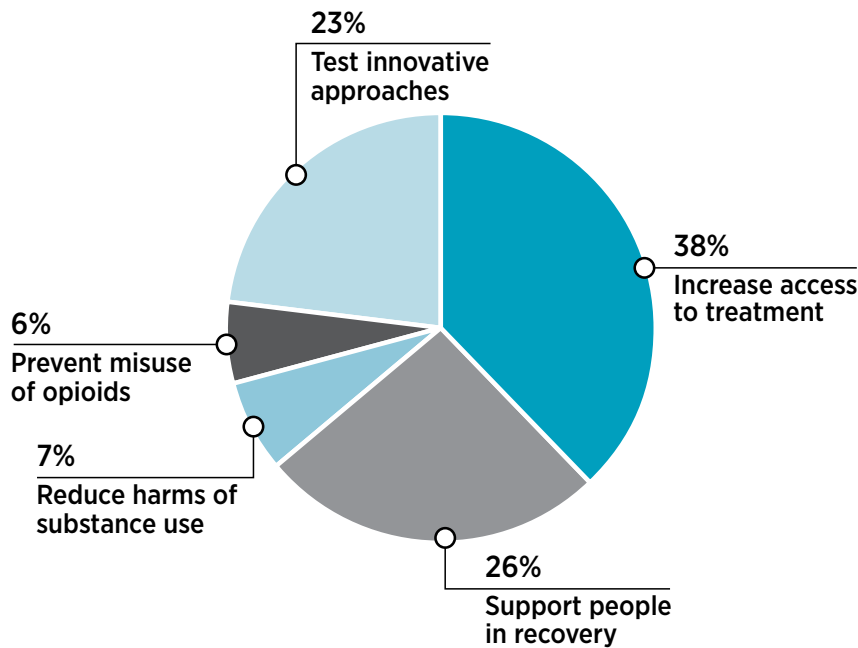
7/1/2022-6/30/2023 and competitively awarded funding received from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Overdose Data to Action grant opportunity. Total = \$113,611,759.

barrier SUD treatment and health care, childcare and family supports, harm reduction services such as safer drug use equipment. **Appendix A** outlines the substance use continuum of care in Allegheny County with a non-exhaustive list of efforts targeted both at individuals who use substances, their families and communities.

Allegheny County has begun strategically spending funds received from the National Opioid Settlement

In 2022, Allegheny County received \$8.42 million from the National Opioid Settlement to be spent by June 2024. Allegheny County has since allocated these funds to various treatment, harm reduction and substance use prevention initiatives and has spent about 40% of the funds received.⁹ Below, we detail our initial funding strategies and initiatives to address opioid misuse and its impacts. **Figure 8** summarizes the strategies to which Allegheny County has allocated the first two Opioid Settlement payments.

FIGURE 8: Opioid Settlement Funding Allocations, by Strategy, Payment 1 & 2



9 For live information on the County’s expenditures, visit the dashboard at <https://analytics.alleghenycounty.us/2022/12/21/allegheny-county-opioid-settlement-projects/>

Strategy: Prevent opioid misuse and harms among children and youth

Substance use can affect the entire family, with children of parents with SUD being at higher risk for a variety of negative outcomes, including lower academic achievement, emotional distress and using substances themselves. In Allegheny County, substance use is the leading cause of referrals to child welfare — a trend exacerbated by the opioid crisis and worsened again by pandemic-related increases in rates of relapse. The death of multiple family members from drug overdose is also increasingly common, worsening outcomes related to the loss of a loved parent, child, caregiver or sibling.

Adolescents' risk of substance use is largely influenced by the behaviors of their peers and family members in addition to the types of recreational activities and in-school supports that are available to them. In alignment with evidence-based best practices for substance use prevention, Allegheny County has invested Opioid Settlement funds in strategies that mitigate risk factors associated with adverse childhood experiences, promote protective factors, and offer relevant educational information.

INITIATIVE: Quality child care for children impacted by opioids

Very young children, birth to three years of age, who are born impacted by neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS) or born to families who are impacted by SUD require high-quality, evidence-based, comprehensive child care programming to ensure appropriate developmental screenings, early intervention (when appropriate), and educational programming by trauma-informed professionals. DCI's Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) expansion program prioritizes children impacted by NOWS/SUD and allows for a comprehensive approach to families seeking child care support for their treatment and recovery needs.

EHS-CCP's, which are located in a scattered site model across Allegheny County, create new opportunities to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and their families. Allegheny County's expansion will serve up to 40 additional children per year and maximize program resources across EHS-CCP and the Child Care Development Fund to support effective partnerships that expand high-quality early learning opportunities for children impacted by SUD so that they may have the healthy and enriching experiences they need to realize their full potential.

Funding Committed: \$905,868 through 6/30/2024

INITIATIVE: Public education campaign to reduce accidental Opioid ingestions among children

Due to rising cases of pediatric opioid ingestion, Allegheny County, in partnership with Luceo Creative Media Group, an advertising and creative media agency, are working to develop and distribute print and digital media that covers practices for safe storage of opioids and other medications and supports the practice of carrying and administering naloxone for use even in small children accidentally exposed to opioids. The campaign will focus on the use and distribution of lock boxes for parents and caregivers to safely store dangerous substances where children cannot get them.

The public education campaign aims to bridge the gap between information and action by marrying explanatory, health-framed materials to realistic, emotional, and authentic narratives. Each campaign image and message considers the negative stigma surrounding substance use and the challenges stigma creates in activating target audiences to seek resources. We understand that substance use education takes time and are committed to creating the large-scale social transformation as well as individual changes in behavior needed to prevent accidental opioid ingestion and overdoses among children. Allegheny County anticipates distributing print and digital materials to providers of SUD treatment and related services as well as to trusted community-based organizations and spaces with messaging that reminds caregivers to store any substances (including used containers and supplies) in a place where little ones can't access them, avoid using substances in front of kids and that Naloxone is always safe to use on children in the event of an accidental opioid ingestion.

Settlement Funding Committed: \$300,000 through 03/01/2024

INITIATIVE: Student Assistance Programs

Allegheny County, through its Office of Behavioral Health, is committed to sustaining Allegheny County's student assistance programs (SAP) as one of its primary investments targeted at substance use prevention. SAP places liaisons at schools of all levels to assist school personnel in supporting students to overcome mental health or substance use-related barriers so that they may remain in school and advance alongside their peers. Students from elementary through high school who are experiencing barriers to school success due to suspected mental health concerns and/or substance use, can be referred to SAP by their guardians, school personnel, peers, or themselves. SAP is a systemic four-phase process using techniques to mobilize school resources and develop supports, involving family members and school staff, to remove barriers to learning and academic success. When the challenges lie beyond the scope of the school, the SAP team will assist

the caregiver and student so they may access services within the community. Allegheny County is committed to supporting SAP and utilized Opioid Settlement funding to allocate additional monies to providers who identified increased need and had capacity to serve additional students.

Settlement Funding Committed: \$170,000 through 03/01/2024

Strategy: Increase access to treatment and recovery support

Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) alone or in combination with other evidence-based treatments, known as medication assisted treatment (MAT) are considered the most effective treatment¹⁰ option for people seeking recovery from their opioid use disorder (OUD). However, in Allegheny County and throughout the country, accessing this life-saving treatment is not always easy. The most frequently reported barriers are gaps in knowing where to go for treatment, a lack of prescribers and treatment openings leading to long wait times and geographical distance from treatment providers as well as cultural differences between those seeking services and the available providers.¹¹

Allegheny County recognizes the unmet need for low-barrier access to treatment in our region regardless of what stage of recovery a person is in and what level of care they are seeking. While investing Opioid Settlement funds into these strategies has increased access to MOUD, additional pathways are needed to connect clients with the comprehensive services they need and to take the strain off mobile sites that are currently serving a high volume of clients every day.

10 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2019. Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Save Lives. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25310>.

11 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). Key substance use and mental

health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP20-07-01-001, NSDUH Series H-55). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

INITIATIVE: Low-barrier, mobile medication services

In certain areas of Allegheny County, the prevalence of substance use and fatal overdose is disproportionately higher than other areas, in part due to the lack of access to MOUD. And, due to residential segregation, the accessibility of health and social services intersects with racial disparities seen in overdose rates and other key outcomes. To fill this gap, Allegheny County has invested opioid settlement funding in expanding the efforts of Prevention Point Pittsburgh, a local syringe service program (SSP), and Allegheny Health Network's (AHN) Center for Recovery Medicine to bring mobile MOUD services, specifically the drug buprenorphine, which one of the safest and most effective in this class, to communities in need rather than expecting residents to seek out care in other parts of the County.

Prevention Point responded to racial disparities in access to MOUD and geographical trends of overdose and substance use by establishing four mobile MOUD sites throughout the County (Perry Hilltop, Carrick/Overbrook, Homewood, and Hill District) beginning in October 2020. This community presence not only reduce the barriers to accessing MOUD but also aim to increase client engagement in other services through screening, assessment and referrals to treatment for SUD, mental and physical healthcare, and social determinants of health such as housing, transportation, food and health insurance coverage. Mobile clinics served over 600 clients with a medical visit in their first two years of operation and can now engage 300-350 people continuously at any one time.

In addition to prescribing buprenorphine, providers on the van can also provide pregnancy tests, wound care, antibiotics and some over the counter medications like ibuprofen. Partnership and payment arrangements between Prevention Point and local pharmacies ensure that even people without insurance can access the treatment medications they need.

In addition, Allegheny County aims to close gaps in care that exist when a person is released from jail by directing opioid settlement funds to AHN's Rethinking Incarceration and Empowering Recovery (RIVER) Clinic. The AHN RIVER clinic, opened in June 2021, is the first and only clinic of its kind in the Pittsburgh region to provide a continuous, transitional care model for patients released from the Allegheny County Jail and provides a spectrum of post-incarceration care, including both medical care and support to address social determinants of health.

Complementing the broader philosophy and goals of the RIVER clinic, settlement funds were used to provide social work and community health worker services at the Forbes Hospital Emergency Department. These staff conduct initial assessments, provide educational materials and linkage to treatment and other social service supports.

Leveraging the combined expertise of a social worker and a peer recovery specialist provides a holistic approach to treatment initiation and long-term recovery planning. These staff aim to increase identification and engagement of patients with SUDs during hospitalization and improve treatment initiation and adherence while also reducing feelings of isolation and shame through discharge planning.

Having various entry points to long-term treatment options and essential social services acknowledges the complex social and psychological aspects of substance use and supports clients in identifying individualized pathways to improving their overall health outcomes whether that be through connection to a mobile van site, the RIVeR clinic or a more traditional outpatient setting. More information about Allegheny County's work to enhance referral processes from both emergency departments and mobile sites can be found under the Initiative: Create warm handoff processes from Emergency Departments and other locations to SUD treatment organizations below.

Funding Committed: \$927,496 through 03/01/2024

INITIATIVE: Telemedicine Bridge Clinic

Telehealth has emerged across all medical specialties as a tool to expand access to care, particularly behavioral health services. Specifically, telehealth for MOUD and other treatments has demonstrated similar outcomes to in-person treatment while increasing patient satisfaction, reducing costs, and improving access to evidence-based treatment.¹² Telehealth has been utilized to rapidly engage patients following treatment in an emergency department or after referral from community-based organizations.

The UPMC Division of Medical Toxicology's Telemedicine Bridge Clinic initially opened in 2020 to meet the needs of residents who struggled to find in-person addiction care. Since then, the Bridge Clinic has evaluated and treated more than 3,000 unique patients during more than 8,000 encounters via both audiovisual and audio-only telehealth visits on the same day as their referral or the following business day. Clients can access this service whether they live in a rural, suburban, or urban community; after release from jail, if they're pregnant or if they're suffering from opioid withdrawal with referrals coming primarily from community-based substance use treatment providers. By investing Opioid

12 Samuels EA, Khatri UG, Snyder H, Wightman RS, Tofighi B, Krawczyk N. Buprenorphine Telehealth Treatment Initiation and Follow-Up During COVID-19. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2022.

Settlement funding in the Telemedicine Bridge Clinic, the County is able to support UPMC in reaching populations who were otherwise not able to access timely addiction care and at significant risk of being lost to follow up due to delays in accessing care.

UPMC is using Opioid Settlement Funds to expand Bridge Clinic services by up to four times, potentially completing over 9,000 encounters per year. Approximately halfway through the funding period, annual volume has already more than doubled, increasing by 144%, compared to the year prior to funding initiation. Growth will be accomplished by hiring advanced practice providers and supporting existing outpatient care coordinators to assist patients with transitioning to longer-term care settings. This expanded capacity has the potential to serve 1 in 4 Allegheny County residents who have OUD. The funding will also allow the Telemedicine Bridge Clinic to work with Allegheny County and relevant payers to implement payment models that will sustain this capacity once settlement funds are exhausted.

Funding Committed: \$941,330 through 03/01/2024

INITIATIVE: Create warm handoff processes from Emergency Departments and other locations to SUD treatment organizations

Emergency departments (EDs) serve as a critical opportunity to engage with populations at high risk of fatal overdose or infectious disease that might otherwise face barriers to accessing treatment. Each year, over 10,000 people in Allegheny County visit emergency departments following an overdose or for other substance use-related medical needs (e.g., wound care, infections, psychiatric symptoms, or withdrawal). Until recently, efforts to rapidly connect individuals who present to an emergency department with these conditions to MOUD or other supportive services were inconsistent across County EDs.

AHN Center for Recovery Medicine received Opioid Settlement funding to embed substance use navigators within emergency departments to increase warm handoff services for individuals presenting with SUD to access MOUD and harm reduction services as well as mental health services, primary care, social services, and residential treatment facilities. Navigators conduct outreach and assess patients' needs, introduce patients to MOUD programs and serve as a resource for their clients and an advocate for culture change in the hospital.

In addition, Allegheny County saw a broader opportunity to create a rapid referral system for emergency departments and community-based locations to connect patients with treatment providers by using Opioid Settlement funding to newly implement the MATTERS (Medication for Addiction Treatment & Electronic Referrals) platform. Allegheny County has partnered with two local health systems – Allegheny Health Network (AHN) and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) – to pilot using MATTERS to make these rapid referrals. (In the future, Allegheny County envisions expanding to introduce MATTERS to mobile outreach sites and peer organizations that regularly interact with people who need connected to SUD treatment.)

The MATTERS platform supports emergency department staff in facilitating a rapid referral to treatment for patients who have OUD without needing to make any phone calls, offering medication and transportation vouchers, and peer referrals to assist individuals in getting to their first clinic appointment.

The mobile and web-based application offers an extensive network of SUD treatment providers and resources so that emergency department staff can support patients presenting with substance use related conditions in identifying an appropriate follow up appointment before being discharged. Utilizing MATTERS, emergency department staff aim to provide every person living with substance use and mental health disorders multiple pathways to treatment within their own community, improving access to care and eliminating financial, geographical, and social barriers. As part of the current pilot, Allegheny County has additionally supported implementation and expansion of in-person care coordination services for patients seen at high volume EDs within AHN and UPMC health systems.

These investments – which support the MATTERS platform as well as hiring and training emergency department staff, devising structures for coordination between providers, and establishing sustainable payment models – aim to reduce morbidity and mortality rates for people living with substance use and mental health disorders by rapidly connecting these individuals to longer-term treatment from emergency settings and utilizing community-based relationship to maintain contact with those clients.

Funding Committed: \$1,031,465 through 06/30/2024

Strategy: Reduce the harms of substance use

For most of us, harm reduction is as simple as wearing a seatbelt in a car or having a smoke alarm at home. When it comes to substance use, harm reduction is one of the best ways of creating better outcomes for at-risk individuals and improving community health. Harm reduction programs provide people with the means to reduce the risks of drug use and improve their health, such as safer drug use supplies, naloxone, and lock boxes to keep substances out of the hands of children and others. Harm reduction interventions can save lives by preventing fatal overdose and the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV and viral hepatitis. Harm reduction programs can keep people alive and healthier so they can move toward their goals related to recovery and quality of life. They keep our communities healthier, save our health and social service systems from unnecessary costs and create better opportunities to link people to the care they need and deserve.

INITIATIVE: Syringe Service Programs

As the number of individuals struggling with substance use disorder (SUD), including people who inject drugs, continues to increase, Allegheny County must aim to reduce the harms of intravenous drug use simultaneously to supporting people to access treatment. Utilizing a Syringe Service Program (SSP) can greatly reduce the harms of substance use, including transmission of diseases, and make a positive difference in health outcomes. These are community-based programs that provide essential services for people who use substances including health education, sterile supplies, fentanyl test strips, and naloxone to prevent overdose. SSPs not only reduce the incidence of disease transmission and overdose, they also have been shown to be an important way of helping people enter treatment.

The county's primary authorized Syringe Service Program is Prevention Point Pittsburgh, which operates a program at five sites: East Liberty, Perry Hilltop, Hill District, Carrick/Overlook, and Homewood. The harm reduction approach utilized by SSPs like Prevention Point have proven to be more successful than abstinence-based programs at connecting clients to medication-assisted treatment, recovery, mental health care, and other vital health and social services by giving people who use substances the opportunity to take important steps towards a safer and healthier future. In its nearly 30 years of operation, PPP has faced ongoing challenges in purchasing SSP supplies at a capacity that meets the needs of its clients due to restrictions associated with other funding sources. Opioid Settlement funding provided an unprecedented opportunity for Allegheny County to invest in PPP by allocating funds specifically for SSP supplies.

Each of Prevention Point Pittsburgh's sites is active once per week and can serve up to 100 individuals per day at each site. Clients' needs vary with some accessing sterile needles and syringes free of cost to help stop the spread of communicable disease and others receiving fentanyl test strips, so they are aware of what substances are present in their supply before using them. SSPs also serve the community at large by facilitating safe disposal of used needles and syringes and distributing naloxone in the event an overdose does occur. Prevention Point also provides their clients with items to meet their basic needs such as hygiene kits, food and water, seasonally appropriate clothing, menstrual products, and bus tickets.

Settlement Funding Committed: \$325,500 through 6/30/2024**INITIATIVE: Naloxone distribution**

Due to the high prevalence of overdose and an ever-changing illicit drug supply, Allegheny County has prioritized Naloxone distribution for over five years through the Health Department (ACHD). Naloxone, also called Narcan, works by temporarily stopping the effects of opioids on the brain and body. It's safe, simple, easy to administer, and begins working immediately to reverse an overdose. Naloxone is safe to use by people of all ages, including children, and won't cause any negative effects if someone is not overdosing on opioids.

Allegheny County used Opioid Settlement funds to purchase naloxone that was distributed to first responders throughout the county including Police, Fire and EMS departments to use in the event of a suspected opioid overdose or in the event that such agencies wanted to share a supply of "leave behind" naloxone for future use. The funds also supported naloxone distribution to providers that interface with high-risk communities. Allegheny County's goal is to give naloxone to anyone who might witness an opioid overdose, including those that actively use illicit substances themselves, and was able to distribute 3000 naloxone kits using funds from the County's first Opioid Settlement payment. Allegheny County plans to support another large purchase of naloxone in 2024 to supplement the supply of the medication that ACHD receives from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As with all harm reduction efforts, negative stigma associated with substance use may interfere with the public's response to naloxone. In ACHD's experience, most first responders are willing and eager partners in the effort to get naloxone in the hands of those who need it most. This may be at least partly due to previous education efforts by Allegheny County.

Settlement Funding Committed: \$214,500 through 6/30/2024

Strategy: Support people in recovery and families who are impacted by substance use

For many people, housing stability and substance use intersect—substance use may prevent an individual from maintaining a safe place to stay and/or an individual’s lack of housing may influence their substance use. Too often, people with substance use disorders exit inpatient SUD treatment or leave the Allegheny County Jail, having received treatment services while incarcerated, to living environments that jeopardize their recovery or to a state of homelessness. Without a supportive living environment people with SUD may struggle to establish a foundation in treatment, build a support network and a plan for maintaining recovery, and find a permanent place to live that is conducive to recovery. In recognition of this relationship between housing and substance use, and of the high prevalence of substance use among Allegheny County’s unhoused population, Allegheny County allocated opioid settlement funding toward a variety of housing options including low-barrier shelter and recovery housing.

INITIATIVE: Low-barrier and recovery-oriented housing options

To whatever extent possible, Allegheny County aims to fund low-barrier housing options that offer case management services so that residents can move toward stabilization regardless of their situation when they first present in need of housing. Low barrier shelter does not require residents to pursue additional services, abstain from substances or seek mental health care in order to access a bed. Providing shelter and offering access to services such as mental health care, SUD treatment or just food and warmth can create a more stable environment for a person to avoid unnecessary harm and make decisions about recovery from a substance use disorder.

When individuals exit inpatient treatment or incarceration to unstable or harmful settings they may relapse to use and/or recidivate to jail. It is important that people in Allegheny County with SUD have a supported living environment available to serve as a step between inpatient drug and alcohol treatment or the Allegheny County Jail and living independently in the community. This “step between” can be recovery housing, which provides a safe, stable and recovery-oriented living environment for up to 90 days at a time. Recovery housing can also provide case management services that focus on connections to treatment and peer supports, locating permanent housing, finding employment and meeting other needs to support recovery.

Allegheny County has historically contracted with multiple providers of recovery housing and sought to expand the system's capacity by adding additional providers in 2019. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the launch of new Recovery Housing sites back significantly. Opioid Settlement funds were utilized to acquire an additional property to offer Recovery Housing, a necessary investment that couldn't be covered by other County funding streams. With the new Recovery Housing site, Allegheny County will be able to serve 200 individuals per year.

Settlement Funding Committed: \$776,554 through 03/01/2024

Strategy: Test innovative approaches to reducing harm and improving treatment outcomes

The funds originating from the settlement are small compared to the county's current opioid spending landscape; however, the settlement's extensive, non-exhaustive list of approved uses makes the funds flexible in nature compared to other sources of funding. The county views Opioid Settlement funds as an opportunity to invest in innovative initiatives to learn what has the greatest positive impact and transition them to sustainable funding sources as is appropriate.

INITIATIVE: Contingency management (incentives for treatment adherence)

Over half of all overdose deaths from opioids in Allegheny County feature co-occurring stimulant use. Unlike OUD, however, no effective medication exists to treat stimulant use disorder, and it remains relatively under-diagnosed. The dual problems of under-diagnosis and lack of effective treatment options exacerbate negative health outcomes, particularly in communities of color, key disparities that were the driving motivation of our investments to address this social problem directly.

Contingency management, the use of financial incentives to motivate and reward positive behavior changes, such as avoiding illicit substances, is the gold standard of treatment for stimulant use disorder and has been studied in over 100 trials. To implement this treatment, Allegheny County partnered with DynamiCare, a digital healthcare app, which is responsible for measuring and rewarding positive progress on individuals' recovery journeys. Incentives are paid to qualifying participants with OUD and/or stimulant use disorder for avoiding illicit substances, attending clinical appointments, and completing cognitive behavioral therapy modules. The incentive-based treatment program in the pilot can be paired with other evidence-based forms of treatment, including medication for

opioid use disorder and cognitive behavioral therapy. This is an added treatment option for patients that complements other provider or community-based programming clients may find beneficial. Allegheny County outlined a goal of recruiting and enrolling 600 eligible participants in the pilot in partnership with local healthcare and social service providers and community-based organizations and is collaborating with DynamiCare and Community Care Behavioral Health to scale enrollment in the pilot in 2024.

Settlement funding committed: \$1,728,000 through 03/01/2024

INITIATIVE: Training and Education Opportunities

As the number of overdose deaths from substance use continue to rise, the need for additional training and education is greater than ever. Allegheny County believes that increasing the availability of high quality ongoing educational opportunities can both increase the effectiveness of substance use professionals, as well as empower families, policy makers, educators along with other stakeholders to better address the public health crisis caused by substance use.

To that end, Allegheny County worked with Allegheny Health Network (AHN) Center for Recovery Medicine (CRM) to develop and host two annual, enduring training events designed to educate both health care professionals and the public to better understand and help address this crisis. The first conference was an extension of CRM's "Drug User Health" conference series which was hosted several times over the last several years. The target audience for this series is health care professionals and substance use treatment staff. It focuses on a broad range of topics related to substance use with an emphasis on harm reduction strategies and evidence-based treatment. The second annual series was geared toward the public including, but not limited to, lawmakers, family members and educators with a broader focus on educating the public on facts about substance use, along with updated information on trends and effective interventions both at the individual and community levels. CRM used a mix of local, regional and national experts to provide world-class educational experiences for participants.

CRM also expanded its ECHO training platform that brings together providers of various professional disciplines (providers, supportive services, peers); service environments (primary care practices, hospitals, CPBO's); and others interested stakeholders to improve the knowledge of addiction treatment and related topics. AHN served as an open resource made available to individuals from any institution, program, faith-based organization or school who wanted to learn evidence-based approaches to treating substance use disorders. In addition to healthcare professional training opportunities.

By providing ongoing didactic and experiential learning opportunities through the ECHO platform, Allegheny County can help bring the next generation of counselors, peers, social workers, nurses, physicians and others into the field and help create a community of practice for substance use treatment across the county.

Settlement funding committed: \$105,834 through 03/01/2024

Allegheny County's plans for the third Opioid Settlement Payment

With settlement funding being distributed every year until 2038, Allegheny County must proactively and strategically plan for using future payments while managing the projects receiving prior payments. The third payment of settlement funds brought \$6.05 million to Allegheny County in December 2023 and must be spent by June 2025. Allegheny County is maintaining prior commitments to Prevention Point Pittsburgh's safe syringe program and mobile buprenorphine services, naloxone distribution, and childcare services, each with the same scope of work as described above. In addition, Allegheny County intends to use payment 3 to:

- Provide MAT and certified peer support in the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ). With Opioid Settlement funding, Allegheny County will be able to offer a choice of treatment medications to incarcerated individuals with an active MAT prescription to continue treatment and identify those needing a prescription to begin treatment. MAT continuation and initiation services in the ACJ increases the likelihood that incarcerated individuals will engage in treatment upon their release and lowers the likelihood of relapse, problem opioid use, and risky opioid use after release. In conjunction with work to expand the availability and accessibility of MAT for incarcerated individuals, DHS and the ACJ are initiating practices that will connect all individuals receiving MAT with a peer support navigator upon release to create connections to community-based treatment and recovery supports.
- Fund interventions that are led, designed and/or operated by highly impacted communities, including the Black community. While there is no singular definition for a community led, designed and/or operated approach, DHS prioritized funding for proposals that demonstrated 1) populations most affected by the epidemic are represented among key leadership, and 2) community representation is a key element of organizational planning and decision making. DHS also prioritized interventions that are predominantly led and/or staffed by Black individuals, reflecting experience, community feedback and research on how trusted messengers improve engagement and service delivery. From a pool of 19 RFP respondents, DHS made awards to seven providers who best demonstrated their ability to deliver services in disproportionately impacted communities.

To share your ideas about how the County should spend future payments of Opioid Settlement funds, please visit Allegheny Engage at <https://engage.alleghenycounty.us/en/folders/opioid-settlement>.

The impact of Opioid Settlement funding will continue to grow over time

This report aims to offer the public a view into the investments Allegheny County has made through Opioid Settlement Funding. As mentioned, this funding source is one of many that DHS, ACHD and DCI utilize in their work to prevent substance abuse, treat individuals with substance use disorders and support people and families impacted by substance use. As initiatives are launched, the County looks forward to sharing the successes we've achieved.

Collecting data, including client information, is essential to provide high-quality care to all consumers of Allegheny County initiatives and necessary to understand the impact of our investments. In a future publication, we will review the progress of early initiatives and results of the impact of opioid settlement investments across the various interventions, including warm handoffs in emergency departments to ensure seamless transitions for patients from acute care to addiction treatment services, the application of contingency management strategies to incentivize recovery milestones, the expansion of telehealth services to broaden access to addiction treatment, and the deployment of mobile medication units to facilitate the distribution of MAT in underserved areas. The analysis will encompass a range of quantitative and qualitative metrics, such as patient engagement rates, treatment adherence, MAT utilization, and overall improvement in health outcomes. Additionally, it will evaluate the cost-effectiveness of these interventions to ensure sustainable investment in opioid crisis mitigation efforts. The publication aims to review progress toward investment and guide future investments and policy decisions in combating the opioid epidemic.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A: Substance Use Continuum of Care

