



Rowan County Health Department
1811 East Innes Street – Salisbury, NC 28146-6030

MEMO

To: Rowan County Board of Commissioners
CC: Aaron Church, County Manager
From: Alyssa Harris, Public Health Director
Subject: Vital Strategies: Leveraging Opioid Settlement Dollars to Support Harm Reduction Programs in NC Jurisdictions
Date: November 7, 2022

Situation:

Vital Strategies, a public health consulting organization, is accepting applications for “Leveraging Opioid Settlement Dollars to Support Harm Reduction Programs in NC Jurisdictions”. Rowan County Public Health is requesting permission to apply for a \$70,000 a year, three-year grant to fund harm reduction strategies that are supported by the Opioid Settlement. This funding will allow us to utilize funds to support the harm reduction strategy of the Opioid Settlement and use GIS mapping to address both rural and racial equity issues regarding opioid use.

Background:

The lack of care coordination for harm reduction strategies services locally has resulted in Rowan County residents relying on out of the county to receive their needed resources. In conjunction with the opioid epidemic, the use of contaminated syringes contributes to the increase in cases of Hepatitis C and HIV in the community. According to the latest data from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services website (2016-2020), the average rate of Chronic Hep C is 162.6 per 100,000; whereas the average rate of HIV is 11.78 per 100,000 for Rowan County. Research has shown that the implementation of a comprehensive harm reduction offers a variety of preventative and medical services including onsite HepC and HIV testing, first aid and wound care, Narcan, referrals for follow-up vaccines, and further treatment for sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis screening and other needs. Harm Reduction strategies have been shown to significantly impact the transmission of communicable diseases and create a healthier environment for the individual, as well as the community.

Assessment:

Through implementation of a local harm reduction program, Rowan County Public Health will greatly impact not only the health of the individual, but also the overall community, by limiting the accidental transmission from contaminated equipment. Connecting with citizens through a standardized harm reduction program allows for the health department to limit the spread of both Hep C and HIV among this vulnerable population, our community, and provide access to resources and treatment.

Recommendation:

We respectfully ask the Board of Commissioners allow RCPH to apply for \$70,000 a year for the next three years for harm reduction including: Narcan, HepC, and HIV testing materials. This \$70,000 will match the funds spent through the Opioid Settlement Funding that had been earmarked for harm reduction. By allowing RCPH to apply for this funding we will be able to address the opioid epidemic while conserving funds from preexisting funding sources and stretching the Opioid Settlement funds.