



Opioid Stewardship Fund Annual Report for the State Fiscal Year 2023 Submitted January 29, 2024

“In accordance with the Opioid Stewardship Act (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.10-10) there is hereby established, in the custody of the executive office, a restricted-receipt account to be known as the ‘opioid stewardship fund.’ Monies in the opioid stewardship fund shall be kept separate and shall not be commingled with any other monies in the custody of the executive office. The opioid stewardship fund shall consist of monies appropriated for the purpose of such account; monies transferred to such account pursuant to law; contributions consisting of promises or grants of any money or property of any kind or value, or any other thing of value, including grants or other financial assistance from any agency of government; and monies required by the provisions of this chapter or any other law to be paid into or credited to this account. Monies of the opioid stewardship fund shall be available to provide opioid treatment, recovery, prevention, education services, and other related programs, subject to appropriation by the general assembly.

“By January of each calendar year, the department of health, department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities and hospitals (BHDDH), the executive office of health and human services (EOHHS), the department of children, youth and families (DCYF), the Rhode Island department of education (RIDE), the Rhode Island office of veterans' services, the department of corrections (DOC), and the department of labor and training (DLT) shall report annually to the governor, the speaker of the house, and the senate president which programs in their respective departments were funded using monies from the opioid stewardship fund and the total amount of funds spent on each program.”

All state funding recommendations, including Stewardship allocations, rely on input from the broad, public/private Governor’s Overdose Task Force and their participants’ expertise on the overdose crisis and on the best abatement strategies. The Task Force recommendations are based on the following Task Force Pillars and Priorities:

Governor’s Overdose Task Force (GOTF) Priorities

- Ensuring Racial Equity and Eliminating Disparities**
- Building Strong Governance and Community Engagement**
- Expanding Data Capacity and Surveillance**
- Addressing the Social Determinants of Health**
- Reinforcing Comprehensive Prevention**
- Strengthening Harm Reduction and Rescue**
- Increasing Investment in Treatment**
- Supporting Recovery**
- Alignment with the Settlement Advisory Committee**

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Stewardship Fund recommendations in particular are made by state agency staff and presented to the [Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee](#) (OSAC) for comment. Next, the recommendations are put before EOHHS Secretary Richard Charest for final approval.

Then, EOHHS works closely with the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH), the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and the Department of Corrections (RIDOC) to carry out activities funded by the Opioid Stewardship Fund.

It is worth noticing that Rhode Island was recently recognized by the National Governor’s Association’s [Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds Summit](#) for implementing a decision-making process regarding settlement/stewardship funds that ensures a wide variety of voices in the fiscal planning process so that funds are dedicated to a range of entities to help address the state’s priorities to respond to the overdose epidemic.

Budget and Funding Areas

In Fiscal Year 2023, state agencies allocated almost \$8 million dollars from the Opioid Stewardship Fund in the following priority areas: governance, data, prevention, reduction/rescue, treatment, and recovery. While projects funded with Stewardship dollars often have dollars from other funding sources braided into their budgets to ensure that we leverage as many types of funding as we can to support Rhode Islanders in need, this Annual Report contains updates on Stewardship Funding only.

According to the Rhode Island Financial and Accounting Network System (RIFANS), state agencies spent just under \$4.9 million in Stewardship dollars in FY23. Speed of spending is dependent on several factors including program planning and development, timing of contracts, workforce capacity, and the process of vendor invoice submission and the state invoicing process. The remaining \$3 million unspent in FY23 was carried forward to be spent in FY24.

The table below breaks out each pillar by project with details of dollars spent in FY2023:

Stewardship Pillars and Funding Areas	SFY 2023 Stewardship Budget	SFY 2023 Stewardship Spent
Data	\$652,380.00	\$336,251.69
Behavioral Health On-Line Database (RI-BHOLD) at BHDDH	\$350,000.00	\$8,523.35
Prescription Drug Monitoring Program FTE/Integration at RIDOH	\$166,508.00	\$194,811.14
Rapid Overdose Death Detection (RODD) at RIDOH	\$135,872.00	\$132,917.20
Prevention	\$500,000.00	\$643,750.33
Regional Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force	\$500,000.00	\$643,750.33
Harm Reduction & Rescue	\$1,730,677.00	\$1,171,301.17
Harm Reduction Infrastructure	\$500,000.00	\$490,426.29
Naloxone Distribution/Supply	\$1,000,000.00	\$511,446.76
Narcan Vending Machine	\$175,977.00	\$114,728.12
Needle Exchange	\$54,700.00	\$54,700.00
Treatment	\$3,842,637.00	\$2,130,453.50
Brick & Mortar Support for Treatment Facilities	\$300,000.00	\$232,098.68
Expanded Medication for Addiction Treatment with Injectable Buprenorphine	\$144,300.00	\$144,300.00

Individual Treatment/Recovery Service (DOC)	\$753,909.00	\$523,893.28
MAT Expansion	\$846,628.00	\$88,971.77
Medication Assisted Program	\$714,000.00	\$714,631.61
Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) services	\$550,000.00	\$313,905.00
Opioid Withdrawal Management	\$126,000.00	\$70,370.16
SUD Workforce Supports	\$300,000.00	\$0.00
Wrap-around Services for MOUD	\$107,800.00	\$42,283.00
Recovery	\$1,100,000.00	\$392,775.38
Recovery Friendly Workplaces	\$200,000.00	\$6,735.38
Recovery Housing - Alcohol Use	\$900,000.00	\$386,040.00
Governance	\$148,108.00	\$176,383.46
Administration: Capacity for alignment, program development and contract oversight	\$148,108.00	\$176,383.46
SDOH		\$1,620.00
Communications - Promotional materials		\$1,620.00
Grand Total	\$7,973,802.00	\$4,852,535.53

EOHHS, BHDDH, RIDOH, and RIDOC are each managing components of the Stewardship-funded activities, and through contract management are tracking metrics, including people served, activities achieved, etc. We are building out the tracking mechanisms and preparing to present them in the near future in the public dashboard mentioned above. The dashboard will be located on the [PreventOverdoseRI.org](https://www.preventoverdose.org) website in 2024 and will highlight state-funded allocations and programs. Some programs are finalizing program development and evaluation or are in the early stages of implementation, making it more difficult to share true outcome data, but we do have a snapshot with some exciting metrics on outputs and number of people served.

Below, we share programmatic descriptions and output summaries for a variety of Stewardship-funded projects. In these descriptions, we reflect just the Stewardship funds allocated to the project, but note when other funds are braided in.

GOVERNANCE

Administration:

Stewardship funds support two positions for overdose prevention: the Director of the Governor’s Overdose Task Force and fiscal staff for the Stewardship Fund. These positions provide key leadership and support to the interagency and public/private overdose prevention and intervention initiatives. Please note that the original budget for this line item was an estimate by the Office of Management and Budget based on expected start dates and salary amounts. After this FY23 estimate, the budget amount and overspend was corrected in the FY24 budget.

DATA/SURVEILLANCE

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP):

To monitor the State’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), the Stewardship Fund partially funds seven administrative and data analytics staff at RIDOH. The PDMP is used to identify and prevent drug diversion at the prescriber, pharmacy, and patient levels by collecting Schedule II-V controlled substances and opioid antagonist prescriptions dispensed by pharmacies. This enables healthcare professionals to determine which controlled substances patients are receiving and from where, and to assist in the prevention of prescription drug

misuse, avoid contraindicated prescription drug combinations, and assess treatment adherence and efficacy. RIDOH is in the process of pursuing Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Certification for the PDMP, which will allow for additional sustainability of the program via match-funding.

Rhode Island Behavioral Health On-Line Database (RI-BHOLD):

The Rhode Island Behavioral Health On-Line Data (RI-BHOLD) system is a centralized system that collects clinical treatment information from all behavioral healthcare providers licensed by BHDDH. Under the federal regulation 42 CFR Part 2, BHOLD is the only database in the state that is able to collect substance use treatment information across all payers, providers, and ages. This provides an invaluable perspective for assessing key outcomes, service gaps, and population characteristics. BHDDH is in the process of investing \$350,000 over three years – matched 90% by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – to update the system.

Rapid Overdose Death Detection (RODD):

Due to a national shortage of medical examiners and a backlog of samples in the forensic toxicology lab, the time to close accidental fatal overdose cases has been increasing. Stewardship funds allowed RIDOH to hire part-time contractors to help support the medical examiners with the added burden of autopsies and to support overtime costs in the Forensic Toxicology and Drug Chemistry Labs to clear the backlog of samples. This work helped ensure RIDOH received faster data on fatal overdoses, which allows policy and funding decisions to be made more quickly and effectively.

PREVENTION

Regional Substance Abuse Task Force:

BHDDH has allocated \$500,000 in Stewardship funding to continue the support for seven Regional Prevention Task Forces (RPTF). The RPTFs updated their needs assessment to include the 2022 Rhode Island Student Survey results and amended each region's strategic plan. The RPTF also implemented interventions targeting Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and/or Latinx communities, older adults, grandparent/relatives with custody of grandchildren due to substance related issues, and non-biological parents with custody of minors due to substance related issues.

Below are cumulative outputs for calendar year 2023 from the seven Regional Prevention Coalitions:

- The coalition collected 4,178 pounds of unused or expired medications.
- A 6-week Chronic Pain and Chronic Disease Management and Powerful Tools for Caregivers program for older adults served 2,766 people.
- 925 people participated in trainings which addressed awareness of overdose risk among elders, identify how to prevent overdose or reverse overdose and naloxone training, and how to obtain and use the reversal agent naloxone.
- 200,410 people viewed public service announcements for the "Count It, Lock It, Drop It" and Safe Station initiatives.
- 25 participants completed informational sessions on understanding and promoting self-regulation among elementary and preschool-age children for parents and/or caretakers.
- 70 individuals from BIPOC and Latinx communities received opioid education and naloxone distribution (OEND) trainings.

HARM REDUCTION

Naloxone Distribution/Supply:

RIDOH supported the University of Rhode Island's Naloxone Hub (at the URI Pharmacy) with a contract to manage inventory, maintain, and distribute the 50,000 naloxone kits provided to Rhode Island by the Teva pharmaceutical organization through the Attorney General's settlement negotiations. URI distributed the kits to Rhode Island community-based organizations, provided trainings, and administered a Get Naloxone Mail Program. In calendar year 2023, URI's naloxone distribution program supported the work of 77 different community-based organizations throughout Rhode Island.

Harm Reduction Infrastructure:

RIDOH supported Miriam Hospital's Preventing Overdose and Naloxone Intervention (PONI) program to manage inventory, maintain, and distribute harm reduction tools to peer outreach organizations. Tools include fentanyl test strip kits, safer smoking kits, Naloxboxes, wound care kits, and more. In addition, PONI formed a Drug User Advisory Board to inform harm reduction and other overdose prevention work for the state.

RIDOH also provided Stewardship funds to harm reduction organizations to support the distribution of tools, harm reduction education, and support. These organizations have encountered over 34,000 people and distributed the following between January and November 2023:

- Over 55,000 kits of naloxone (110,000 doses)
- Approximately 20,000 fentanyl test strip kits
- Approximately 34,000 safer smoking kits

Harm Reduction Vending Machine and Needle Exchange:

RIDOH has partnered with AIDS Care Ocean State (ACOS) to provide needle exchange services and Harm Reduction Vending Machines, partly with Stewardship funds. ACOS provides needle exchange and other harm reduction delivery across the state and has a brick-and-mortar facility in Providence. The Harm Reduction Vending Machines are being used to dispense low-barrier, easy access harm reduction tools to help prevent overdoses and reduce the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis C. Through these vending machines, individuals can access free sterile syringes, naloxone, wound care and hygiene kits, and fentanyl test strips any time of day or night.

Needle Exchange:

RIDOH-funded harm reduction agencies offer sterile needles to clients who inject drugs and provide for safe disposal of used needles. From January through November 2023, RIDOH-funded harm reduction agencies (ACOS, Project WEBER/RENEW, Parent Support Network, and Community Care Alliance) distributed 558,865 sterile needles. This number includes needles distributed by vending machines and all types of encounters with outreach workers.

Harm Reduction Vending Machines:

There are 11 Harm Reduction Vending Machines throughout the state including at the Men's Intake Service Center, Women's Corrections, probation offices, Kennedy Plaza, and several community-based organizations. Cumulatively, since 2021 there have been 23,437 encounters dispensing various harm reduction supplies. In 2023 alone, there were 15,245 vending machine encounters.

TREATMENT

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (Including RIDOC):

The Stewardship funds continued to fund and expand the Department of Correction's substance use programming that consists of evidence-based Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), recovery supports, and opioid use withdrawal management programs. This program provides both oral and injectable medications and follow up care.

Substance Use Workforce Support – Family Therapy Supports:

BHDDH encumbered \$250,000 in Stewardship dollars, braided with Settlement dollars, for a University of Rhode Island (URI) training program for Marriage and Family Therapists students to receive specific, practical training to assist families in overcoming obstacles associated with their loved one's substance use disorder (SUD) through group therapy. The goal of the program is to help Rhode Island bolster our SUD workforce and thus provide supports to family members or partners who experience direct effects of the overdose/SUD crisis. The priority is to recruit bilingual and/or BIPOC students for the program. URI staff will also develop a curriculum for a "Family Support Specialist" certification, which is a new position being incorporated into the certification process of Rhode Island's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) located throughout the state. This would be a professional training on how to support families who have a family member or a partner with a co-occurring mental health or SUD diagnosis.

RECOVERY

Recovery Housing (including Alcohol Use):

Stewardship funds are currently being braided with Opioid Settlement and federal funds to maintain recovery housing capacity and infrastructure. Just over 820 people were served in various recovery housing programs from July 2022 through June 2023.

Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFW):

RFW recently hired a director and an additional staff person. They are in the process of upgrading the RFW website and assessment tools. As of December 2023, there are currently over 110 designated RFWs across multiple sectors, including state agencies, municipalities, substance use treatment agencies, prevention coalitions, and the construction industry.

RFW successfully ran its second annual recovery-focused Job Fair at the 2023 Rally4Recovery, which provided people in recovery the opportunity to meet employers and educators to increase their recovery capital. Here are some outcomes:

- Over 500 meaningful conversations
- Approximately 70+ jobs filled by employers
- Completion of 10 college enrollment inquiries on-site
- Over 230 job postings on the Job Board, viewed by over 800+ people
- Establishment of lasting connections between employers and attendees

CONCLUSION

The Stewardship Fund is an important part of the state's overdose response. EOHHS is pleased to have the opportunity to manage the Opioid Stewardship Funds and to help Rhode Island state agencies carry out this critical work to address the state's overdose crisis.