



Opioid Stewardship Fund Annual Report for the State Fiscal Year 2024 Submitted January 26, 2025

“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 Priorities:



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.

Budget and Funding Areas

In State Fiscal Year 2024, 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 SFY24. 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 \$3.6 million unspent in SFY24 was carried forward to be spent in SFY25.

The table below breaks out each pillar by project with details of dollars spent in SFY2024:

Pillar/Priority	Stewardship SFY24 Enacted Budget	Stewardship SFY24 Spent
Administration and Community Engagement	\$413,778	\$386,687
Administration: capacity for alignment, program development and contract oversight	\$348,778	\$347,087
Task Force and workgroup community co-chair stipends	\$65,000	\$39,600
Data	\$744,531	\$417,685
BHOLD	\$341,490	\$155,980
PDMP FTE/Integration	\$264,215	\$175,151
RODD	\$138,827	\$86,554
Prevention	\$1,299,569	\$500,000
Investment in school based mental health (Student Assistance)*	\$799,569	\$0
Regional Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force	\$500,000	\$500,000
Harm Reduction & Rescue	\$2,416,257	\$1,456,585
Drop-in centers	\$151,273	\$62,650
Harm reduction infrastructure	\$509,574	\$473,060
Hope Initiative	\$600,000	\$97,268
Naloxone distribution/supply	\$988,553	\$659,085
Narcan Vending Machine	\$106,857	\$104,523
Needle Exchange	\$60,000	\$60,000
Treatment	\$2,237,631	\$1,254,400
Alcohol Detox	\$100,000	\$0
Brick & mortar treatment facilities (Development of Add. SUD Residential Services)	\$67,901	\$29,076
Equipment	\$757,656	\$410,311

Expanded Medication for Addiction Treatment with Injectable Buprenorphine	\$144,300	\$144,300
MAT Expansion	\$846,627	\$549,566
Opioid Withdrawal Management	\$55,630	\$55,630
SUD workforce supports	\$200,000	\$0
Wrap-around services for MOUD	\$65,517	\$65,517
Recovery	\$1,400,000	\$857,156
Recovery Friendly Workplaces	\$200,000	\$91,941
Recovery Housing - Alcohol Use	\$900,000	\$557,005
Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) - peer navigator and surveillance	\$300,000	\$208,210
Grand Total	\$8,511,767	\$4,872,514

* Please note: Investment in school based mental health (Student Assistance) line item was created for BHDDH to reallocate unspent funds to the RI Student Assistance Program. To date, \$764,100 out of the \$799,569 has been spent in SFY25.

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 website 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, 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. Additionally, these funds support yearly stipends for community co-chairs in each of the Task Force workgroups as well as the Community Co-Chair for the Task Force.

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 Coalitions:

BHDDH has allocated \$500,000 in Stewardship funding to continue the support for seven Regional Prevention Task Forces (RPTF) during calendar year 2024 covering the entire state. The RPTF implemented interventions targeting Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and/or Latinx communities, older adults, and families with young, elementary school aged children. The RPTF also supported two state-wide Drug Take Back Day events in April and October 2024.

- The coalition collected **5,003** pounds of unused or expired medications
- **350,100** people viewed public service announcements for the "Count It, Lock It, Drop It"
- A 6-week Chronic Pain and Chronic Disease Management and Powerful Tools for Caregivers program for older adults served **295** people
- A 6-week Matter of Balance/Action Steps for older adults served **931** people
- A 6-week Bingocize for older adults served **930** people
- **783** 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.
- **2679** BIPOC and Latinx reached through community education campaign
- Incredible Years parenting training program will start in February.

Rhode Island Student Assistance Services

In CY2024, a one-time allocation of just under \$800,000 was provided to sustain Rhode Island Student Assistance Services as locations previously supported by temporary COVID-19 funds were about to be discontinued. With these funds, RISAS has served 23 middle and high schools statewide including:

- 37,729 parents
- 134,873 students
- 6,399 teachers

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 2024, URI's naloxone distribution program supported the work of 39 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, NaloxBox, 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:

Between January 2023 and September 2024, peers providing mobile outreach services encountered 52,357 individuals, distributed more than 50,000 kits of naloxone (110,000 doses) and over 55,000 other harm reduction tools.

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 September 2024, RIDOH-funded harm reduction agencies (ACOS, Project WEBER/RENEW, Parent Support Network, and Community Care Alliance) distributed 437,592

sterile needles. This number includes needles distributed by vending machines and all types of encounters with outreach workers.

Harm Reduction Vending Machines:

There are 14 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 43,169 encounters dispensing various harm reduction supplies. Between January and November of 2024, there were 19,810 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) supervision and training program for newly licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT) to receive specific, SUD clinical support and training to assist families in overcoming obstacles associated with their loved one’s substance use disorder (SUD) through individual and/or through group therapy.

To date, 10 LMFT-A graduates have been receiving clinical supervision from an experienced LMFT/SUD trained clinical supervisor and have been placed in 8 different locations treating primarily family members or partners that have a loved one with a diagnosed substance use disorder. In addition, this program is in the process of developing a peer led family workforce.

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. 860 unique individuals were served in various recovery housing programs from July 2023 through June 2024.

Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFW):

In calendar year 2024, RFW expanded its membership to 165 participating businesses and agencies, an increase of 74%. To organize this information, a new customer relationship management system is now in place to ensure individualized resources for each new and existing member. The new RFW website, recoveryfriendly.ri.gov, has a wealth of information and free resources such as the new monthly newsletter and connection to the RFW staff.

RFW delivered 35 workplace training sessions, equipping businesses with tools to foster recovery-friendly environments in 2024. RFW also conducted 15 naloxone training sessions and distributed naloxone to over 50 businesses. RFW was featured in 8 podcasts, delivered 5 keynote speeches, and was featured in two Providence Journal articles. Social media platforms experienced substantial growth with followers increasing from 23% to 95% depending on the platform.

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.