



Rolette County Public Health District  
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## **Rolette County Public Health District Political Subdivision Opioid Settlement Funds Work Plan**

### **Opioid Response Work Background Political Subdivision Opioid Settlement Funds Plan & Future Strategies Proposal**

#### **Background:**

Rolette County is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest county in North Dakota by population with 25.9% currently living in or below the poverty level. Our service area population includes 78% Native Americans, 18.4% being white and the remaining 2.9% being two or more or another race. In addition to the significant health disparities such as elevated rates of suicide, accidental deaths, diabetes, liver disease, and comorbid conditions that Indigenous Nations tend to be a higher risk for compared to other races, the opioid crisis has proven particularly disruptive as well. The lifelong nature of addiction and the increasing availability of heroin, fentanyl and other illicit drugs and stimulants demand the need for more prevention investment each year.

According to the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Region III (includes our service area schools of Rolette, Rolla, St. John and Dunseith) 10.5% students in grades 9-12, have taken prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it (counting drugs such as codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, and Percocet, one or more times during their life compared to the state rate of 10.2%.

4.7% of students in grades 9-12 also reported having taken an over-the-counter drug to get high (one or more times during their life) while the state rate is 4.5% and 2.1% students have used methamphetamine at least one or more times during their lifetime versus the state of 1.7%.

The 2021 Community Readiness Survey showed that 38.9% of Region III (Rolette County included) adults believed that prescription drug abuse in the community was a serious problem among adults, with the state reporting 34.2%. The Region III results have increased with concern by 1.1% from 2019.



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The same source, referring to adults' perceptions of youth showed that 28.8% believed that prescription drug abuse in the community was a severe problem among youth, with the state reporting at 25.7%

Our Rolette County Public Health District (RCPHD) has been fortunate to receive the State Opioid Response grant funding and began implementing opioid misuse and overdose prevention in 2019. Funding is provided through the State Opioid Response (SOR) grant from the North Dakota Department of Human & Health Services, Behavior Health Division (BHD). We have continued receiving varying amounts each year since then.

Our federal State Opioid Response grant provides support to our local needs and helps to fill the gaps throughout the continuum of care specific to the opioid crisis, while also addressing stimulant misuse and use disorders.

Through grant implementation efforts, we have created positive partnerships with local professionals (i.e., Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Providers, Pharmacies, Law Enforcement, etc.). We assist and promote their services, provide them with resources and materials such as Deterra Drug Deactivation Bags and Naloxone, etc. We continue with the process of changing behaviors and acceptance to the identified opioids/stimulant problem by increasing the awareness for prevention via local print and media or by setting up booths in schools and within our communities, to promote the safe use of medication and relating prevention topics through comprehensive campaign messaging and materials.

Our RCPHD Opioid Prevention Program currently offers Free Naloxone (Narcan) Training and is available for anyone requesting. The training teaches the participant how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose and how to properly administer Narcan. Participants of the training receive a Free Narcan Kit along with other prevention resources.

We have seen an increase in the amount of Narcan kits being requested from the public; on average distributing about #500 throughout the year (2023). We have located and placed Narcan kits in with all the AED cases throughout the county, including schools and other public access



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facilities. Narcan Kits are always available for pick up from our Rolla or Dunseith office locations and through our mobile clinic outreach.

Deterra Drug Deactivation Bags are regularly distributed and available for pick up at our public health agency, satellite locations, mobile clinic sites and local drug stores. The bags provide a safe way for disposing of unused, unwanted and or expired medications, thus preventing random access to medications.

We also have a Syringe Disposal Kiosk located outside our Rolla office at 114 3rd Street NE Rolla, ND providing community members with a place to safely dispose of your used needles/syringes/sharps. In recent months RCPHD has received public requests for sharps disposal kiosks to be placed in other county locations.

We have collaborated with our local MAT providers, and we not only provide them with Narcan and Deterra for their clients in need, but we have gained the interest of one clinic to assist in referral efforts for Hep C testing and other infectious disease testing and treatment. We are looking to expand our links to treatment and recovery options for our clientele. We are hoping to move forward with our local Sheriff's Dept. to address the needs for individuals upon release to have the connections needed for them to obtain opioid prevention services, such as access to Naloxone. Lack of LAC access jail administration hesitance and short inmate stays has prevented us from establishing MAT and substance use/behavioral health concerns for the incarcerated individuals

As established in our SOR grant we are vested in taking the steps to develop a Harm Reduction Clinic for our service area. Harm reduction is effective in addressing the public health epidemic involving substance use as well as infectious disease and other harms associated with drug use. Specifically, harm reduction services can connect individuals to overdose education, counseling, and referral to treatment for infectious diseases and substance use disorders, distribute opioid overdose reversal medications (e.g., naloxone) to individuals at risk of overdose, or to those who might respond to an overdose. Harm Reduction clinics aim to lessen the harms associated with drug use and related behaviors that increase the risk of infectious diseases, including HIV, viral



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hepatitis, and bacterial and fungal infections, reduce infectious disease transmission among people who use drugs.

Our County Opioid Settlement Funds are intended to serve as supplemental, enhancement of and contingency funding, helping offset the instability we have experienced in federal program funding, particularly following recent changes in the federal administration.

The use of County Opioid Settlement funding is determined by identified opioid prevention needs at the local level. These funds are entrusted to our public agency by our County Commission to enhance and sustain opioid prevention services within our high-need county. As such, County Opioid Settlement funds are intentionally flexible and may be reallocated as program needs evolve.

All program personnel expenses are tracked through our Time Information Management System and entered into Quickbooks Payroll System by cost center(grant name) and all program expenses are allocated to program through Quickbooks Accounting Software.

### **Political Subdivision Opioid Settlement Funds Mitigation Plan:**

1. Maintain a comprehensive opioid prevention and needs based harm reduction program within Rolette County.
2. **Maintain availability of Naloxone (Narcan):**
  - a. Provide law enforcement and First Responders Naloxone to leave at locations of Overdose 911 calls.
  - b. Provide naloxone to individuals being released from treatment and incarceration.
  - c. Supplement a newly established **Harm Reduction** clinic with the purchase of supplies otherwise prohibited with the use of federal funds. In addition to naloxone, safer-use supplies, wound care supplies, sharps containers, and other needs-based harm reduction supplies.

Rationalization: We have again identified County Opioid Settlement Funding as a backup source to support the purchase of Naloxone if the North Dakota Behavioral Health Division is unable to supply a sufficient quantity. In the meantime, **we have utilized an in-kind donation of Naloxone** to ensure that law enforcement agencies have access to the necessary opioid antidote. Harm reduction supplies that are not allowed under the SOR program are purchased using County Opioid Settlement funds.

3. **Establish consistent Drug Take Back events and Locations**



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- a. Provide our service area with a permanent, known Drug Takeback location.
- b. Coordinate Drug Take Back with Local Law Enforcement

Rationalization: We have included Take Back services as a contingency if we need to assign a staff member—who is not currently included in the SOR budget—to assist SOR staff, or if local Law Enforcement requires compensation for personnel for participation in Drug Take Back events.

4. Support Rolette County K9 Unit

- a. Annual fiscal donation to Rolette County Sheriff's Department K9 Unit

5. Syringe Kiosks

- a. Establish additional sharps disposal kiosk location in Rolette County communities

Rationalization: Sharps kiosks were included in the County Opioid Settlement funding to ensure resources are available to contract for installation at identified locations. This includes necessary site preparation such as land leveling, pouring concrete, and securing the units to the concrete base. Early in the SOR funding period, state staff indicated that installation as described was not an allowable expense under the SOR grant.

6. Professional Development:

- a. Staff training opportunities to develop professional skills to improve our prevention capacity and to be better equipped to interact with and support individuals and families regarding OUD and SUD.

Rationalization: The rationale for including additional professional development for Opioid Prevention staff, beyond what is outlined in the SOR grant, is to allow flexibility in responding to emerging training opportunities. Alternative training options occasionally become available and enhance staff capacity to effectively serve and engage with our diverse population.

7. Enhance the behavioral health efforts within our public health core functions:

- a. Support nursing salary to complete the training regarding integration of mental health services into public health environment through participation in Behavioral Health Institute for Health Officials;
- b. Support the consumable materials required to teach Mental Health First Aid to community members;
- c. Offer Mental Health First Aid within the schools and community for reduced cost;



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- d. Support ongoing Mental Health Education for Mental Health First Aid Instructor through NATCON;
- e. Explore access to **CredibleMind digital platform** for improvement of mental health by prevention, early intervention, and evidence-based self-care. The program provides access to a comprehensive collection of apps, videos, podcasts, articles, books, and other resources, including referral for diagnosis and treatment for over 200+ topics.

**Rationalization:** The rationale for including Mental Health First Aid and CredibleMind in the County Opioid Settlement funding is that these strategies were identified as not allowable or supported under the SOR grant, necessitating an alternative funding source to implement these important services. This is particularly important given that substance use disorder is often directly associated with unresolved mental health concerns, making these interventions critical components of prevention and response efforts.

### **Future Strategies Proposal:**

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 15% of Americans 18 or older needed treatment for SUD in 2020 and less than 10% of the people who needed treatment, received it.

Political Subdivision opioid settlement funding will complement our efforts on supporting a harm reduction program by providing financial support to purchase harm reduction items that are otherwise prohibited through the federal opioid funding. This funding will also facilitate our staff to research the potential of securing connections to addiction counselors and/or peer support workers.

We have reached out to “Face It Together” to determine if this would be a connection for peer support. The need for well-trained counselors and access to treatment is a greater need than ever. Addiction affects the abilities of individuals to work, enjoy healthy relationships with friends and family, etc. Support systems are a vital link to recovery for many people living with the disease of addiction. Peer support specialists utilize their lived experience to assist others on their journey to recovery and wellness. Through shared understanding and mutual empowerment, peer support workers help others become and stay engaged in the recovery process.



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We explore the placement of a harm reduction vending machine within Rolette County, in a location with longer business hours and easy access to. The vending machine will be equipped with supplies for harm reduction. Items will include Naloxone, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, safer sex kits, hygiene products, etc. The users of the vending machine will have access to information on how to contact RCPHD for program enrollment and or follow up services.

The vending machines can potentially provide 24/7 ready access to lifesaving and disease prevention supplies, so people feel empowered to take control of their health. Individuals cannot get healthy or seek treatment if they do not have the care and resources they need. Self-service vending machines have been utilized in parts of the world and are becoming more common in urban and rural environments. They are proven through research to have a positive impact on communities.

The harm reduction program participants will enroll in the program by calling, walking in or by referral to RCPHD. Each person will obtain an access code for use of the vending machine with limitations and restrictions on the items, etc. We can acknowledge that drug use is prevalent within our communities, and it has become an increasingly risky behavior. We can use this recognition to help individuals by providing new methods, care, and services to support their needs.

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This plan will be revisited on a regular basis and adjusted to best meet local conditions using existing resources.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Frydenlund, RN  
Rolette County Public Health District  
Administrator