

FOLLOW UP ON NINE SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED FROM 2018 OPIOID TOWN HALL MEETING

SOCIAL SERVICES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

The Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee held a town hall meeting in Price, Utah on Monday, September 17, 2018 to discuss the opioid overdose crisis in Carbon County. Many individuals provided recommendations for action to help address the problem. This brief provides an update on action taken on nine recommendations provided. This brief is for informational purposes only and requires no Legislative action.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Background

At the three-hour town hall meeting on the opioid overdose crisis held by the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee in Price, Utah on Monday, September 17, 2018, many individuals provided suggested action steps to address the problem. The Subcommittee heard from 21 members of the public, nine experts on a panel, as well as suggestions from staff research. Below is an update on action taken on nine of the recommendations provided.

Recommendation: More Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services

Action taken: Effective April 1, 2019 the State of Utah provides full Medicaid medical services to all U.S. citizen adults with incomes under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. As of July 2019, there are 36,000 adults statewide newly being served by this Medicaid expansion. For more information, please visit <https://medicaid.utah.gov/expansion>.

Recommendation: Deflection of Those With Substance Use Disorder Prior to Arrest

Original explanation: Someone wanting service, who is in full addiction, has to either commit a felony or neglect children in order to get help. Ambulance providers need somewhere to take people who need treatment. The community needs resources for counselors to help individuals deflected from the criminal justice system.

Action taken: Four Corners says they have sufficient capacity and sliding scale for all uninsured--challenge is most likely for those with private insurance, who have insufficient benefits and income is too high to afford cash payment on the sliding scale. The legislative Mental Health Crisis Line Commission has discussed requesting new funding for mental health/substance use disorder "receiving centers," where law enforcement could drop off or individuals could go to connect with resources. The Criminal Code Evaluation Task Force plans to discuss this topic at future meetings.

Recommendation: Required Support Structure Post-drug Court Graduation

Original explanation: When drug court graduates lose the structure, it is easy to relapse. The immediate loss of accountability is not helpful for those in long term recovery.

Action taken: The Criminal Code Evaluation Task Force plans to discuss this topic at future meetings.

Recommendation: Provide More Community-based Services to Juveniles

Original explanation: There is a need to provide more community-based services to juveniles, now that they are not being brought into the system after juvenile justice reform.

FOLLOW UP ON NINE SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED

The Division of Juvenile Justice Services provided a description of community services and the number of youth served. For more information please visit “Juvenile Justice Community-Based Programming in Carbon County” <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2019/pdf/00003826.pdf>.

Recommendation: Have the Prescription Drug Database Compare Similar Medical Providers to Similar Providers

Original explanation: Doctors would self-regulate better if they had comparable data, but currently can only see their own performance but not compared to others.

Action taken: This functionality is scheduled to go live on September 16, 2019.

Recommendation: Create a Risk Assessment for Opioid Prescribing

Original explanation: Create a tool that prescribers could use to identify patients more at risk of abusing opioids before issuing prescriptions. The Department of Health piloted the Opioid Abuse Risk Screener in the State-run Health Clinics of Utah. “The Utah Medical association believes that there are many evidence-based screening and assessment tools already available to clinicians for use in identifying patients at risk for abusing opioids and other substances. These tools such as SBIRT [Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment], ORT [Opioid Risk Tool], DAST [Drug Abuse Screen Test]-10 or -20 and many others have been created and rigorously tested and validated by expert organizations such as the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHA) and many other organizations that work in the field of substance abuse. These organizations continue to update or create new evidence-based tools in this area and these tools are sufficient for the assessment and are designed by experts who already know what they are doing and what needs to be assessed.”

Action taken: During the 2019 General Session, the Legislature passed H.B. 191, *Controlled Substance Abuse Amendments*, which requires a prescriber to discuss the risks of using an opiate with a patient or the patient's guardian before issuing an initial opiate prescription. For more information please visit <https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/HB0191.html>. Effective 2024, controlled substance prescribers must receive at least 3.5 hours of one-time training on screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) as a condition of license renewal. For more information please visit <https://le.utah.gov/~2017/bills/static/HB0175.html>.

Recommendation: Assist Prescribers in Setting their Medical Software Prescribing Defaults According to Centers for Disease Control Guidelines

Original explanation: “Setting defaults to [Centers for Disease Control] guidelines helps in the education process and requires a prescriber to make a conscious choice when prescribing outside of recommended guidelines. It allows that choice to be made, but not without thought.” “Options for Addressing the Supply Side of the Opioid Epidemic” <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2018/pdf/00003578.pdf>

Action taken: During the 2019 General Session, the Legislature passed H.B. 186, *Opioid Prescription Regulation Amendments*, which permits the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing to consult with prescribers and health care systems on best practices with respect to prescribing controlled substances. For more information please visit <https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/HB0186.html>.

Recommendation: Pathways to Employment for Those with Criminal Records

Action taken: During the 2019 General Session, the Legislature passed H.B. 90, *Occupational Licensing Modifications*, which provides for an individual with a criminal conviction to apply to the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing for a determination of whether the individual's criminal history would disqualify the individual from receiving a specific occupational or professional license if all other requirements were met. For more information please visit <https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/HB0090.html>.

Recommendation: Lower Cost of Local Technical College Options at U.S.U. Eastern

Action taken: The Legislature approved \$2 million ongoing beginning in 2019 to fund the cost of dropping technical education tuition at the U.S.U. Blanding, Moab, and Eastern (Price) campuses to \$2 per membership hour to match the average cost per membership hour within UTECH (Utah System of Technical Colleges) schools.

Sources for Additional Information

- <https://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/Commit.asp?Year=2019&Com=APPSOC>
 - “Meeting Materials” for Friday, September 13, 2019
- <https://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/Commit.asp?Year=2018&Com=APPSOC>
 - “Meeting Materials” for Monday, September 17, 2018