



Cumberland County
Public Health

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Cumberland County Opioid Settlement Funds used to support Launch of Greater Portland Health's Mobile Medical Van

New Service Will Expand Treatment for High-Risk Opioid Use Disorder

PORTLAND -- A powerful new resource for people at high risk of overdose from opioid use disorder is rolling out in Greater Portland. Greater Portland Health, with support from Cumberland County's opioid settlement funds, has launched a mobile medical van to reach people at highest risk for overdose death.

Substance use disorder and overdose deaths are an ongoing concern in the Greater Portland area. The rate of overdose deaths in Portland rose from 18.1 to 29.3 per 100,000 people from 2007-2016. In 2021, Maine topped 600 drug deaths for the first time as the opioid epidemic continues to worsen.

The mobile medical van, launched this month, proactively reaches out to people experiencing homelessness and others at high risk of overdose as well as immigrants and people seeking asylum, to connect them directly to harm reduction resources and opioid use treatment. The Greater Portland Health team is distributing naloxone, providing translated educational materials, interpretation services, and providing transportation to providers of medication for opioid use disorders (MOUD), inpatient treatment programs, and recovery residences.

Cumberland County Public Health held a competitive process for the use of \$80,000 of the County's opioid settlement funds to support treatment innovations and capacity building projects. Greater Portland Health's proposal was chosen among 9 proposals. "Greater Portland Health's mobile medical van will be able to reach people that currently have a very

hard time accessing harm reduction and treatment services when they need it,” said Public Health Director Liz Blackwell-Moore. “We are thrilled to be able to provide some start-up funding for this important addition to the services available in Cumberland County.”

Greater Portland Health’s providers and staff have found success in providing treatment for substance use when they are able to easily access patients, but say that it is more difficult to connect with patients who are living on the street or elsewhere. Offering low-barrier Medication for Opioid Use Disorder and increased use of naloxone has been successful in saving lives. January was Portland’s first month in two years with no overdose deaths.

The mobile medical van will continue this mission to provide more ease of access to these life saving services. “We are extremely grateful to receive the opioid settlement funds to begin utilizing our new mobile medical van,” said Ann Tucker, CEO of Greater Portland Health. “The service will expand low-barrier access to MOUD, naloxone, education, transportation and interpretation services. Our team will also be able to connect community members to additional services and support both at our health centers and other community providers.”

Greater Portland Health offers primary medical care, mental health care, dental services, and healthcare support services for 16,000 patients across 16 permanent health centers in Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook. The organization has 15 years of experience providing care tailored to the unique needs of the underserved communities and populations in the area, and has come to be recognized as a trusted and respected provider among community members experiencing homelessness and New Mainers.

In 2023, Cumberland County began receiving Opioid Settlement Funds. The County expects to receive about \$230,000 a year for 18 years. The Public Health Department conducted a community assessment and created an action plan for the allocation of the funds over the next 4 years. Priority areas for investment include improving coordination of local responses to opioid use disorder and overdoses; increasing capacity and innovations in treatment; and investing in preventative early interventions for youth and families impacted by opioid use disorder. This Greater Portland Health mobile van project was funded to support increasing capacity and innovations in treatment.

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