
Sponsor: Public Health

Meeting Date: 3/19/2024

Title: Grant Award from the Minnesota Department of Human Services for Harm Reduction Services and Treatment Referrals

File Number: 2024-071

Background and Rationale:

Public Health applied for a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to provide harm reduction services and treatment referrals to people who use drugs (PWUD) in Ramsey County and surrounding communities. Between 2018 to 2021, Ramsey County experienced a 169% increase in drug overdose deaths, the largest increase among the Twin Cities metro area. During the same time, opioid-involved deaths among Ramsey County residents increased 438% with 48% of deaths among 35-54-year-old residents. Unsheltered people in Minnesota experience significant disparities related to substance use disorder (SUD). Compared to the total Minnesota population, unsheltered people had an 11 times higher risk of a fatal opioid-involved overdoses, and a 16 times higher risk of a fatal overdose involving methamphetamines and opioids.

Public Health was awarded \$1,038,351 in grant funds for the period upon execution through June 30, 2026. The program's goals are to:

1. Reduce harms associated with drug use among justice-involved individuals and people experiencing homelessness.
2. Reduce the unmet drug treatment needs among justice-involved individuals and people experiencing homelessness.

This work builds on and sustains the existing harm reduction work facilitated by Public Health's Clinic 555 Syringe Service Program (SSP). The SSP began providing harm reduction services including syringe exchange, education, and naloxone distribution to PWUD in July 2018. In 2023, the SSP provided syringe exchange and harm reduction services to 1,646 individuals, distributing 377,722 syringes through 4,994 client encounters. The funding will allow the county to offer harm reduction services including naloxone kits, wound care, harm reduction education, and syringe exchange to people experiencing homelessness through the SSP and mobile medical unit or Care Van. The program also includes the identification of people experiencing homelessness in need of drug treatment services and providing treatment and support services referral to those individuals. The Care Van allows staff to reach people experiencing homelessness in need of harm reduction services and treatment referrals in community, reducing barriers to care.

For this project, the Public Health staff will provide harm reduction services including wound care and harm reduction services to people experiencing homelessness, that are justice involved, and communities most impacted by opioids and substance use. The grant award will fully fund the 2.0 Full Time Equivalent increase in the personnel complement for clinical services in SSP.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the submittal of the grant application to the Minnesota Department of Human Services for harm reduction services and treatment referrals, in the amount of \$1,038,351.
2. Accept a grant award from and approve a grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Services for harm reduction services and treatment referrals for the period upon execution through June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$1,038,351.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreement.
4. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and execute amendments to agreements in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.
5. Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the Public Health Department by 2.0 Full Time Equivalent.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Reinhardt, seconded by Commissioner Xiong.
Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Frethem, Martinson, McGuire, Moran, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board