

Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC)

Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2025

Meeting Location: Hybrid meeting using WebEx and in-person at Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel, 39375 Co. Hwy. 24 Morton, MN 56270

Members present: (Names in italics are non-voting OERAC members)

Remote: Rep. Robert Bierman, Sadie Broekemeier, Dr. Ashwin George, Curtis Jackson, Toni Napier, Katrina Howard (proxy for Brock Reed), Dr. Charles Reznikoff, Judge Nicole Starr, *Deepa McGriff, Jolene Rebertus,*

In person: Joe Clubb, Sarah Grosshuesch, Dr. Kathy Nevins, Rep. Dave Baker, Kristi Schoen, *Teresa Steinmetz*

Members not present: Dr. Heather Bell, Peter Carlson, Senator Bill Lieske, Jack Martin, Senator Zaynab Mohamed, Dr. Antony Stately

State Staff Members Present: Laura Farlow, Jen Sather, Michaela Seiber

Call to order

Facilitator Stacy Sjogren began the meeting at 10:00 am, reviewed the OERAC mission, the meeting ground rules and gave a guest welcome. The meeting agenda was confirmed, and a roll call followed. Quorum was secured. See voting log for details.

Business items

Minutes approval: Dave Baker moved to approve the minutes from the February 21, 2025 meeting. Seconded by Robert Bierman. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

Available funding: An organization that was awarded two grants in 2024 later determined it would be unable to complete one of the workplans due to internal changes. As a result, the organization returned one of the awards to better focus on successfully executing the remaining grant. OERAC is welcome to direct the funds as they see fit. State recommendation to move the funds into the 2025 RFP.

- Member comments: Baker, Clubb, Nevins
- Clarification that it was not a contracting process issue that led to the return of funds. The organization had some internal changes that affected their ability to onboard two grant contracts.

- The funds were from the workforce development and training category of the 2024 RFP.
- Discussion about redirecting the funds to support the State Naloxone portal. At the time of this meeting, the portal was closed. Assistant Commissioner Steinmetz announced that DHS will be releasing a new strategy for the naloxone portal Wednesday, March 26th. Acknowledgement that in Greater Minnesota, specifically northern areas, naloxone is difficult to obtain.

Dave Baker moved to approve to have the funds apply to the 2025 RFP. Seconded by Charles Reznikoff. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

Public Comment

Facilitator, Stacy Sjogren, welcomed public comment at 10:20AM.

- Leonard Fineday, Secretary Treasurer for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, thanked OERAC for their work across the state of Minnesota and funding support. Leonard announced plans to establish an 18-bed withdrawal management facility on the Leech Lake Reservation, focusing on medically assisted detoxification. The facility, to be built on the site of a former casino hotel, is expected to break ground in Spring 2026 and begin accepting patients in late Fall 2026. He noted the lack of such services in North Central Minnesota and the affects that has on the nearby hospital and tribal police department. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe may reach out to OERAC for partnership opportunities later next year.
- Megan Wagner, Director of Programming at Change the Outcome, raised concerns about rising emergency room visits related to Kratom withdrawal. She highlighted the drug's varying effects depending on dosage, its easy availability (18+ to purchase), and the lack of regulation in Minnesota compared to surrounding states. Megan emphasized the need for stronger public awareness and regulatory oversight and invited OERAC members to reach out for more information.
- Aaron Hubner, Director of Public Interest at Padagis LLC, introduced his company, which manufactures over 200 generic products - including a 4mg intranasal naloxone. Aaron estimates that 10% of total revenues come from the naloxone product and expressed interest in supporting OERAC's public education campaigns.
- Maitreya Reeder, a representative from Catalyst for Systems Change, shared that their organization is advocating for legislation to add overdose prevention education to the Minnesota health education standards. A hearing on the legislation was scheduled for the Monday following this meeting. Maitreya requested support, either through testimony or by contacting legislators. The bill, authored by Senator Mann, is Senate File 2234. Contact information was provided for those seeking more details.

State Opioid Response RFP

The State Opioid Response (SOR) team at the Department of Human Services (DHS) shared an update that the Federal State Opioid Response Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released soon. Community reviewers will be needed in June to review the applications. An official e-memo will be sent out once the RFP is published. If there are any questions, reach out to BHD_Opioid@state.mn.us.

Minnesota Hospital Association Grant Presentation

The Minnesota Hospital Association provided an overview of their 2021 OERAC-funded grant. The project focused on delivering to rural Minnesota prescribers on medications for opioid use disorder and alternatives to opioids.

Quarterly Financial Update

Kate Mayer, the Budget Director for the Behavioral Health Administration at DHS presented the OERAC Quarterly Financial Update. She provided update for the Registration and Licensing fees account and for the Settlement fund. Funds are moving in right direction and this year's RFP anticipated to be over \$12 million in available funding.

Kate also addressed questions from the December financial update. Interest is not earned on OER funds unless the law explicitly required it. Projections of future payments can be found on the Attorney General's website. DHS has requested a specific OERAC allocation projection from MMB and will share once available.

- Member comments: Baker, Nevins, Howard
- Discussion on the decline in Registration and Licensing fees. Members noted that Minnesota's high licensing fee may be contributing to the decline, raising questions on if companies are leaving the state as a result.

Naloxone Saturation Strategy Presentation

Jeremy Drucker, Director of the Office of Addiction and Recovery, presented the new Naloxone Saturation Strategy that was published in February 2024. A webinar will happen on Wednesday, March 26th containing more details on the strategy and on the changes to the State Naloxone Portal.

Foundational Education for OERAC Strategy Presentation and Discussion

Presentation and Large Group Discussion

Assistant Commissioner Steinmetz presented key guiding principles for addressing the opioid crisis. Following the presentation, all Council members were invited to share what resonated most with them. The discussion highlighted several themes:

- Sustainability and resource allocation
 - Importance of funding sustainable projects, ideally those that can become self-sufficient.
 - Recognition of redundancies in resource allocation at both the state and county levels.
- Acknowledgement that strategies must be tailored to Minnesota's unique needs.
- Fiscal responsibility and transparency
 - OERAC has a commitment to be responsible stewards of the dollars.
 - Need for transparent reporting and processes, especially in response to DHS data requests.

- Understanding the funding landscape: where funding overlaps, what other funding streams are there, and where are the gaps.
- Supporting the workforce and identifying stable reimbursement structures.
- Public awareness
 - Enhancing public awareness of OERAC's role in grant contracts.
 - Importance of behavioral health education, especially for youth.
- Data-driven approaches
 - Need for tools that track and respond to trends in the crisis.
 - Using the real-time data to identify “hot spots” and allocate resources quickly.
- Importance of low barrier access to services.
- Reinforcement of the principle that saving lives is foundational.

Small Group Discussion

Discussion Topic: *What additional, specific information does OERAC require before developing its funding strategies for the next RFP?*

Following small group discussion, the Council reconvened to share insights.

Key Discussion Points

- **Data Needs**
 - Strong interest in more real-time, localized data, especially county-level fatal/nonfatal overdose rates and reversals.
 - Gaps identified in real-time data and tribal data, with acknowledgment of privacy and sovereignty issues.
 - Desire to define key data points (e.g., number of overdoses reversed).
 - Request for visual mapping of OTPs, overdose hotspots, and SOR-funded areas to identify access gaps.
 - Interest in a centralized summary (“cheat sheet”) of all opioid-related funding sources.
 - Interest in statewide maps and matrices comparing city/county strategies, overdose data, and available services.
 - Need to assess where naloxone kits may be sitting unused and data on private agency Narcan distribution, including location and coverage.
- **Past Program Success and Best Practices**
 - Proposal to develop a repository of effective program models and best practices to inform future funding.
- **Community and Cultural Context**
 - Emphasis on culturally grounded solutions, especially for African American and Indigenous communities.
 - Recommendation for presentations on culturally specific and community-based services.
 - Need to understand the structure of Tribal programs, particularly those offered free of charge.
- **Grant Outcomes and Sustainability**
 - Interest in more detailed reporting from grantees on both short- and long-term outcomes.
 - Desire to identify which previously funded programs were most successful and why.

- Questions around what “sustainability” means for harm reduction efforts and whether it is being adequately supported.
- Input needed from grantees on workforce challenges such as mandates, geographic barriers, and retention.
- **Funding Mechanisms and Strategy**
 - Request for clear explanations of OERAC’s funding mechanisms, including non-traditional options like invitation-only RFPs.
 - Importance of considering existing local initiatives during funding decisions to avoid duplication and improve coordination.
 - Suggestion to analyze other states’ grant-making models.
 - Desire to compare previously granted RFPs with current community needs to inform a strategic, forward-looking funding approach.

Large Group Discussion

Discussion Topic: *How will you use the information to inform the 2026 funding strategy?*

Key Discussion Points

- **Addressing Gaps in Services**
 - Members emphasized targeting funding toward unmet needs and service gaps.
 - Encouraged collaboration to maximize impact and stretch limited resources.
- **Outcomes and Impact**
 - Prioritize strategies that demonstrate measurable impact and meaningful outcomes.
 - Funding should reflect effectiveness, especially under resource constraints.
- **Grant Process Improvements**
 - Broad agreement to simplify the RFP and application process to increase accessibility.
 - Interest in alternative funding methods such as targeted RFPs, direct allocations, or streamlined processes to reduce burden on both applicants and staff.
 - Suggested adapting scoring systems to better support smaller or newer organizations.
 - Called for clearer, more transparent feedback for applicants—especially those repeatedly denied funding.
 - Strong support for prioritizing communities facing the highest health disparities.
 - Recommended a dual approach: fund high-need areas and projects previously overlooked.
- **Data Accuracy and Overdose Trends**
 - Concerns that overdose and mortality data may underrepresent the true extent of the crisis.
 - Emphasized the importance of using accurate, real-time data to guide funding decisions.
- **Summary:**
 - Council members called for a 2026 funding strategy that is data-informed and outcome-oriented. Agreement that funding should be to the communities experiencing the highest disparities and to projects that eliminate the gaps in service in Minnesota.

Adjourn

OERAC Chair Joe Clubb adjourned the March 2025 meeting.

Thank you to the host, Lower Sioux Indian Community

Next meeting: May 16th, 10AM – 3:30PM in St Paul, MN.

Roll Call and Voting Log

March 21, 2025

P = in person R = remote participant A = absent Y = yes (approve)

Member	Attendance status	Minutes approval	Vote:
Joe Clubb	P	Y	Y
Sarah Grosshuesch	P	Y	Y
Dr. Kathy Nevins	P	Y	Y
Rep. Dave Baker	P	Y	Y
Dr. Heather Bell	A	-	-
Rep. Robert Bierman	R	Y	Y
Sadie Broekemeier	R	Y	A
Peter Carlson	A	-	-
Dr. Ashwin George	R	Y	Y
Curtis Jackson	R	Y	Y
Senator Bill Lieske	A	-	-
Jack Martin	A	-	-
Senator Zaynab Mohamed	A	-	-
Toni Napier	R	Y	Y
Katrina Howard (Proxy for Brock Reed)	R	Abs	Y
Dr. Charlie Reznikoff	R	Y	Y
Kristi Schoen	P	A	
Judge Nicole Starr	R	Y	A
Dr. Antony Stately	A	-	-
Deepa McGriff	R		
Jolene Rebertus	R		
Teresa Steinmetz	P		
Tally	voting members present= 13 absent= 6	Motion to approve: Dave Baker Second: Robert Bierman Motion Passed	Motion: Dave Baker Second: Charles Reznikoff Motion Passed