

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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OAAC recommends, Executive and Council approve \$2.5 million in grants for opioid addiction and recovery services

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—On Monday, June 28, 2021, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council approved opiate litigation settlement grant recommendations, provided by the Opiate Abatement Advisory Council (OAAC), for addiction and recovery services. Cleveland Clinic Akron General and Summa Health are each receiving \$1 million for specialized emergency department services. Akron Community Foundation is receiving \$500,000 to establish a grant program for small community organizations.

Nationally and in Summit County, healthcare providers in emergency departments are at the forefront of the opioid epidemic. According to Summit County Public Health data, Summit County emergency departments had at least 1,059 overdose visits in 2020. Programs to train emergency department personnel to recognize the signs of opioid use and overdose enable healthcare providers to begin addiction treatment and support right away, increasing the likelihood of long-term recovery for individuals with substance use disorder.

“The opioid epidemic is ongoing in Summit County and experts believe the COVID-19 pandemic has likely led to an uptick in overdoses and deaths,” said Executive Shapiro. “Working with a diverse group of local experts on the OAAC, we are committed to using our opiate litigation settlement funds to fund projects that will make a difference in the fight against this epidemic and help individuals with substance use disorder choose recovery. These latest grant awards provide critical funding to two important players in the fight, healthcare providers and grassroots organizations.”

Using its grant award, Cleveland Clinic Akron General is establishing the Recovery’s in Reach Program at its emergency departments throughout Summit County. The hospital is partnering with Brightview Health to utilize an evidence-based model piloted by the Ohio Department of Health and already in use at Summa Health. After identifying an overdose patient, a patient will receive a consult with an addiction medicine specialist to discuss patient care. The hospital will also assist in a patient’s transition from the emergency department to treatment, and link patients to comprehensive harm reduction services including STD testing and naloxone.

Summa Health is using its grant award to expand the existing First Step program to its Green Emergency Department. The program is currently in operation at the Barberton and Akron Emergency Departments.

With the grant funding, the Green Emergency Department will incorporate the First Step program into their established protocols and fund the implementation of innovative telemedicine technology. Through telemedicine, patients will have the same access to MAT, Addiction Nurses, Peer Support and harm reduction services that First Step currently provides in person at Akron City and Barberton.

“Conducting outreach to individuals with a substance use disorder can be difficult. By better preparing our emergency departments to treat and support individuals following an overdose, healthcare providers have a unique opportunity to help them choose treatment and recovery,” said Zion Apostolic Faith Church Senior Pastor and OAAC member David Parker.

To support smaller community organizations, Akron Community Foundation is establishing the Summit County Opioid Healing Fund to provide grants of up to \$25,000. Through its collaborative work, the OAAC determined there are numerous small non-profit agencies in Summit County that provide grassroots assistance to individuals with substance use disorders and their families. These organizations typically need less than \$25,000 toward their mission, but do not often receive financial support from larger agencies. The establishment of this grant fund will ensure these important community organizations can continue to help abate the public health emergency that has come from the proliferation of opiates. For more information, visit <https://www.akroncf.org/>

“Akron Community Foundation is committed to providing philanthropic funds to help all people in Summit County. We are pleased to be able to offer grant funding to the community organizations who provide important support and services to individuals with substance use disorders and their families,” said John Garofalo, Vice President, Community Investment at ACF. “We thank the OAAC and Executive Shapiro for entrusting ACF with this critical program.”

To date, Summit County has distributed more than \$380,000 in life saving medications received in settlement agreements to support all of the county’s hospital systems and their EMS services. The County has also distributed over \$5.5 million in opiate litigation settlement funds to local organizations in the County based on guidance from the Key Stakeholders Group and Opiate Abatement Advisory Council.

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