

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro—Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Summit County invests \$7 million in addiction resources, trauma informed care

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Since late 2022, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council have invested more than \$7 million of its settlement funds in addiction resources and trauma informed care to support the County’s opiate abatement efforts. Following recommendations by the Opiate Abatement Advisory Council and Key Stakeholders Group, the County has enhanced addiction services at the Jail, is purchasing a data sharing platform for care coordination and is creating a trauma informed care strategic plan.

Each year, a significant number of County residents enter the County Jail and receive mental health and/or substance use treatment. Typically, these individuals are incarcerated for relatively short periods of time before returning to the community. Without adequate behavioral health intervention, they are more likely to become acutely ill again and return to the County Jail. To help alleviate this cycle, the County partnered with Summit Psychological Associates to connect inmates with appropriate mental health and/or substance use treatment services in the community increasing the likelihood of inmates following through with outpatient appointments.

Summit Psychological Associates case managers are now working directly with inmates in the County Jail and outside in the community following an inmate’s release. Case managers build a relationship with behavioral health inmates in the jail and develop a plan for transitional services for each inmate. Each released inmate will remain on a case manager’s caseload indefinitely and the case manager will be responsible for maintaining contact with the individual after release, ensuring they receive adequate services, and monitoring their progress. In addition, the jail clinician will enable inmates in the transitional program to begin mental health and substance use treatment while in the jail.

“Treatment does work and people do get better. The recovery journey is not easy, however. That is why we are looking to make smart, targeted investments that allow us and our partners to better support our residents in need,” said County Executive Shapiro.

To further support residents with substance use disorder, those in recovery and any resident in need of social services resources, the County is purchasing a data sharing platform to facilitate comprehensive care coordination and connect health care with social care. The platform, created by technology company Unite Us, leverages technology to help solve human problems. It allows both providers and clients to

access information and allows for interagency information sharing. This information sharing piece is critical to assessing and assisting a resident with substance use disorder. Currently, when an agency like the ADM Board makes a referral to a provider, it is difficult to learn whether the provider and client both followed through and how they progressed. The Unite Us platform will now alleviate this issue and allow the County to identify potential system level gaps. The platform will remove current barriers, like time, and awareness, that may prevent a resident in need from accessing critical services. It provides several features, including Care Coordinators who monitor the system to ensure providers and clients are connected within 48 hours. Participation will be open to any social services provider in the community, from hospitals to churches. The County expects the platform to be operational in July and will conduct community outreach in the coming months to educate providers about the platform.

“For years, our community has discussed the need to better serve our most vulnerable residents, including those living with substance use disorder. Many of us have long wished for an interconnected system like Unite Us. Thanks to our settlement funds, the ability to better connect and support of residents is now a reality. I am confident this platform will change lives for the better in Summit County,” said County Executive Shapiro.

In recognition of the role trauma can play in substance use disorder, the County is partnering with the University of Akron to create a single multi-year strategic plan of systemic, top-down organizational changes within county agencies to implement trauma informed care. This approach recognizes that organizations and providers should acknowledge an individual’s circumstances of the past and present, including trauma. Adopting such an approach can improve outcomes and lead to more effective treatment and support. It will also benefit all residents and clients the County serves. The strategic plan will include input from public, private and faith-based system participants.

“Each program is filling a current gap in the County’s treatment and recovery system and addresses directives in the County’s abatement plan. Taken collectively, the programs will help more residents access treatment and achieve successful outcomes,” said County Executive Shapiro. “We will continue to work closely with the OAAC and Key Stakeholders Group to fund services and resources needed to reduce substance use disorder and support residents in recovery.”

County Executive Shapiro and County Council have now invested \$18.5 million in settlement funds directly into the community, from funding a new approach to addiction treatment in hospital emergency departments and to providing small grants to grassroots nonprofits on the front lines of opiate abatement. The Executive’s Office is exploring a plan to establish an endowment with the remaining settlement dollars to make sure the funds live on in perpetuity and provide the community the ability to implement new and innovative programs in the field of addiction treatment and recovery.

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