



Snohomish County

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Executive Somers Releases Holistic Plan to Address Impact of Drug Crisis on Snohomish County Communities

Proposes Initial \$1.4 Million Spending Plan for Opioid Settlement Funds Focused on Evidence-Based and Community-Centered Response Efforts

New Executive Directive Coordinates Region-Wide Response to Drug Crisis and Establishes Disaster Policy Group

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., May 18, 2023 – Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers today announced that he is advancing a holistic plan to address the impact the drug crisis is having on Snohomish County residents and businesses. First, he is issuing an Executive Directive, effective immediately, that coordinates a robust and collaborative response to the crisis. He is also transmitting a spending plan to the Snohomish County Council for the initial \$1.4 million in opioid settlement funds Snohomish County received with a focus on a community-centered response.

“I lost my only brother in March to a fentanyl overdose. I know how powerful these drugs are and the impacts they have on loved ones and our whole community. Current policy debates on public safety, addiction, and homelessness all too often seem to forget that real people are involved,” said Executive Somers. “In Snohomish County, we have built the infrastructure for addressing substance use disorder, and this plan is crucial for advancing our efforts locally. Ultimately, we need an influx of state and federal dollars to address the complex issues individuals, communities, and businesses are facing because of this drug crisis. We must do more before we lose more loved ones.”

At 284 total fatal overdoses – opioids as well as other drugs – Snohomish County lost more than five people per week on average in 2022. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of opioid-related overdose deaths reported in Snohomish County more than doubled. The number of those that involved fentanyl jumped from 24 to 189, which represents a nearly eight-fold increase. The county has already exceeded 80 fatal overdoses within the first quarter of 2023, with more than half of them tied to opioids.

A positive change in recent years is the increased availability and use of naloxone, a nasal spray that reverses opioid overdose. In 2022, local emergency departments reported 77 percent of overdose patients had received naloxone treatment prior to arriving at the hospital, up from 64 percent in 2020.

To address this crisis and build on existing work, Executive Somers is issuing an updated [Executive Directive](#) to the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) to coordinate the County’s response to this crisis. DEM will facilitate the Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group and organize across agencies including Fire/EMS, housing and human services, public health and medical services, and public safety, among other key regional partners. The Executive Directive also establishes a new Disaster Policy Group, led by Executive Somers, that will incorporate the heads of impacted agencies and will provide strategic policy guidance and approvals.

Notably, the Executive Directive establishes an aggressive timeline for developing and implementing strategies to address the drug use crisis:

1. Within 30 days of the receipt of the Directive, the MAC Group must submit an updated list of goals to the Disaster Policy Group for consideration and approval;
2. Within 90 days of the approval of new goals, the MAC Group must develop and submit to the Disaster Policy Group immediate strategies to reduce the number of drug-related deaths and mitigate impacts to property and public safety; and
3. Within 180 days of the approval of new goals, the MAC Group must develop and submit to the Disaster Policy Group mid- to long-term strategies to reduce the number of individuals suffering from substance use disorder.

Additionally, Executive Somers released a proposed spending plan for the first \$1.4 million in opioid settlement dollars Snohomish County received. In this initial installment, the County is set to receive approximately \$14 million (or \$740,000 per year for the next 15 years) from the settlement with pharmaceutical companies. The County also anticipates there will be additional future settlements related to the opioid crisis.

The Executive's initial spending plan is broken into two phases,

1. Phase One includes a total of \$671,125 and focuses on immediate-term actions and building infrastructure for future planning. Expenditures in this phase include expanding the County's First Responder Leave-Behind Program by making naloxone more readily available to fire/EMS, funding to support community-based organizations that wish to expand their grassroots opioid-related efforts, and increasing education efforts.
2. Phase Two includes a total of \$800,000 and focuses on longer-term proposals. Expenditures in this phase will likely include school-based education to mitigate substance use disorder among youth and the creation of a mobile resource to provide medication assisted treatment and/or counseling for individuals suffering from substance use disorder throughout the county.

The full spend plan [is available here](#).

The Snohomish County Council will review and vote on the Executive's proposed spending plan in the coming weeks. Once approved by the Council, the County will begin distributing this urgent funding into the community. The goals and crisis response strategies identified by the MAC Group and approved by the Disaster Policy Group will be publicly available at <https://snohomishoverdoseprevention.com/>.

Snohomish County is committed to providing education and overdose prevention efforts throughout the county. To learn more, find treatment resources, and/or request a naloxone training, [visit this website](#).

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