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Community Coming Together: Opioid Response Group Established with Multi-Agency Commitment

Partner agencies in Snohomish County unveil 12-month action plan

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. – After several months of quietly working behind the scenes on a unified action plan, one of Washington’s counties hardest hit by opioid-related deaths has released details on how it has ramped up efforts to address the crisis. The Snohomish County Executive, Snohomish County Council, Snohomish County Sheriff, and the Snohomish Health District have come together with a countywide commitment to reducing the impact of the opioid epidemic in Snohomish County.

“Our guiding principles for this effort are collaboration and coordination for the benefit of all of our residents,” said Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive. “We are a community coming together. To facilitate collaboration, I have directed the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management to partially activate the Emergency Coordination Center to support this effort.”

While not a formal declaration of emergency, as typically used during natural disasters, the directive does provide additional staff resources to facilitate better coordination and communication across multiple jurisdictions, government agencies and service providers. The multiple agencies and governments in Snohomish County involved so far have formed an Opioid Response Multi-agency Coordination (MAC) Group.

“The opioid epidemic is often referred to as a public health crisis, and that’s certainly true,” said Dr. Mark Beatty, health officer for the Snohomish Health District. “However, public health alone cannot end the epidemic. It requires each of us working together with a shared purpose.”

The Opioid Response MAC Group has developed the framework for a multiagency plan focused on reducing the negative impacts opioids have on the health, safety, and quality of life of our communities. The seven goals agreed upon are:

- Reduce opioid misuse and abuse;
- Lessen the availability of opioids;
- Reduce criminal activity associated with opioids;
- Use data to detect, monitor, evaluate, and act;
- Reduce collateral damage to the communities;
- Provide information about the response in a timely and coordinated manner; and
- Ensure the availability of resources that efficiently and effectively support response efforts.

To work towards those goals and associated objectives, the group has established leads for core areas aligned with the County’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. These include Public Works and Engineering; Firefighting/EMS; Emergency Management; Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services; Logistics Management and Resource Support; Public Health and Medical Services; Public Safety and Security; and External Affairs. With the partial activation, these leads will be responsible for coordinating efforts to meet the agreed upon objectives. This will include weekly situation reports, and operational periods coordinated one month at a time.

“We’ve learned in law enforcement that we can’t arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic,” said Ty Trenary, Snohomish County Sheriff. “We’ve also learned that the only way to make any significant impact is through collaborative partnerships and by addressing the problem at the local level. By coordinating the efforts that are already in place across the county, I believe we can be more effective and efficient in our response to the crisis.”

Now that the initial framework and objectives have been identified, those core team leads will be reaching out to other public agencies and private entities to participate in the action teams. This countywide plan is also aligned with the [Washington State Interagency Opioid Response Plan](#) and the [North Sound Behavioral Health Organization’s Opioid Reduction Plan](#).

More details about the Opioid Response MAC Group—including its objectives, action team leads and future progress reports—can be found at <http://snohomishoverdoseprevention.com/opioid-mac-group/>.

The website www.snohomishoverdoseprevention.com is a new information and resource portal available in Snohomish County. The website—and accompanying social media accounts—were developed to be a one-stop shop for resources. Whether trying to understand the problem, prevent addiction, or save a life, this is a place to find information for that first next step.

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