



**Care Massachusetts  
The Opioid Abatement  
Partnership**

# Care Massachusetts Core Training and Technical Assistance Team



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# Background: Care Massachusetts

Care Massachusetts is working collaboratively with cities and towns across the state to take action to end the overdose crisis.

## **We provide resources and technical assistance with:**

- ❑ Connecting municipalities with the people most impacted by the overdose epidemic
- ❑ Promoting the selection and implementation of proven public health strategies
- ❑ Educating the public on the source and purpose of the funds
- ❑ Facilitating collaboration across municipalities



# OFFICE HOURS

## How to Organize a Community Forum

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3/14/2024



# PRESENTER



**Kate Lena**

**Senior Consultant, JSI**



# Objectives

## Participants will learn about:

- ❑ Objectives of a community forum
- ❑ Why amplify community members' voices
- ❑ Utilizing and building capacity
- ❑ Logistics of a community forum
- ❑ Tailoring a forum to your community
- ❑ Tips for municipalities



# Objectives of a Community Forum

- ❑ Provide a safe space for people in your community to share their experiences
- ❑ Prioritize the needs of people who have been most impacted by the opioid crisis
- ❑ To meet the terms of the state subdivision agreement of utilizing a community engaged process
- ❑ Provide information and transparency to your community about the opioid abatement funds
- ❑ Make connections with people in your community, listening to their stories
- ❑ Collect baseline data on the unique needs of your community + to observe trends over time



# Why Amplify Community Members' Voices

- ❑ People with lived and living experience are the experts in their own lives
  - ❑ Their perspectives should be amplified, honored, and incorporated into this work
- ❑ Providing this space for people to speak their opinions can:
  - ❑ Help people process + heal past experiences
  - ❑ Empower people to be involved in their community
- ❑ Decisions should be based in data
  - ❑ We want to design and fund effective programs. If we do not hear from the people who will be accessing services through these programs, we may miss something





# Utilizing + Building Capacity

- ❑ Decisions should not be made by one person
- ❑ Build up your coalition with members with a variety of experience and knowledge
  - ❑ Prioritize people with lived and living experience
  - ❑ Start with a large community forum
- ❑ Divide up the work, leveraging the networks of coalition members
- ❑ Tag onto already established events
- ❑ Leverage already established partnerships + regional clusters
- ❑ Forums amongst affinity groups may be more effective than bringing people together who may have opposing views
  - ❑ Ex: Unique forums at syringe service programs, recovery support center, parent support groups, treatment centers, afterschool programs



# Logistics of a Community Forum

- ❑ Create genuine safe spaces for people to speak openly
- ❑ Best practices for supporting people to participate:
  - ❑ Provide transportation support or go to where people already are
  - ❑ Have childcare providers at event
  - ❑ Feed people
  - ❑ Pay participants for their time
  - ❑ Acknowledge that certain locations may exclude some populations
  - ❑ Invite local harm reduction program to be present for supply distribution, including Naloxone
  - ❑ Schedule the forum for a time that works for the participants
- ❑ Follow up with participants, showing them that their voices and their opinions are being included in decision-making



# Tailoring a Forum to Your Community

- ❑ Rural vs urban
- ❑ Tailoring the forum based on the population participating
- ❑ Acknowledge all languages spoken in your community and have forums in each of those languages
- ❑ Recognize any technology limitations that may exist
  - ❑ Disruptions in internet
  - ❑ Lack of consistent cell phone



# Tailoring a Forum to Your Community

- ❑ Each community can (and should) utilize a different community engagement process
  - ❑ Large community forum(s)
  - ❑ Multiple small forums hosted at local organizations/programs
  - ❑ Surveys
  - ❑ Focus groups
  - ❑ Interviews
  - ❑ Anonymous options



# Tips for Municipalities

- ❑ Approach this as developing a comprehensive substance use plan for your municipality, not just related to the opioid abatement funds
- ❑ Develop different options for community members to share their opinions
  - ❑ In person events
  - ❑ Virtual events
  - ❑ Anonymous options
- ❑ Who to have at events
  - ❑ Historical marginalization could ostracize people we want at these events
- ❑ It is your responsibility to engage with your community
  - ❑ Don't do it just to do it. Make it meaningful.



# Tips for Municipalities

- ❑ Remember: this is a requirement that municipalities include people with lived and living experience in your decision making process.
  - ❑ Ask for support from Care Massachusetts!
  - ❑ Create a plan that works for your community
  - ❑ Break up the community engagement plan over time to create a consistent mechanism for involvement



# Questions?



# NEXT STEPS

- ❑ **Upcoming Office Hours:**

- March 28th - Open Session

\*\*Register [here](#)

- April 11 - Conducting a Community Needs Assessment

\*\*Register [here](#)

Note that there are now unique registration links for each event\*\*

- ❑ **[Previous Office Hours slides and recordings](#)**

- ❑ **[Request individualized technical assistance](#)**

- ❑ **Sign up for our [listserv](#)**

- ❑ **Check out the [municipal dashboard](#)**





# Massachusetts Municipal Opioid Abatement Virtual Conference

March 19 - 9:30 a.m. to  
12 p.m. &  
March 20 - 9:30 a.m. to  
1:30 p.m.

Free event

[Register today!](#)



# FEEDBACK SURVEY

**Please take a couple minutes to respond to the anonymous feedback survey after the call ends**



**THANK YOU!**

