

2023 02 24

Health and Human Services Committee

Testimony notes from Marielle Matthews, MPH, Public Health Equity Manager at the City of Burlington

- It's important at this crisis point to put attention on those most at risk of fatal overdose: people who are using drugs currently.
- Allocation of resources is yearly decided by the same groups of people and it's crucial to get new perspectives in the room, folks who are in recovery and folks who currently use drugs need to be the first people asked about interventions
- Committee structure – in bill H.711 there is recommendation for only one person with lived experience –need to add more
- One huge opportunity for the legislature to create a pathway for municipalities to implement overdose prevention sites.
- Another imperative is increasing access to methadone as an effective treatment for folks using fentanyl
- Syringe service programs or SSPs are critical to our network of care – it's crucial that adequate funding is allocated for SSPs
- We need to expand access to different ways to induct on buprenorphine. Safe induction – a place where you can go through withdrawal and safely start on bupe
 - Housing and monitoring for about 7-10 days
- Justice-involved populations are also at high risk for fatal overdose immediately following release from incarceration, when they are very vulnerable and have few resources or community supports. Tom Dalton of Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform is working on a project that focuses on providing services for justice-involved populations. The City supports this work, the Mayor is providing seed funding for it, and we look forward to seeing services for justice-involved populations grow.
- Another important intersection of prevention and harm reduction is preventing ACEs – adverse childhood experiences. This is important for both adults and kids and the first CDC recommended strategy to increase financial stability of households.
- If you want to know more about overdose prevention topics, I would strongly suggest reaching out to Scott Pavek (spavek@burlingtonvt.gov), who works for the City of Burlington as the Substance Use Policy Analyst
- Open up data – report on graduation rates from treatment and set goals – anecdotally, the current graduation rates are likely unacceptably low and we should give us pause -- **require that these data be released to the public and the public health community**