



**Baltimore City Office of
Emergency Management**
401 E Fayette St, 6th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
(410) 396-6188

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor
City of Baltimore

Chief Charles Svehla
Emergency Manager
Office of Emergency Management

To: Honorable President Mosby, and Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council

Room 400 City Hall

From: Chief James Wallace, Acting Director, Office of Emergency Management

501 N. Calvert St - Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

Date: November 17, 2021

RE: Council Bill 21-0071R - Investigative Hearing – Developing a Coordinated Response to Baltimore City's Overdose Crisis

The Acting Director of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and staff will be present for the Health, Environment, and Technology Committee hearing regarding the request for a comprehensive briefing on the City's coordinated response to the current overdose crisis. As Director of OEM, I submit the following report / information regarding OEM's role in City efforts to address the opioid overdose crisis.

Thank you for your support, time, and consideration.

Deputy Chief James Wallace
Acting Director, City of Baltimore Office of Emergency Management

JW/jlm

Cc: Honorable Mayor, Brandon M. Scott
Chief Administrative Officer, Christopher J. Shorter
Chief of Staff, Michael Huber
Deputy Mayor, Public Safety, Sunny Schnitzer
Deputy City Administrator, Daniel Ramos
Fire Chief, Niles R. Ford
Acting Emergency Manager, Chief Charles Svehla



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The opioid epidemic which has been sweeping across the nation for 30 years, has impacted many communities, both urban and rural. The three phases of this crisis include the rise of prescription drug use and subsequent deaths observed in the 1990's, increases in fatal heroin-related overdoses and deaths of the 2010's, and what we know today as an resurgence of fentanyl laced street drugs. According to the City Council First Reader, "Between 2013 and 2019, Baltimore City saw a 271% increase in fatal overdoses. In 2020 there were 1,028 intoxication-related deaths in our city.... In 2019, 88.6 % of Baltimore City overdose deaths involved fentanyl."

Given the drastic increase in fatal overdoses and the understanding that addiction and overdoses can be preventable, city agencies and representatives from non-governmental organizations came together in 2020, with the assistance from the Baltimore City Health Department. Together they would work via the Opioid Intervention Team to develop a three-year Opioid Intervention Strategic Plan. The planning process involved evaluating the effectiveness of current practices used and lessons learned to come up with a list of attainable goals, objectives, and strategies the city can adopt to mitigate the opioid crisis.

Although the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is not the lead agency assigned with the planning, development, and implementation of the Strategic 3-year Plan, including the mitigation efforts referred to in Council Bill 21-0071R, they are responsible for ensuring the City of Baltimore is prepared for all incidents, emergencies, disasters, and special events. Given this and OEM's partnership in City's planning, prevention, and response efforts, OEM was a member of the Opioid Intervention Team. Members from OEM's team attended a series of monthly meetings and quarterly assessments to address items discussed during the monthly OIT meetings. During a series of monthly meetings and quarterly assessment, the team came up with nine objectives and twelve strategies which made up the current OIT plan. Once developed the team determined this plan will be implemented from January 2021 to December 2023.

The process used to develop the strategic plan involved assessing existing materials, developing project logistics (completed by BCHD), conduct key informant interviews, develop a Strategic Advice Memo, survey OIT members and analyzed the results. The team facilitated discussion/listening sessions using multiple platforms including four OIT meetings, two virtual strategic planning sessions, and three listening sessions, drafting and revising the OIT Strategic Plan,



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surveying residents for feedback and analyzing survey results for final review and implementation.

As discussed in the Baltimore City Health Department's Opioid Strategic Plan, "The purpose of the Baltimore City Opioid Intervention Team (OIT) is to protect and reduce the impact of opioids and opioid-related deaths on the citizens and visitors of Baltimore City."

The vision states, "Baltimore City will be a healthier place where no one else falls victim to substance use disorder, where anyone impacted by substance use disorder can get the help they need, and where there is no more suffering from the misuse of substances."

Finally, "The mission of the Baltimore City Opioid Intervention Team (OIT) is to develop and implement a coordinated approach to address the opioid crisis impacting Baltimore City. The approach taken by the OIT will include the following mission elements to make our vision a reality:

1. Support coordination among opioid-related efforts of local government agencies, nonprofit and other private sector organizations, communities throughout Baltimore City, and State and Federal partners;
2. Identify and promote "promising practices" that can be implemented in Baltimore City;
3. Assess gaps in local efforts to combat the opioid epidemic and work to fill those gaps;
4. Facilitate communications and sharing of relevant data;
5. Provide limited, need-based financial support to assist local agencies and organizations to advance their efforts to combat the opioid crisis; and
6. Evaluate local opioid-related plans and proposals.

To maintain alliance with State Partners the BCHD and OIT outlined goals, objectives and strategies which were consistent with those established in the *Maryland Inter-Agency Heroin and Opioid Coordination Plan from the Inter Agency Heroin and Opioid Coordinating Council and the Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC)* in January 2020. The plan focused on three subtopics with goals focusing on Prevention Education, Treatment and Recovery, and Public Safety and Enforcement. Among each goal there are a series of objectives and strategies outlined to achieve the goals; and OEM will aid wherever necessary to complete action steps needed.

Summary



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The members of OEM believe in the purpose, vision, and mission of the OIT strategic plan and we would like to continue to support and provide support to the City's coordinated response to the current overdose crisis.