



## Colorado Opioid Abatement Council (COAC)

### Meeting #21

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025  
9:00am – 10:30am

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**Appointees:** Aaron Miltenberger, David Frank, KC Hume, Nancy Rodgers, Lori Laske, Racquel Garcia, Terry Hofmeister, Terrence Gordon

**DOL Staff:** Jamie Feld, Jack Patterson, Natalie Sandoval, Christian Dykson, Mindy Baumgardner

**Guests:** Jose Esquibel, Dion Miller

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#### Welcome and Introductions

ORU staff opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and reiterating COAC's mission to maximize the impact of opioid settlement funds through prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery. ORU Staff highlighted the recent drop in fentanyl-related overdose deaths in Colorado, sharing CDC data showing a 28.5% decrease in fentanyl deaths, though the overall number remained high. ORU Staff also recognized Colorado's national leadership in transparency due to its public dashboard and regional planning mode.

ORU Staff introduced two sets of minutes for approval—from the December 18, 2024, and February 6, 2025 COAC meetings. No questions or revisions were raised.

*Dave Frank moved to approve both sets of minutes.*

*Racquel Garcia seconded.*

*Unanimously approved*

#### March 15<sup>th</sup> Funding Requests

Terrence Gordon summarized the latest round of regional funding requests. The COAC has received funding requests from 8 regions totaling **\$6,869,153.33** for the March 15<sup>th</sup> funding request deadline.

The COAC Review Committee reviewed the March 15<sup>th</sup> funding requests and recommended the release of funds to 7 of the 8 regions.

The Committee raised no concerns regarding the 8<sup>th</sup> regional request (Region 18), but lacked a quorum to make a recommendation to release funds due to recusals.

The funding requests were summarized.

- **Region 1 (Northwest) requests \$40,000.**
  - Region 1 currently projects expenditures of \$863K from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are
    - \$272,500.00 Infrastructure, staffing at government or not-for-profit agencies
    - \$200,000.00 Substance use prevention (general)
    - \$162,500.00 Supportive/recovery housing and other housing assistance

- **Region 5 (I-70 Mountain) requests \$480,081.68**
  - Region 5 currently projects expenditures of \$1.8M from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$500K Treatment services adhering to ASAM continuum of care
    - \$368K Media prevention campaigns
    - \$362K Syringe services and other harm reduction efforts for people who use drugs
- **Region 6 (Boulder) requests \$253,216.68**
  - Region 6 currently projects expenditures of \$2.5M from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$453K Peer-recovery centers, and events
    - \$423K Syringe services and other harm reduction efforts for people who use drugs
    - \$190K Full continuum of care of recovery services
    - \$190K Jail-based treatment, recovery or harm reduction services
- **Region 8 (Adams) requests \$4,851,862.44**
  - Region 8 currently projects expenditures of \$7.3M from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$1.3M Harm reduction programs or strategies (general)
    - \$1.3M Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) - (general)
    - \$1.2M Substance use prevention (general)
- **Region 9 (Arapahoe) requests \$61,200.00**
  - Region 9 currently projects expenditures of \$4.8m from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$1.3M Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) - (general)
    - \$968K School and community prevention and education programs
    - \$943K Jail-based treatment, recovery or harm reduction services
- **Region 12 (Douglas) requests \$360,024.49**
  - Region 12 currently projects expenditures of \$1.7M from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$426K Withdrawal management services
    - \$400K Collaborative cross-systems coordination infrastructure and staffing
    - \$217K Media prevention campaigns
- **Region 17 (SWORD) requests \$790,497.65**
  - Region 17 currently projects expenditures of \$1.8M from 20025-2026
  - Largest allocations are:
    - \$819K Supportive/recovery housing and other housing assistance
    - \$446K Full continuum of care of recovery services
    - \$409K Infrastructure, staffing at government or not-for-profit agencies
- **Region 18 (San Luis Valley) requests \$32,270.39**
  - Region 18 currently projects expenditures of \$382K from 2025-2026
  - Largest allocations are
    - \$110K Peer support specialists and recovery coaches
    - \$105K Substance use prevention (general)
    - \$102K Connection to care (General)

ORU Staff noted that they are working on improvements to the two-year plan submission format, which would make it easier to track changes in scope, spending, and goals going forward.

**Vote to Release Funds**

The council proceeded to vote on funding release motions:

*Aaron Miltenberger moved to approve the funding requests from Regions 5, 6, 8, 9, and 17*

*Dave Frank seconded*

*Unanimously approved*

*Dave Frank moved to approve the funding request from Region 1*

*Terrence Gordon seconded*

*Unanimously approved with KC Hume abstaining*

*KC Hume moved to approve the funding request from Region 12*

*Dave Frank seconded*

*Unanimously approved with Racquel Garcia abstaining*

*Terry Hofmeister moved to approve the funding request from Region 18*

*Racquel Garcia seconded*

*Unanimously approved with Lori Laske and Aaron Miltenberger abstaining*

**Expenditure Reporting Review Procedures**

Nancy Rodgers provided an overview of the draft procedures that were developed by the Administrative and Review Committees to guide the review of expenditure reports submitted by regions and eligible local governments. The goal of these procedures is to bring consistency, transparency, and efficiency to the review process, while still allowing for flexibility and collaboration when clarification is needed.

The proposed process involves four key steps. First, entities submit their expenditure reports to the Opioid Response Unit. Then, ORU Staff conduct an initial review and apply a standardized coding system to categorize each expenditure. If any items are unclear or require relabeling, ORU Staff will reach out to the reporting entity for clarification. Once those steps are completed, the reports are brought before COAC for final review and publication.

Nancy explained that the coding framework is designed to help identify whether expenditures are clearly labeled and allowable under settlement guidelines, whether they are unclear and need more information, or whether they may fall outside the defined scope. She emphasized that this process

strikes a balance between oversight and accessibility—it ensures that COAC has a clear picture of how funds are being used, without creating unnecessary burdens on local governments trying to do the work. Council members were supportive of the approach and appreciated the thoughtful structure behind it.

### **Expenditure Reporting Update**

Nancy also shared a significant update: all 92 required reports for 2024 were submitted on time, compared to only 62 in 2023. Total reported expenditures more than doubled to \$29.6 million, reflecting strong momentum in implementing funded programs.

Notably, all 19 regions reported expenditures this year, up from just 14 in 2023. ORU Staff reached out to 29 local governments and all 19 regions for clarifications, as well as to provide regions the opportunity to report on committed expenditures. A final review of this data would take place in the May COAC meeting, and updates would be published to the public dashboard in May.

### **Opioid Administrators Summit Learnings**

ORU Staff reported back from the national summit, where Colorado’s model was recognized for its regional approach, transparency, and inclusion of lived experience. They also took note of best practices shared by other states, including the collection of narrative data, expanded guidance for local grantees, and support for measuring impact in communities with fewer resources.

Takeaways included the importance of identifying high-impact and low-impact strategies, better storytelling to reflect lived experience, and developing more technical assistance tools for smaller jurisdictions.

### **Opioid Response Unit Updates**

The Assistance Committee recently issued updated guidance on specific expenditures. Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) were determined to be not allowable under opioid settlement guidelines, as they AEDs are generally not utilized in response to opioid overdoses which is due to respiratory depression. The Committee also responded to an inquiry about whether vitals sign monitoring systems for county jails was an allowable use of opioid settlement funds. There is general agreement that the technology may be allowable under Schedule B, Category H – Preventing Overdose Deaths, which includes the language (“may include, but not be limited to”). While Schedule B (Approved Uses) encourages investment in overdose prevention, some Committee members questioned whether this type of intervention—technological monitoring in jails—qualifies as a prevention service.

The Committee’s preliminary position is that while allowable, this is not a recommended use of opioid settlement funds. Regions are encouraged to consider alternate funding options for such technology.

Planning is also underway for the next statewide opioid settlement conference, which will be held in Loveland on October 27, 2025, in collaboration with Rethinking Addiction & Recovery. The event will feature a range of panel discussions, keynote speakers, and community-led presentations focused on effective practices in prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery.

In terms of infrastructure funding, Round 1 projects have officially been closed out for Region 12, Region 18, and Thornton Police Department. Several extensions have been granted for active projects, including

those in Arapahoe County, Fremont County, and the Town of Buena Vista. Meanwhile, Round 3 applications are currently under review, with funding awards expected to be announced by summer 2025.

### **Public Comment**

Member of public, Dion Miller - Dion raised concerns about how funds were being allocated. He specifically questioned a \$200,000 allocation to "Roofers in Recovery" for "roofs on sober livings", asking whether the spending aligned with abatement principles. Dion also emphasized the need for more support for recovery services.

Lori Laske clarified that the funds in question were split between two separate projects: one for recovery housing and another for a treatment facility. Roofers in Recovery bought and opened the 1<sup>st</sup> inpatient recovery in the San Luis Valley and the other project opened the 1<sup>st</sup> recovery housing for males for up to 22 individuals. She invited Dion to visit and offered to speak with Dion.

Terrence Gordon thanked Dion for his engagement, reiterating the importance of public feedback and transparency.

Aaron Miltenberger shared about the Boys and Girls Club's The Youth of the Year Celebration, of which the winner, Mayesa Duran, was highlighted as a potential speaker for the fall conference. Mayesa is a member of the youth teen substance, abuse, prevention program and involved directly with addressing substance use in the community.

José Esquibel referenced proposed state budget cuts totaling \$13.5 million for Opioid Use Disorder-related services, affecting recovery programs, MAT expansion, detox services, and recovery housing. He expressed concern that these cuts could shift additional pressure onto COAC and the Regions.

Racquel Garcia added that Medicaid cuts to peer recovery reimbursements posed another serious challenge, potentially disrupting the peer workforce and reducing critical support services.

ORU Staff acknowledged these issues and informed the council that the Colorado Attorney General's Office had filed federal lawsuits challenging some of the funding cuts, especially those related to addiction and mental health services.

### **Adjourn**