



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

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DIRECTOR



May 28, 2021

TO City of Somerville - Public Health and Public Safety Committee
FR Douglas S. Kress, Director - Health and Human Services Department
RE: Response to Item 208261, Access to Treatment with Local Partnering Agencies

The City of Somerville and the Health and Human Services Department employs and/or works with several substance addiction stakeholders to ensure residents receive support and referrals to treatment.

These agencies include:

- **Somerville Police Department: Community Outreach, Help, & Recovery (COHR):** see below
- **Somerville Prevention Services: Substance Use Prevention Coordinator:** \$61,670.61
- **Column Health:** \$96,000.00
- **Somerville Homeless Coalition:** \$32,250.00
- **Fenway Health/ACCESS:** \$17,250.00

Descriptions of work and collaborations:

- **Somerville Police Department – Community Outreach, Help, and Recovery (COHR)** – the COHR program, a civilian unit based in the Somerville Police Department, provides assistance with assessment, referrals, alternative to arrest, as well as pre and post adjudication planning for individuals impacted by behavioral health. Staff includes licensed clinicians, graduate level interns, recovery coaches (currently vacant/unfunded), and case management who work alongside the police and local mental health stakeholders to quickly identify individuals in crisis and make referrals to provide resources for them on their recovery path. This includes post overdose follow up, identifying particularly vulnerable individuals and doing outreach shortly after they experienced a non-fatal overdose to ensure they are aware of the treatment services available. In December 2020, SPD partnered with the Somerville Homeless Coalition to conduct weekly Homeless Outreach to address the lack of resources and increased need of residents experiencing Homelessness. In addition to weekly outreach to build relationships and offer supports, SPD assisted in providing transportation to individuals to access shelters in neighboring communities. COHR also provides regional CIT training for police officers in an effort to increase understanding of behavioral health, effectively communicate and engage, provide verbal and tactical de-escalation, navigate community resources, and utilize risk assessment tools. This equips officers with the knowledge and skills to guide best practice response to individuals impacted by psychiatric illness, development disorders, and co-occurring substance use disorders in an effort to decrease having individuals referred to the criminal system and

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subsequently increase their potential access to treatment. COHR also provides training to community agencies and individuals to increase literacy on best practice response to work toward a foundation of knowledge in supporting recovery across the community. Trainings included, Recovery Coach Academy, Why the Criminal Justice System should be Trauma Informed, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA); MHFA for youth; MHFA for veterans; MHFA for Public Safety; Understanding Trauma and Building Resilience.

These programs are funded through a combination of City and Grant funds:

- **City of Somerville:** 1FTE COHR Director/LICSW - \$81,806.89
- **Grants:**
 - o Department of Mental Health
 - CIT TTAC funds 1 FTE Administrative Staff; 1 FTE Research and Regional Coordinator; 1 FTE Co-Director/LICSW
 - Jail Diversion 1 Clinician/LADC 60% funded by grant.
 - o Department of Public Health
 - ACCESS is funded to partner with SPD on Overdose Aftercare Program, provides a harm reduction specialist conduct outreach in the community. Grant requests a police officer to accompany ACCESS staff, SPD receives \$20,000 annually to offset staffing costs and support transportation.
 - o Police Assisted Addiction Recovery (PAARI)
 - o Previously funded a part-time recovery coach however during COVID they were not able to fill this position. This position has been vacant since March 2020.
- **Somerville Prevention Services' Substance Use Prevention Coordinator** – this position, funded through the medical marijuana stabilization funds, is offered through the City of Somerville's Health and Human Services Department in connection with the Somerville Public Schools. The Somerville Public Schools Director of Student Services (and/or other counseling staff) makes referrals to the Substance Use Prevention Coordinator for youth who may be actively using substances. The role of this position is to do a substance use assessment, similar to that of the Clinical Youth Specialist for mental health-related referrals, and remain as a temporary support to youth until a referral is secured for further treatment (if applicable). This short-term service allows the City to provide stop gap services to stabilize the youth and bridge them to long term, sustained treatment with a provider that meets the youth needs, especially with wait lists for services being several months long, if not more.
- **Column Health** – the City of Somerville's Health and Human Services Department was recently awarded the Massachusetts Attorney General Office's Promoting Cultural Humility in Opioid Use Grant in January 2021. This grant aims to strengthen cultural humility and culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) in opioid use disorder treatment to better serve racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse communities. The City partnered with Column Health, a locally-based agency that provides leading edge outpatient mental health and

addiction treatment, to recruit and hire two full-time, bilingual Recovery Navigators (\$40,000.00 each plus benefits). These individuals will be tasked with doing outreach and acting as liaisons to individuals in recovery, particularly those of Spanish, Portuguese, or Haitian Creole background, who have been historically underserved in opioid recovery treatment, to access treatment.

- **Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC)** – the City of Somerville’s Health and Human Services Department, in partnership with the Cambridge Public Health Department, was awarded the Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant from the MA Department of Public Health’s Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) division in January 2020. This aims to extend the work of the Massachusetts Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative (MOAPC) grant to a particular population. Based off of their successful community-based overdose prevention education efforts through MOAPC with local business owners, Cambridge and Somerville decided to bring these trainings to individuals experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. A natural partnership with the SHC made sense given some previous overdose prevention work with them in the past. This funding allowed for SHC to increase their staffs’ capacity to better support the individuals they serve, particularly as they have been seeing opioid-use cut across many of the work with clients, either the individual themselves or someone they may know and/or support. These efforts have led to reported increased rapport building and engagement with the individuals they serve, further facilitating SHC’s ability to connect individuals with substance addiction, housing, and other needed supports.
- **Fenway Health/ACCESS** – the other community partner in the OD2A grant is Fenway Health/ACCESS. Fenway Health/ACCESS’s Drug User Program serves as one of the several state-sanctioned and state-funded syringe exchange programs in MA aiming to provide risk reduction education and supplies to individuals as well as information and referrals to medical, substance use and other social services. Their mobile outreach van serves both Cambridge and Somerville, bringing these much needed services directly to people who may need safe supplies and/or information on how to get further treatment when they are ready to do so. This funding further enhanced Fenway Health/ACCESS’s abilities to continue their street outreach efforts, particularly during the COVID-19 shutdown, and support staff in making valuable connections with the transient population they serve daily.

HHS also regularly attends, supports and promotes recovery programs for adults and youth. This includes attending and presenting at meetings as well as promoting events and programs on social media and newsletters. This past year, Somerville Prevention and the Council on Aging partnered to have Somerville Prevention featured in their monthly newsletter with tips, statistics, best practices, contact information for treatment resources, etc. in relation to substance misuse prevention with seniors. This was a targeted strategy by Somerville Prevention to bring more substance misuse prevention education and resources to our seniors, supplementing what is provided by the Council on Aging social work team.

Somerville Prevention also works with 20-30 middle and high school youth each school year to educate and promote youth substance misuse prevention. Somerville Positive Forces (SPF) youth act as ambassadors, educating their peers and the community on substance misuse prevention efforts and using their collective voice to speak to what youth need in regards to support. Youth that may need supplemental support for treatment are referred accordingly to our Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator and/or Clinical Youth Specialist as deemed appropriate.

My staff and I are available to answer any questions you may have about the work and partnerships we have in the community and beyond.

Sincerely,

Douglas S. Kress
Director, HHS