



# MAYOR'S OFFICE OF **OVERDOSE RESPONSE**

## **Baltimore City Transparency & Accountability Plan**

### **Background**

The City of Baltimore has successfully taken legal action against companies that played a role in the opioid epidemic. To date, the City has won settlements against major pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, now totaling more than \$402.5 million, with abatement proceedings underway. Now, the City is building a transparent and accountable plan in collaboration with the Restitution Advisory Board to ensure these funds directly benefit Baltimore's communities and help save lives.

On August 29, 2024, Mayor Scott signed an Executive Order establishing a comprehensive framework for the administration of funds the City has acquired as part of the lawsuits, collectively known as the "opioid restitution funds". Included in this Executive Order, the City is required to publish a plan for transparency and accountability of the restitution funds so the public can see how the funds are spent and what difference it makes in the community.

### **What is Transparency and Accountability?**

**Transparency in governance** means the City will make information about how decisions are made and how money is spent easy to find and understand.

- Transparency means sharing clear, up-to-date information with the public—like who is getting the money, what they are using it for, and what results they are seeing.
- It relates to providing the public with access to information about policies, activities, and decision-making in formats that are useful and understandable.
- For opioid restitution funds, it serves as a means for governments to showcase responsible stewardship of restitution dollars and share actions and decision-making.

**Accountability in governance** means the City will take responsibility for making sure the money is used in ways that meet community needs and follow the law.

- Accountability means making sure the City follows through on promises and listens to community feedback.
- It relates to how public officials will take responsibility for and provide explanation for their actions, decisions, and performance to the public.
- For opioid restitution funds, it serves as a means to contribute to clear oversight and monitoring for how the restitution funds are handled and used.

## How the City will Ensure Transparency

The City will follow recommended best practices to guide its planning and decision making. This includes [Principles for the Use of Funds From the Opioid Litigation](#). This nationally recognized guidance for jurisdictions receiving money from the opioid settlements encourages governments to create a fair and transparent process for the use of opioid settlement funds. Principle 5 outlines how governments should adopt strategies and practices to publicly disclose information related to their planning process, funding decisions, and monitoring activities.

The City will commit to sharing information related to opioid restitution funds financials, the process for the decision-making, and the impacts of investments. To keep the public informed, the City is committed to sharing regular updates in these ways:

### Public Website

The City will maintain a dedicated webpage on the City's website to provide easy access to information related to the opioid restitution funds. This page will be reviewed and updated regularly. This page will meet content accessibility guidelines and The City will partner with organizations and places (e.g., libraries, community centers, health centers, community organizations) to help people access the website information. Print copies of key website content will be available to the public at local libraries and updated quarterly by the Restitution Advisory Board in coordination with the library system. The website will adhere to accessibility guidelines and will include the following information or a link to where it can be found:

- **Financial information:** Current income and spending or a link to a dashboard that shows this data in visual form. Dashboards and other data visuals will be used to display expenditures, remaining funds, and recipient information
- **Planning documents:** Links to key documents outlined in the Executive Order and timelines for updates. This includes plans to make sure funds are spent and monitored equitably.
- **Public engagement:** Notices about how the public can provide feedback, such as forums, virtual and in-person open meetings, and recordings and/or minutes from past events. These will also be advertised in community settings.
- **Decision making process:** Clear explanations of who is making the decisions, how they are doing so, and where the City and affected communities are in this process. This will also include the names and roles of the Restitution Advisory Board members and other key decision makers, and how they will be making recommendations for funding to the Mayor and the Overdose Cabinet.
- **Funding opportunities:** Notices of open calls for proposals, scoring criteria, and support materials to help applicants apply.
- **Key indicators:** Links to important metrics related to community impact, such as most recently available overdose and substance use measures. Data will be organized to show different demographic groups who might experience disparities. Dashboards and other visuals may be used to show impacts on key indicators.



## Annual Public Report

Each year, the City will release a report. This will be available on the website and in print form at local libraries for public access. Reports will include:

- **Financial summary of the Trust, including:**

- Total funds received
- Total interest accrued
- Total funds earmarked
- Total funds spent

- **Grant awards and use of funds**

For each recipient of funds:

- Confirmation that organizations who receive funding are in good standing with the State
- Amount Awarded
- Duration of grant
- How the work relates to the strategic plan, including rationale for the approach and how the work reaches populations most affected
- A description of funded activities including structural or capital investments
- Annual updates on performance measures outlined in grant agreements
- A summary of results and changes from the work upon completion of the grant terms

## Evaluations and Learning

The City may conduct formal evaluations for selected programs. For example, it may be helpful to learn more about programs that are novel. These evaluations will be publicly shared and may include:

- What happened as a result of the program
- How the program improved substance use and health
- How the program reached those most affected by substance use
- How the program improved health equity
- Broader lessons that could be applied to other efforts
- Cost analyses

## Overall Impact

In the future, the City will explore opportunities to look at the long-term impact of the investments on substance use and other health outcomes across the City. Results of these broader evaluations will be posted publicly and may answer questions like:

- What changes happened in communities as a result of these efforts
- How did these changes affect residents, neighborhoods, and the overall public health system?



- How did these changes affect communities most affected by substance use?
- How did these efforts affect health equity?

## **Conclusion**

The City of Baltimore is committed to using the opioid restitution funds to make a lasting difference in the lives of residents. Through regular updates, public input opportunities, and open access to data and reports, the City will ensure these funds are used effectively and fairly. Residents are encouraged to stay engaged, ask questions, and share feedback throughout this process.

