

ANNUAL WORK PLAN

SUBSTANCE USE ADVISORY COMMISSION

FY 2025

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INTRODUCTION:

Established by the City of Raleigh City Council in June 1990, the Substance Use Advisory Commission (SUAC) represents the city's commitment to a permanent and vigorous effort to combat substance use and support those affected by it. The purpose of SUAC is to advise the City of Raleigh City Council, upon request, on the best ways to combat substance use and in any other areas as the City Council may direct.

SUAC seeks to eradicate the suffering of all persons affected by and at risk of substance use. SUAC aims to advocate for a healthy community by...

- Promoting best practices for the prevention, intervention, treatment of substance use,
- Facilitating opportunities for collaboration among substance use resources in the Raleigh community and identifying gaps in services
- Serving as a liaison between Raleigh community and City Council
- Advising City of Raleigh City Council on trends, issues, and needs related to substance use
- Advocating for local policy initiatives affecting substance use and related mental health considerations

BACKGROUND:

The National Institute of Mental Health defines substance use disorder (SUD) as a treatable mental disorder that affects a person's brain and behavior, leading to their inability to control their use of substances like legal or illegal drugs, alcohol, or medication. People with a SUD may also have other mental health disorders. Though people might have both a SUD and a mental disorder, that does not mean that one may cause the other. There are common risk factors that can contribute to both SUDs and other mental disorders

Common issues surrounding addiction and substance use disorder include:

- **Stigma:** can lead to discrimination, isolation, and reluctance to seek help.
- **Lack of Access to Treatment:** financial limitations, limited availability to treatment, and inadequate insurance coverage.
- **Co-occurring Mental Health Disorders:** Substance use disorders frequently co-occur with other mental health conditions, complicating treatment and recovery efforts..
- **Risk of Overdose and Health Consequences:** Substance use carries the risk of overdose, as well as long-term health consequences such as liver disease, cardiovascular problems, respiratory issues, and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases.
- **Impact on Relationships and Social Functioning:** Addiction can strain relationships with family, friends, and colleagues, leading to conflict, loss of trust, and social isolation.
- **Legal and Financial Consequences:** Substance use can lead to legal issues such as arrests and convictions for drug-related offenses, as well as financial difficulties due to spending on substances and loss of employment.
- **Environmental and Socioeconomic Factors:** Factors such as poverty, trauma, exposure to violence, and lack of social support can contribute to the development and perpetuation of addiction.
- **Cultural and Ethnic Disparities:** There are disparities in access to addiction treatment and outcomes based on cultural and ethnic backgrounds, often due to systemic barriers and cultural differences in attitudes towards addiction.
- **Impact on Communities:** Addiction can have broader community impacts, including increased crime rates, strain on healthcare and social services, and economic burden.

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive approaches that prioritize destigmatization, addressing underlying social determinants of health, prevention, early intervention, and access to evidence-based treatment.

The first harm reduction model started in the 1980s in Liverpool and had success utilizing outreach workers, distribution of education, and providing clean needle exchange programs for individuals who used drugs to prevent the spread of HIV. Though Harm Reduction is not a new concept, it is gaining interest as the highest rates of US overdose deaths ever recorded: more than 100,000 in a 12 month period ending in April 2021 (AAMC). Harm Reduction incorporates a range of strategies that includes safer use, managed use, abstinence, meeting people who use drugs “where they’re at,” and addressing conditions of use along with the use itself. Because harm reduction recognizes an individualized approach, there is no universal definition of or formula for implementing harm reduction. Link to the National Harm Reduction Coalition can be found [HERE](#).

OUR WHY:

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics estimated 107,543 drug overdose deaths in the United States in 2023 – a decrease of 3% from 2022. This is the first annual decrease in drug overdoses since 2018. According to NCDHHS, nearly 12 North Carolinians died each day from a drug overdose in 2022. Of the 4,339 North Carolinian deaths, 241 occurred in Wake County. More data points can be found on NC DHHS Opioid and Substance Use Data Dashboard [HERE](#)

OUR PRIORITIES:

During FY2025, SUAC will capitalize on its position as a Raleigh City Council advisory commission by focusing all of its efforts on gathering information from the community relating to common challenges surrounding SUD and addiction and proposing related local policy to City Council to best support these individuals in our community. Responsibilities for SUAC's activities are allocated among two task forces: Community Education & Outreach Task Force and Strategies & Assessment Task Force.

Community Education & Outreach Task Force

The Community Education & Outreach Task Force (formally Events Task Force) will work to ensure SUAC is present at applicable community education and outreach events related to raising awareness and fostering community engagement in substance use prevention and intervention. Key initiatives and impacts may include:

- **Annual Medication Drop-Off Events:** As part of our ongoing efforts to prevent prescription drug misuse and promote safe medication disposal practices, SUAC plans to continue its participation in the bi-annual medication drop-off events in collaboration with local pharmacies and law enforcement agencies. These events provided community members with a safe and convenient way to dispose of unused or expired medications, reducing the risk of diversion, abuse, and environmental contamination.
- **Community Workshops and Seminars** focused on various aspects of substance use disorder, including prevention, early intervention, treatment, and harm reduction. These events should provide valuable information to community members, healthcare professionals, educators, and law enforcement personnel, fostering a deeper understanding of substance use and its impact on individuals and families. Workshops should facilitate discussions to identify actionable steps for improving community resources, advocating for policy changes, and promoting health equity. Workshop topics could include...
 - **North Carolina Rally for Recovery Annual Event** to celebrate recovery and offer hope to anyone seeking or in need of recovery from SUD.
 - **i.e. Stigma Reduction** tailored to different community groups such as parents, healthcare professionals, employers. The workshop could provide education on challenging stigma, promoting empathy, and supporting individuals with substance use disorder. Option to offer continuing education credits for healthcare professionals and professional development training for employers to encourage participation and engagement.
 - **i.e. Social Determinants of Health Event** focused on exploring the impact of social determinants of health on substance use disorder and strategies for addressing systemic barriers. Option to invite experts, community leaders, and policymakers to present on topics such as housing insecurity, poverty, trauma, and healthcare access.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** through various channels, including social media, local newspapers, and community events. These campaigns should aim to destigmatize addiction, raise awareness about available resources and support services, and promote a message of hope and recovery. By leveraging multiple communication platforms, SUAC will effectively reach a broad audience and spark meaningful conversations about substance use within the community. Outreach events could include...
 - **Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina Annual OBX Conference**
 - **i.e. Access to Treatment Resource Fair** focused on increasing awareness of available treatment options and support services for substance use disorder. Invite local treatment providers, support groups, counseling centers, and social service agencies to participate and share information about their programs and resources. Provide on-site assistance for individuals and families seeking treatment, including assistance with insurance enrollment, referrals to treatment providers, and access to support services.
 - **i.e. Overdose Prevention Training Initiative:** a community-wide overdose prevention training initiative to equip residents with the knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to opioid overdoses. Offer free naloxone training sessions in collaboration with local harm reduction organizations, pharmacies, and community centers. Distribute naloxone kits to

participants and provide information on accessing additional resources, such as addiction treatment and support services.

- **Collaborative Initiatives with Healthcare Providers** to develop and implement training programs for medical professionals on Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) protocols. These initiatives aim to improve early detection of substance use disorders in healthcare settings and facilitate timely access to appropriate treatment and support services for patients. Topics to promote could include...
 - **i.e. Dual Diagnosis Awareness Campaign:** highlighting the link between substance use disorder and mental health conditions and promoting integrated treatment approaches. Partnerships could include mental health organizations, advocacy groups, and healthcare providers to disseminate information through social media, community events, and educational materials.
 - **i.e. School-Based Education Programs:** Recognizing the importance of early intervention and prevention efforts, SUAC could partner with adult faculty/staff within local schools to implement targeted education programs for students. These programs included interactive presentations and peer-led discussions with informational materials designed to provide education regarding the risks associated with substance use in youth.

These initiatives align with SUAC's mission of empowering individuals, families, and communities with knowledge and resources to address substance use disorders effectively. By fostering collaboration, raising awareness, and promoting evidence-based practices, SUAC will continue to make a positive impacts in the community and advance its mission of creating a healthier, more resilient society

Strategies and Evaluation Task Force

The Strategies and Evaluation Task Force (formally Communications and Survey Task Force) will work to establish SUAC's presence in the Raleigh Community by implementing a comprehensive social media presence and broadly promoting SUAC's assessments and other commission activities. Specifically, the strategies and evaluation techniques SUAC may utilize include:

- **Social Media** to disseminate information, raise awareness, and engage with the community on topics related to substance use disorders, stigma reduction, and access to treatment.
 - Evaluation: Monitor social media metrics such as reach, engagement, and follower demographics to gauge the effectiveness of outreach efforts. Track user interactions, comments, and shares to measure community engagement and identify content preferences. Adjust social media strategies based on performance data to optimize impact and reach.
- **Community Listening Sessions** to gather input, feedback, and insights directly from community members, individuals with lived experience, and service providers. Minimum of 2 per fiscal year.
 - Evaluation: Assess attendance rates, participant engagement, and feedback received during listening sessions. Use qualitative data collected to identify emerging trends, community priorities, and areas for collaboration with stakeholders. Incorporate community input into the planning and implementation of education and outreach initiatives.
- **Needs Assessment Surveys** within the community to identify specific areas of concern related to substance use disorders, stigma, access to treatment, and social determinants of health.
 - Evaluation: Analyze survey data to identify prevalent issues, demographic trends, and areas for targeted intervention. Use findings to inform the development of tailored education and outreach initiatives and advocate for policy changes based on community needs.
- **Participant Feedback Surveys** following community events, workshops, and educational sessions to gather insights on program effectiveness, relevance, and satisfaction.
 - Evaluation: Analyze survey responses to assess participant satisfaction levels, knowledge gained, and perceived impact of engagement activities. Use feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement in event planning, content delivery, and community engagement strategies. Incorporate suggestions and recommendations from participants into future programming to enhance community engagement efforts.

- **Partnership Development** with local organizations, agencies, and institutions to leverage resources, expand outreach efforts, and maximize impact in addressing substance use disorders and related issues.
 - Evaluation: Assess the number and quality of partnerships established, including collaborative initiatives, joint events, and shared resources. Measure the extent of community reach and engagement achieved through partnership activities. Solicit feedback from partners to evaluate the effectiveness of collaboration and identify opportunities for improvement.
 - Attend City Council Community meetings and Citizens Advisory Council Meetings.
- **Review and proposal of amendments to current Bylaws in FY 2025**

Overall, these strategies and evaluation techniques enabled SUAC to engage the community effectively, tailor education/outreach efforts to address specific needs, and evaluate the impact of its initiatives in advancing its mission of promoting substance use prevention, intervention, and treatment.

Proposed Budget

Cost of attendance to local, regional, or state conferences or other events addressing substance use issues.	\$1,250
Funds to host, coordinate, and facilitate the Annual Retreat in Spring 2025 - including facilitator fees, facility fees, supplies, and appropriate food/beverage.	\$1,250
Funds to promote, host, and facilitate public listening sessions and forum discussions, including facilitator fees, facility fees, supplies, and appropriate food/beverage.	\$1,500
General marketing and promotional materials or sponsorship of events that SUAC will attend relating to its goals.	\$1,500
Analysis of FY2024 Community Survey results and ongoing analysis of the repurposed survey	\$1,500
Total:	\$7,000

COMMISSION MEMBERS

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