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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

To: Local Media and Press Release Subscribers
From: Rock County Public Health Department
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Rock County Recognized for Opioid Settlement Planning Process

Rock County, WI – Rock County is excited to announce that the County received one of the inaugural awards for [Excellence in the Application of the Opioid Litigation Principles](#). The Principles were developed by a [coalition](#) of organizations from across the spectrum of the substance use field and by faculty and staff from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The award is given to jurisdictions that demonstrate distinction in how their decision-making process to utilize the National Opioid Settlement funds reflects the [Opioid Litigation Principles](#). Rock County and the state of Colorado are the only jurisdictions in the United States to receive the inaugural award.

The following Opioid Litigation Principles, a set of evidence-based guidelines developed by the awarding coalition, guide state and local policymakers to effectively and equitably use settlement funds:

1. Spend the Money to Save Lives
2. Use Evidence to Guide Spending
3. Invest in Youth Prevention
4. Focus on Racial Equity
5. Develop a Fair and Transparent Process for Deciding Where to Spend the Funding

The Principles were presented in a [report](#) coordinated by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health which provided details and examples to guide jurisdictions' efforts.

To ensure Rock County incorporated the Opioid Litigation Principles into its planning process, the County formed a workgroup with members from Rock County Public Health Department, Human Services, County Administration, and the Sheriff's Office which focused on prioritizing the responsible use of National Opioid Settlement funds. The workgroup gathered public input, reviewed evidence-based literature and local data, and developed a rubric centered on health equity to consider how funds could be utilized.

“By applying the Principles for the use of funds from the National Opioid Settlement, we have been able to ensure that the funding our county is set to receive addresses the key areas necessary to mitigate the impacts that the opioid epidemic has had on our community,” says Rock County Public Health Officer, Katrina Harwood.

Rock County hopes to encourage other local jurisdictions to utilize the Principles in planning for the use of funds from the National Opioid Settlement. Any jurisdictions looking for guidance on how to use settlement funds can view Rock County’s full [report](#) or email publichealth@co.rock.wi.us.

"The Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation offer a framework for local governments to use as they decide how to spend dollars from the opioid settlements. The Principles offer flexibility that jurisdictions can apply in their approach," says Sara Whaley, faculty at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and one of the coordinators of the Principles. "The approach that Rock County has taken to inform their recommendations with feedback from the community is a really commendable effort to ensure that the priorities of those affected by this crisis are represented by the funding allocations. Using the community's input, officials can identify the evidence-based interventions that will have the biggest impact."

The full report with recommendations on how to utilize National Opioid Settlement funds was prepared by the Rock County Public Health Department and presented to the Rock County Board of Supervisors on September 8, 2022. Further actions on the recommendations are currently pending consideration of updates to the settlement that have taken place since the report was developed. Action taken as a result of the report will be determined by the County Board.

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Rock County Public Health Department serves Rock County residents by improving population health outcomes and removing barriers through community partnerships to provide everyone the opportunity to reach their full health potential. Visit the Rock County Public Health Department [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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