



Federal Rescue Funds Drive Kane County's Mental Health Enhancement Initiatives

Kane County Connects Staff 12/13/2023 10:00AM

The Kane County Board has allocated nearly \$10 million in federal pandemic recovery funding to the Health Department to launch a multi-faceted endeavor to address gaps in the behavioral health system, including coordinating access to treatment and resources to support youth and families.

“For over a decade, we have received consistent feedback from mental health providers, childcare centers, schools, law enforcement and our courts about the growing number of young people and adults grappling with increasingly severe mental health issues,” said Kane County Health Department Executive Director Michael Isaacson.



He notes the upwards trend in behavioral health concerns following the pandemic that extends through Kane County's senior population, across geographic boundaries and socio-economic groups.

“While specific populations have unique needs, every segment of our community can benefit from additional behavioral health supports.,” said Isaacson.

The National Institutes of Health highlights a 2021 study which showed almost half of Americans reported recent symptoms of an anxiety or depressive disorder, with 10% reporting that their mental health needs were not being met. In Kane County, suicide attempts have increased by 97% since before the pandemic, and Kane County Coroner data shows a 16% increase in fatal overdoses from 2019 to 2021.

This proposal was informed by a comprehensive community health assessment process and ongoing conversations and surveys with residents (adults & youth) and mental health/substance use treatment providers. The results of this process clearly identified a desire to see Kane County play a more central role in behavioral health services. There are three priority areas of focus:

1. County Behavioral Health Workforce Development Initiative

The top issue identified by behavioral health providers relates to the inability to recruit and retain highly qualified staff. This is an issue across most sectors in the community,

but it is having a devastating impact on local organizations' ability to meet the needs of our residents. The Kane County Health Department is uniquely positioned to create a system that will both engage providers and create a sustainable model that will mark this community as a leader in assuring quality mental health and substance use treatment. This effort will be built upon coordinating with the education system to engage young people in careers to support their community, supporting internships that lead to quality candidates staying in Kane County, funding local organizations to provide financial incentives to make community mental health more competitive for attracting and keeping talent and implementing a countywide training model that will support the ongoing professional development of providers to assure Kane County residents get the best care that is culturally appropriate and trauma-informed.

2. **County Mechanism to Support Selected Unfunded Mental Health Needs**

Many families in Kane County struggle to access the resources they need to achieve sustainable improved mental health. This initiative will create a process where organizations can apply for resources from a Kane County Mental Health Fund to support specific client needs that are currently unfunded. Common examples include additional treatment & medications. Eligible organizations will include those that serve residents with mental health and/or substance use issues including: courts, law enforcement, mental health providers, schools, substance use treatment facilities and others identified in coordination between the Health Department and the Kane County Board.

3. **Unified Communication Framework**

Stigma and lack of awareness about the mental health needs continue to keep residents from getting assistance in a timely manner. A coordinated communication campaign across multiple platforms will assist in the early identification of mental health or substance use issues and support the implementation of the broader effort described above. This process will both improve resident access and also serve as an investment to position this community for future funding from state, federal and private funders.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic Kane County received a total of \$103,413,041 from the U.S. Treasury Department in State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds through the American Rescue Plan Act.

To learn more about the American Rescue Plan and the funding Kane County has distributed from the plan [CLICK HERE](#).

Subscribe to Kane County Connects [here](#)