

## **State Opioid Abatement Grants – Can Your Program Benefit?**

by Jennifer Rainwater, Executive Director of the Tennessee Medical Foundation

The answer is very likely, “yes!” Currently 35 states have been awarded settlement funding from opioid related lawsuits and are beginning to develop ways to distribute those funds to organizations which aid in opioid abatement.

Tennessee’s spending authority is controlled by our Opioid Abatement Council (OAC) which was “created by the Tennessee General Assembly in Public Charter 491 to manage the disbursement of proceeds from lawsuits relating to opioids. The Opioid Abatement Council upholds the responsibility to ensure the disbursements of these funds go toward funding programs, strategies, expenditures, and other actions designed to prevent and address the misuse and abuse of opioid products and treat or mitigate opioid use or related disorders or other effects of the opioid epidemic.”

Since every state will have a different procedure, I won’t bore you with the nuts and bolts of how we applied but I will share our process in determining how much funding we would ask for and what services and projects we thought would qualify us for funding.

As a PHP, we already qualify as an opioid abatement entity simply by providing the services we have provided for many years. So, we determined at the onset that we would include a percentage of salaries and benefits in our grant budget. But we wanted to include some additional targeted projects that could impact opioid treatment and education in Tennessee. As you determine what your PHP would like to do, here’s a quick overview of what we did.

Three brains are better than one so Dr. Michael Baron, Ms. Brenda Williams-Denbo and I got together for a good old brainstorming session. We all agreed that education and training would be the focus of our three, targeted projects:

1. Produce CME videos about proper prescribing for healthcare providers and new promotional videos educating people about the work of the TMF.
2. Provide a grant to our TMF Loan Fund, which would be used for grants to help with the cost of evaluations and treatment of opioid use disorder.
3. Provide funding for an Exploratory Outcome Study assessing the efficacy of our program on long-term recovery.

We asked for 100% funding of these three projects and for 10-20% funding of salaries, benefits, travel expenses, supplies, office space, printing and insurance. We also asked for 20% funding of an annual retreat for our participants which will include CME credits for attendees.

In total, we proposed a three-year grant of \$1,000,000.00 (\$333,333.00 each year). Tennessee’s OAC invoicing procedure requires that we invoice for actual expenditures. So, we will be reimbursed as we spend money on these projects rather than receiving funding in a lump sum. Tennessee’s OAC will also require semi-annual reporting which will allow the council to gather outcome data and explore the effects these projects are having on opioid abatement in our state.

As you consider applying, I would recommend that you be conservative when considering how much funding to request. It is important to determine how you will receive funding (reimbursement,

lump sum, etc.) to be sure that you don't overtax your cash accounts while waiting for funds. Consider the impact your projects may have on existing staff. Will the projects overburden their workloads? Will you need to hire additional staff to complete the projects? (For our outcome study, we contracted with a third-party expert.) I would also advise that you choose projects that will have measurable outcomes as your state will likely require some degree of ongoing reporting.

The National Academy for State Health Policy State Tracker [nashp.org/state-tracker/state-opioid-settlement-spending-decisions](https://nashp.org/state-tracker/state-opioid-settlement-spending-decisions) is a great resource for more information about your state. If you would like more detailed information about our grant, please feel free to email me at [jenniferr@e-tmf.org](mailto:jenniferr@e-tmf.org) or give me a call at 615-467-6411.