

## **RESOLUTION NO. 20220616-053**

**WHEREAS**, the use of opioids, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, Fentanyl, carfentanil, tramadol, methadone, and heroin can be fatal or cause severe side effects; and

**WHEREAS**, from April 2020 to April 2021 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 100,000 Americans have died from drug overdoses, resulting in a 28 percent increase from the year before; and

**WHEREAS**, Travis County has experienced an upward trend of drug overdose deaths, particularly those resulting from opioids and in March of this year overdoses in Austin doubled from 60, the base average, to 120; and

**WHEREAS**, Travis County ranked fourth among Texas counties for accidental opioid fatalities in 2019 and a report from the Texas Harm Reduction Alliance revealed 262 people died of a drug overdose in Travis County the following year, a 36 percent increase; and

**WHEREAS**, this year the Travis County Medical Examiner released the “Travis County Medical Examiner Annual Report 2021,” which shows that drug toxicity is now the number one cause of accidental deaths in Travis County, ahead of both falls and motor vehicle fatalities; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2021 Report shows that overdose deaths in which Fentanyl was detected rose by 237 percent —from 35 in 2020 to 118 in 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, drugs, including but not limited to, heroin, cocaine, opioids, and Xanax are being laced with Fentanyl, and while pharmaceutical Fentanyl is 50-100 times more potent than morphine, illicitly manufactured Fentanyl can contain even higher concentrations, increasing the danger of overdose, with two out of every five pills laced with Fentanyl containing a potentially lethal dose; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2019, the increase of counterfeit pills containing Fentanyl seized by the DEA has increased by 430 percent; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, Texas paid \$20 billion for non-fatal overdose care in emergency rooms and intensive care units; and

**WHEREAS**, previous studies indicate that it is possible to effectively reduce the impact of opioid use disorder through various approaches, including improved syndromic and disease surveillance, community-based outreach and linguistically accessible public education, expanded access to medically assisted treatment, prescription drug take-back and disposal, use of Fentanyl testing strips, and the increased availability and training on the use of Naloxone; and

**WHEREAS**, harm reduction is a proactive and evidence-based approach to reduce overdoses and overdose deaths, and the harms associated with drug use at both the individual and community levels; and

**WHEREAS**, lack of access to safe stable housing for people experiencing homelessness risks the health and safety of residents and makes it harder to access life-saving services; and

**WHEREAS**, Naloxone, a medication that reverses the effects of a drug overdose, is not widely accessible for use by community members and social service agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, drug recovery programs often have long waitlists in our community; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, City Council adopted Resolution No. 20180534-038 that recognized the growing opioid epidemic as an emerging public health and safety crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, the Community Health Paramedic Team within Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (ATCEMS), created an Opioid Use Disorder Support program which responds directly to 911 calls for apparent opioid overdoses, and/or follows up with overdose patients and their support networks to offer support services and treatment; and

**WHEREAS**, the ATCEMS Community Health Paramedic (CHP) team identified a gap in the availability of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for patients with opioid use disorder (OUD); and

**WHEREAS**, patients often experienced a seven-to-ten day delay between choosing to seek treatment and being able to begin treatment in a MAT program; and

**WHEREAS**, with the delay, comes the guarantee of withdrawal symptoms, which can be a deterrent for those trying to get help and an increased risk of overdose and death; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, ATCEMS and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer expanded the Opioid Emergency Response program to create a Buprenorphine Bridge Program for short-term treatment that brings immediate relief to patients who are seeking treatment for their OUD; and

**WHEREAS**, 92 percent of the patients treated through this program have been successfully placed in treatment programs, and 86 percent were still active and successful in their recovery seven days later; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, APD affirmed that it intends to utilize a portion of its funding to supply Naloxone to all sworn officers and to provide training on its use to treat opioid overdoses; and



**WHEREAS**, additionally, APD continues to work with other partners including EMCOT, Austin Public Health, and the Office of Police Oversight toward fulfilling the requirements of Resolution No. 20200611-096 which directs the City Manager to include funding for the expansion of programs to reduce or eliminate arrests for low-level, nonviolent offenses by substituting alternatives to arrest and incarceration, including harm reduction strategies, when the underlying issues can be better addressed with services and health care; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2021, City Council adopted Resolution No. 20210930-108 directing the City Manager to engage with Travis County on the creation of a joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission and to return to Council with a formal recommendation regarding implementation of the commission; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2021, City Council adopted Resolution No. 20211209-047 supporting the City's participation in both the Johnson & Johnson and Distributor Settlements to allow the City to receive its allocation of settlement funds for use in opioid mitigation measures and to participate in other opioid litigation settlements; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is set to receive the first settlement payment allocations next month totaling approximately \$1.5 million amongst four settlements; and

**WHEREAS**, the settlement with Johnson and Johnson, Teva, and the Distributors will have recurring payments over a nine, fifteen, and eighteen years timespan, respectively; and

**WHEREAS**, Travis County declared the opioid epidemic a public health crisis in May 2022 and passed a resolution to dedicate \$350,000 to initiate overdose prevention measures; and

**WHEREAS**, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan established a priority of creating a Healthy Austin Program that would increase healthy behaviors and improve coordination between the Austin Public Health Department, other departments within the City and counties, non-profit organizations, and the community; and

**WHEREAS**, City Council adopted a strategic direction setting a key outcome experienced by the Austin community of enjoying a sustainable environment and a healthy life, both physically and mentally; **NOW**, **THEREFORE**,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

City Council supports the City Manager in current efforts to address the escalating public health crisis caused by drug overdoses and encourages greater interdepartmental coordination and regional coordination with public safety, healthcare, and service providers to equitably implement harm reduction strategies and promote community health and wellness.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

City Council declares a Public Health Crisis in Austin related to drug overdoses.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to invest in harm reduction strategies utilizing the Opioid settlement payments to address the overdose crisis, including the following immediate harm reduction strategies:

- Ensure an adequate supply of Naloxone kits are available on all first responder vehicles.

- Increased access to Naloxone and training through City channels other than EMS or Austin Police Department, including but not limited to, Austin Public Health, Austin Public Libraries, and Austin Parks and Recreation Department.
- Increase access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), Naloxone, and support services and operations for community partners focused on harm reduction strategies.
- Expansion of interlocal agreements, including, but not limited to, the Sobering Center, Central Health, and Integral Care.
- Enhance previously established partnerships between ATCEMS CHP and local resources, including Austin Public Health, Downtown Austin Community Court, and others, to facilitate rapid assessment, screening and referral to harm reduction services, medication-assisted therapy, and behavioral health providers.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager shall provide a directive to the Public Health Commission with the objective to develop a comprehensive local plan of action that develops and prioritizes strategies related to prevention, treatment, and support services for substance use disorders. The Public Health Commission should provide quarterly reports to the Council's Public Health Committee and to the Travis County Commissioners Court and include collaboration with harm reduction organizations to identify strategies and action around the following topics:

- Increasing staff capacity at community and non-profit organizations, to provide, but not limited to, street intervention counselors, mobile drug treatment services, community health workers and peer support services.



- Identify and increase capacity for Housing First housing and harm reduction strategies in housing.
- Creation of Criminal Justice Pre-arrest Diversion Programs that exist outside of the criminal legal system that can address mental health and drug use using a public health response.
- Assess mental and behavioral health access to treatment gaps.
- Assess state and federal grant opportunities for additional funding.
- Evaluate harm reduction strategies and research national best practices.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to create a data dashboard to provide continuous sharing of relevant data with other City departments and community partners and to improve data collection, integration, and dissemination of information, and tracking inpatient and outpatient treatment availability to ensure clients are linked to necessary services. This should incorporate system-wide public health data, including, but not limited to, the database currently used to track overdoses by Austin-Travis County EMS, Travis County Medical Examiner's Office, hospital partners, APD, the Travis County Sheriff's Office and other relevant software data and provide additional internal or contracted staffing support to implement within one-year. Data metrics should include, but not limited to, the following:

- behavioral health treatment rate for patients with a primary diagnosis of opioid use disorder;
- doses of Naloxone distributed;
- doses of Naloxone administered by first responders;

- fatal overdoses; and
- nonfatal overdoses.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to create a public education campaign within the next year to warn about the dangers of Fentanyl, mental health stigma, and youth education, including:

- The development and implementation of a public awareness campaign including educational materials that focus on the prevention of drug use, risks of substance use, and community resources available in treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and safe disposal of unused prescription drugs and syringes.
- The development and implementation of an educational campaign for health care providers about up-to-date and safe prescribing practices for the treatment of pain and pain management and finding other non-opioid pain management options.
- The development and implementation of an initiative to encourage physicians to refer patients to MAT treatment when an opiate use disorder is suspected or identified.
- Support expansion of street-level interventions, educational outreach, and linking clients to the appropriate prevention, treatment, harm reduction, or recovery programs.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to collaborate with the current monthly workshops hosted by Travis County to provide input for the comprehensive local



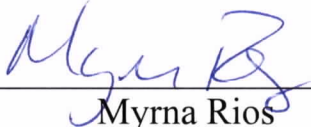
plan of action and public education campaign. Additionally, the City Manager is directed to host a town hall within the next six months to hear from people's lived experiences and people most directly impacted by the overdose crisis.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to amend the City's Legislative Program for the 88th Texas Legislative Session to support the legalization and access to Fentanyl test strips, and expansion of Good Samaritan laws and be in opposition to bills that increase arrest and severity of criminal punishment related to an individual experiencing an overdose and impact the likelihood of bystanders calling 911 related to overdoses.

**ADOPTED:** June 16, 2022

**ATTEST:**

  
Myrna Rios  
City Clerk