

NEWS RELEASE

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Gateway to the Rockies Opioid Council Conference Starts Discussions on How Best to Fight the Opioid Epidemic in Colorado

Clear Creek, Gilpin and Jefferson Counties – The Gateway to the Rockies Opioid Council (GROC) hosted a conference on June 23, 2022, to start the discussions with stakeholders and the community about what the historic settlement dollars from major drug manufacturers and distributors mean for our region, identify what’s working and the gaps in fighting the opioid epidemic, help inform how to allocate the region’s funding, and hear directly from community members with opioid use disorders. Attendees included representatives like county commissioners, a school superintendent, human services, public health and law enforcement from each county, as well as a representative from the court system. As stakeholders, partners from treatment centers, behavioral health, a parent group and others were also in attendance.

The conference kicked off with a presentation from Eric Butler, Deputy County Attorney for Jefferson County, detailing the outcomes from the landmark settlement and outlining the framework for the use of settlement funds. Then a panel, facilitated by Colorado Public Radio’s Vic Vela who is in recovery, shared their experiences with their own addictions or that of family members. The panel included Clear Creek County Commissioner George Marlin, who shared his experience with drug addiction in his family, and Grant Kidwell and Jefferson County Public Health’s Michael Miller, who both shared their own addiction story. The panel brought first-hand accounts to attendees to underscore why the work to fund prevention, treatment and recovery is critical to community health and well-being.

Jamie Feld, the Deputy Director of Opioid Response in the Colorado Attorney General’s Office provided an overview of the Statewide Opioid Abatement Council, including the two-year plan. Commissioner Andy Kerr serves as the Front Range representative to the Statewide Opioid Abatement Council Opioid. Also included were two breakout sessions for attendees to discuss the strengths and challenges within each county and brainstorm how they want to be involved in the design of the two-year plan as well as identifying other voices that should be at the table.

Opioid addiction and overdoses have devastated families and communities across Colorado and the crisis poses a serious threat to the state’s public health, safety and economy. As a result of several historic settlements with major drug manufacturers and distributors, the Colorado Department of Law announced a groundbreaking framework for distributing nearly \$400 million in opioid settlement dollars throughout the state for addiction treatment, recovery and prevention programs. Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper, who chairs GROC, also participated in Attorney General Phil Weiser’s 18-month working group of local government leaders, who worked with the Attorney General to create the framework. These dollars will be distributed to 19 regions for local governments, the state and infrastructure needs. Clear Creek, Gilpin and Jefferson counties make up Region 10, or the Gateway to the Rockies Opioid Council.

The GROC is working toward ensuring that the settlement funding awarded to the state is invested in the region in a way that will have the most impact. The next step for the GROC is to submit its two-year plan to the State of Colorado. [Find more information on the council on the GROC website.](#)

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