



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Gloucester

Program Title: Prevention & Treatment Specialist at Gloucester High School

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Quinton Sheppard

Title: Director

Department: Community Engagement & Public Information

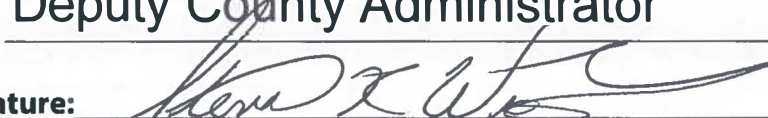
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Steven Wright

Title: Deputy County Administrator

Signature: 

Prevention and Treatment Specialist at Gloucester High School

Executive Summary

Gloucester County has taken an innovative approach to utilizing a portion of its Opioid Settlement Funding to house a full-time Prevention and Treatment Specialist position inside its one high school, Gloucester High. The County partnered with Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Behavioral Health to provide the cooperative; school-based approach aimed at combating potential addiction before it starts. The program also addresses nascent substance use before it evolves into addiction.

Behavioral Health agreed to subsidize 50% of the personnel costs for the full-time position, with the remainder of the cost paid through opioid settlement funds distributed directly to Gloucester County.

The impact of the position was immediate since its inception in January 2024. It continues to be considerable, providing programming to nearly 600 youth in Gloucester County Public Schools. In addition, 36 youth were enrolled in individual therapeutic counseling services, with ten of those youth referring themselves to the program. Many of the youth have reported diminished substance use and higher levels of general functioning.

Prevention and Treatment Specialist at Gloucester High School

The Problem Addressed

As rural localities across the state have grappled with how to utilize available settlement funding to help combat the Opioid crisis in their individual communities, Gloucester County has pooled its available resources collaboratively with the Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Behavioral Health Board to incorporate a full-time Prevention and Treatment Specialist position in Gloucester High School. This cooperative, school-based approach is aimed at combating potential addiction before it starts, as well as addressing nascent substance use before it evolves into addiction, through the provision of therapeutic counseling. The need for this position had been documented by GCPS staff for well over a decade. Alas, prior to the distribution of the Opioid Settlement funds, sufficient funds were not available to support the position, even on a part-time basis.

Local Cooperation Toward a Solution

Initial conversations between Gloucester County Public Schools, Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Behavioral Health, and Gloucester County focused heavily on leveraging opioid settlement funds to incorporate part-time/intermittent prevention services into Gloucester High School. Ultimately, Behavioral Health secured a multi-year SUD services grant focused on youth prevention and treatment from the Department of Juvenile Justice. Utilizing these funds, the Behavioral Health Board agreed to subsidize 50% of the personnel costs for a full-time position, with the remainder of the cost paid through opioid settlement funds distributed directly to Gloucester County. The current incumbent in the position was hired in December of 2023 and began serving the youth of Gloucester High School in January of 2024.

The impact of the position was immediate and has continued to be considerable. Between January of 2024 and March of 2025, prevention programming was provided to nearly 600 youth in Gloucester County Public Schools. In addition, 36 youth were enrolled in individual therapeutic counseling services. Of those 36, ten were self-referred (both for their own substance issues, as well as issues relating to familial substance use). Many of the youth have reported diminished substance use and higher levels of general functioning.

Referrals have primarily been made regarding vaping and marijuana incidents. From research and consulting with local treatment providers, we understood that vaping and marijuana use at a young age directly contributed to the likelihood of moving on to more dangerous substances. We were pleased that with the specialist being able to work with these students at a young age, they would have a better chance of staying away from opioids.

The Prevention & Treatment Specialist not only works with students one on one, to provide therapeutic services, but is also heavily involved in prevention programs throughout the school. Several examples include: Attending 9th grade Health classrooms, reaching over 200 students to provide education awareness and promote SUD services and visibility; going into seven 10th grade classrooms, reaching 161 students to continue to provide education on substance use and promote SUD services within the school; and going into other classrooms to reinforce skill building and resilience to promote awareness and self-referral to students who may be struggling with addiction or who desire services as a preventive measure due to family history, community exposure, and peer pressure.

The Prevention & Treatment Specialist works under the supervision and guidance of a licensed clinical supervisor. All the programming provided to students follows evidence-based or informed substance use prevention curriculum. More specifically, the specialist develops

assessment-based treatment plans for everyone she is assigned and delivers services through individual, family and group psycho-educational, motivational, and support sessions to provide support for the individual's recovery process. With a major component being to help students navigate situations where their family members at home may be struggling with substance abuse, the specialist utilizes a whole-family approach to treatment.

How this Model Could Help Other Localities

Developing a plan for using Gloucester County's allocated Opioid Abatement Funding took months of planning, which included stakeholder meetings, community engagement forums, and research. The Prevention & Treatment Specialist is just one of several components that was integrated into Gloucester's overall plan.

Throughout our research, we often consulted with neighboring localities, many of which had no direction, thought, or foresight into how they could best utilize their funding. Gloucester's overall plan has become a type of "guiding light" for the region, with the Prevention & Treatment Specialist component being the "flagship" of the plan.

Many localities just do not have the manpower or expertise on staff to delve into formulating such a plan. Therefore, we would strongly encourage localities that are still grappling with how to make a large impact on combating the Opioid epidemic to consider a plan similar to ours, to include partnering with their local community services board or other community agencies to offer prevention and treatment support to school-aged youth. To assist with this in the Middle Peninsula region, Gloucester Deputy County Administrator Steve Wright has formed a collaborative Opioid Consortium group comprised of leadership from each of the

six counties. The purpose of this group is to discuss best practices, current initiatives, and potential opportunities for fund sharing and collaborative/intergovernmental projects.