



City of New Bedford  
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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **New Bedford Health Department Awarded Funding to Establish Regional Coalition to Combat Opioid Abuse**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts** – The New Bedford Health Department, in collaboration with the towns of Dartmouth, Marion, Rochester, and Wareham, was awarded a \$550,000 grant by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to establish the *Opioid Prevention Coalition – South Coast*, a regional collaboration aimed at making policy, systems, and environmental changes that will reduce the use of opioids and decrease the number of deaths and hospitalizations due to opioid misuse.

The project will leverage existing capacity and resources in opioid prevention, including the City's nasal Narcan pilot program and school-based health curricula, and expand these efforts to build regional capacity in the participating communities. Seven Hills Behavioral Health, which has played a key role in several city-wide efforts in opioid prevention, will work with the Health Department as a consultant on this program.

"This funding is much-needed and very timely," says Director of the New Bedford Health Department, Brenda Weis. "The increased use of opioids across the state and region has been well documented in recent years. Just last year, outgoing Governor Deval Patrick declared it a public health emergency, and newly elected Attorney General Maura Healey has identified this issue as a top priority."

"Like many other people, I've had friends and I've had one family member who've had these issues and frankly died from overdoses. It is difficult and painful and you'd be hard pressed to find anybody who hasn't been touched by this in some way," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

"Ignoring the problem is not a viable option for any community and that's why this coalition is so important. We are coming together to grab hold of the issue, and take the necessary steps to save people's lives and get them into treatment," he continued.

The coalition will begin by assessing the current programs and policies in each town to understand resources and gaps, and then move onto building a framework that creates effective and sustainable policies, systems, and environmental changes.

The New Bedford Health Department is committed to promoting and protecting the health of New Bedford residents by upholding important regulations and implementing innovative health and wellness programming.

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