



Association of Minnesota Counties

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150 County Officials, Key Staff From Across Minnesota Attend County Opioid Summit in Alexandria

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), in partnership with Rx Abuse Leadership Initiative (RALI) Minnesota, held the County Opioid Summit on September 12 in Alexandria. Nearly 150 county officials and key staff from across Minnesota attended the summit, which was designed to provide data to help county leaders understand the scope of opioid and other drug abuse in Minnesota and across the country. Attendees included county commissioners, sheriffs, attorneys, health and human services directors, public health directors, law enforcement and corrections professionals, and other staff on the frontlines of the opioid epidemic in Minnesota's 87 counties.

Hadi Sedigh (Director of the National Association of Counties' (NACo) Futures Lab), Greg Anderson (St. Louis County Public Health & Human Services' Substance Use Disorder Supervisor), and Julie Bauch (Hennepin County Opioid Coordinator), began the summit with a staggering review of the impact opioids and addiction in general have on county systems in Minnesota and nationwide.

Other sessions included stories from the field, where county leaders in human services, law enforcement, corrections, public health and work force development from around the state focused on substance use and how it interacts with their role in the county system. Each person discussed how they respond to addiction and opioid use and how it impacts their work.

The summit also included speakers presenting their substance abuse solutions in short, TED-talk style presentations, that described how their program came to be, how they identified the central problem and its solution, what the program hopes to accomplish, steps taken to develop and implement the program, and recommendations for others on how to replicate their program.

During regional breakout sessions, county officials and staff had the opportunity to discuss which impacts of substance use disorder and opiate abuse are most acute in their region, what partnerships and programs are already in place addressing these challenges, what else could be done, and finally, what AMC can do to support their work, such as providing electronic resources/links to members and seeking legislative solutions to assist counties.

"When larger counties with more resources are able to share what's working for them with smaller counties, we can then go home and implement some of these same best practices in order to make a difference in our own communities," said AMC President Susan Morris, an Isanti County commissioner.

The County Opioid Summit concluded with a presentation on combatting addiction through policy at the federal and state levels.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in making this important event a success and an important step forward in dealing with an addiction crisis that affects all communities in Minnesota.

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