

Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force awarded \$1.8 million federal grant to continue to fight opioids

The Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force has been awarded a federal grant of more than \$1.8 million to continue its work to fight opioids in New Bedford, Dartmouth and Fairhaven.

The Task Force, co-chaired by Damon Chaplin, the City's director of public health, and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro, has been recognized in the past for innovative and successful measures to reach those affected by opioid addiction in Greater New Bedford.

Last year, the New Bedford Police Department, with the support of the Task Force, became one of the first cities in Massachusetts to pioneer Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), a pre-booking diversion program aimed at redirecting those arrested for low-level drug crimes. In 2018, New Bedford was also one of six cities nationwide invited to present at the National League of Cities Mayors' Institute on Opioids to share best practices in combating the opioid epidemic due to the Task Force's successful education, outreach and prevention initiatives. In the city, the total number of opioid overdoses (685) peaked in 2016, and while the number has declined modestly since, the problem continues to present a very serious public health challenge. As of September 2019, there has been a total of 457 overdoses in the city.

The \$1,848,771 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will support the Greater New Bedford TRAIN (Teach, Reach, and Initiate Naloxone) Project, which

will focus on residents of New Bedford, Dartmouth, and Fairhaven, a 96-square-mile area. The New Bedford Health Department and New Bedford Police Department will also partner with Fishing Partnership Support Services for the program.

TRAIN will seek to reach more than 7,000 individuals through education and navigation to treatment and recovery services. The TRAIN Project will train first responders and key community personnel in naloxone administration, as well as drug safety (including prescription drugs) and cultural competency. It will add recovery coach staff to the Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force's post-overdose follow-up program to provide individuals and families with resources and to help facilitate pathways to treatment and recovery services.

"The battle against the opioid epidemic requires an all-out community-based effort, with the support of government resources at every level. With the emergence of fentanyl as a contributing factor in overdoses in our region, the more Naloxone that is available to our first responders and community stakeholders, the more lives will be saved," said U.S. Rep. William Keating. "This funding will bring proven, effective prevention models, including recovery coaching, to more people in need in our district. I applaud the HHS for funding this initiative, and congratulate the Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force for bringing these much-needed resources to the South Coast."

"The Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force has successfully worked to combat the opioid epidemic that has touched far too many families in our area, as it has across the country. I commend the Task Force for its successful application for this important funding, and I'm grateful to Congressman Keating for his support along the way," said New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell.

"This funding opportunity will help city agencies and partners

get one step closer to saving lives and strengthening our communities,” said Damon Chaplin, the City of New Bedford’s director of public health and co-chair of the Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force.

“The TRAIN Project will have a significant impact on the Task Force’s efforts to reach the individuals and families that the opioid epidemic has affected across the region. We are pleased to add more tools to our toolbox when it comes to addressing opioids in our communities,” said New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro, co-chair of the Greater New Bedford Opioid Task Force.