

Community Advocacy Panel (Panel) Proposal

Executive Summary

The **Community Advocacy Panel (Panel) Proposal** outlines a critical initiative by the Opioid Abatement Council (OAC) to incorporate the lived experiences of individuals and families affected by the opioid crisis into the decision-making process for utilizing Tennessee's opioid settlement funds. This document presents the purpose, structure, and operational framework for establishing and managing the Community Advocacy Panel (Panel).

Purpose and Role of the Community Advocacy Panel (Panel)

The Panel aims to provide a platform for those with lived experiences to:

- Inform the OAC about the personal and community impacts of opioid use disorder (OUD).
- Identify gaps in services and propose tailored solutions.
- Advocate for strategies to reduce stigma and enhance public awareness.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the use of opioid settlement funds.

Panel Composition and Selection

The Panel will consist of 16 members, including two representatives from each of Tennessee's seven regions and two members from affiliate organizations serving as Chair and Co-Chair. Panelists will be selected through a structured referral and vetting process, ensuring diverse representation of affected populations. There are no formal educational or professional prerequisites, fostering inclusivity of perspectives.

Operational Framework

Panel members will meet quarterly, primarily in virtual formats, to ensure broad participation. The meetings will focus on identifying regional needs, consolidating community feedback, and providing actionable recommendations to the OAC. Although the Panel's proposals are for advocacy, their input is expected to play a significant role in shaping state strategies for combating the opioid epidemic.

Implementation Timeline

Key milestones include:

- **October 2024:** Development of operational documents.
- **December 2024:** Council approval of the Panel structure.
- **February 2025:** Selection of Panel members.
- **March 2025:** Orientation for newly appointed members.
- **April-May 2025:** Training Panel Members
- **June-July 2025:** Panel Implementation
- **August 2025:** Full implementation and commencement of Panel operations.

Conclusion

The Panel represents a transformative step in integrating community voices into the opioid abatement strategy. By fostering collaboration between affected individuals, the OAC, and affiliate organizations, this initiative will ensure that Tennessee's response to the opioid crisis is informed, compassionate, and impactful. Approval of this proposal will enable immediate progress toward these goals.

1. What is the purpose of the Community Advocacy Panel?

In accordance with Opioid Abatement Law, **Tennessee Code Annotated, Sections 33, Chapter 11, Part 105(a)**, the Council is required to receive **input** from community stakeholders, local governments, state and local public health officials, public health advocates, law enforcement, judiciary representatives, opioid remediation service providers, and other parties to include those with **living experiences**, who are interested and actively involved in addressing the opioid crisis and its abatement to strive to provide the following:

- Inform understanding of the impact opioid use disorder has on an individual's day to day lives, what matters most to them, and how interactions with health care providers, community members, social workers, first responders, employers, co-workers, criminal justice system and have influenced them
- Provide an opportunity to help remove the stigma and bias from family, friends, health care providers and others in positions of influence
- Allow those individuals to voice their own perspectives and challenges
- Assist in identifying ways to share, distribute, and implement findings and strategies within their community and provide feedback to the Council
- Provide input into priorities and gaps within their community
- Provide strategies on ways to engage other individuals with living experiences
- Bring public awareness of the Council's work to all regions across the state
- Assist in the development of services that more closely meet the needs of those impacted

The Panel members would serve as advocates for the community by collaborating and voicing the concerns, challenges, and perspectives of those directly affected by opioid use disorder (OUD) to the OAC.

The Panel members would prioritize staying informed of current opioid use disorder challenges and solutions, which will help foster new ideas, influence change, and forge connections between the community and the OAC.

In addition, the Panel members would develop a consensus from input received from the community and report ideas on possible solutions, which would help improve transparency, establish accountability, and inform the OAC decisions for the implementation of funding programs, strategies, expenditures, and all other actions designed to prevent and address the effects of the opioid epidemic.

It should be noted that any proposal received by the Panel is non-binding and will **not be effective** unless adopted by the Council.

2. Who will serve on the Community Advocacy Panel?

As mentioned in the purpose statement, in accordance with the Opioid Abatement Law, the Council is required to receive input from community stakeholders, local government representatives, state and local public health officials, public health advocates, law enforcement and judiciary representatives, opioid remediation service providers, and other parties interested and actively involved in addressing the opioid crisis and its abatement.

There would also be opportunities for family members of **diverse priority populations** that includes, but not limited to the following:

- Individuals experiencing acute or chronic pain
- Pregnant or Post Partum
- Co-occurring Mental Health Conditions
- Family/Caregiver (parents, spouses, children, etc.)
- Justice-Involved
- Youth & Young Adults

2a. What would be the requirements to serve as a member on the Community Advocacy Panel?

There would be no specific educational level, professional background, or previous panel or committee experience required to serve on the Panel, but candidates would submit and agree to the following requirements listed below:

- be an individual with living experiences of opioid use disorder, family member or friend of an individual in recovery or who once struggled with opioid use disorder
- provide a minimum of three (3) references
- submit a resume or bio explaining reason for desiring to serve as an advocate
- provide listing of service on any current or previous boards, panels, etc.

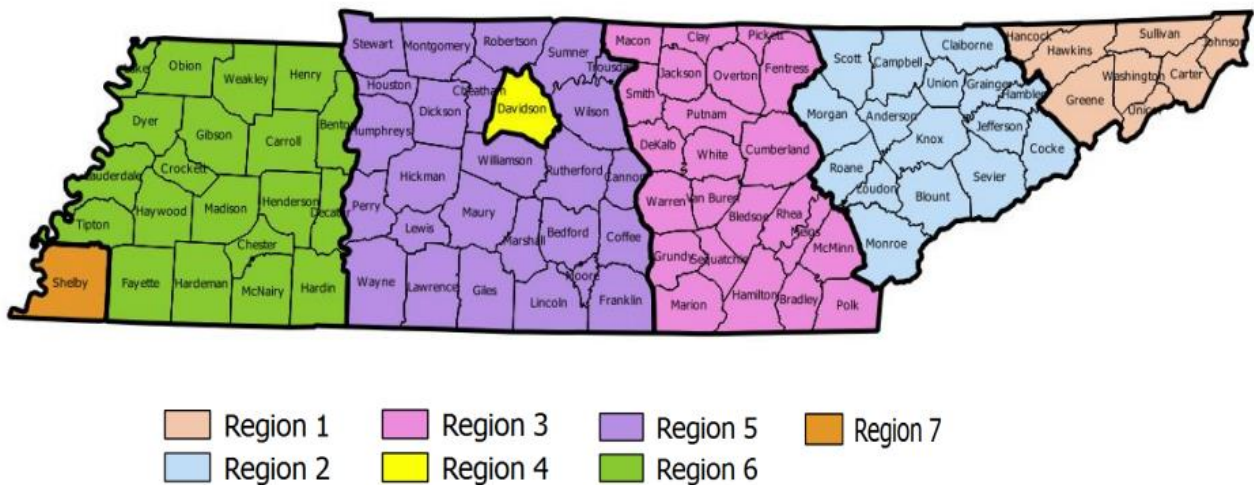
- meet all other requirements set from developed operational guidelines and the Opioid Abatement Law

2b. How many members would serve on the Community Advocacy Panel?

The OAC Office proposes sixteen (16) members comprising the Community Advocacy Panel. There would be two (2) members from each of the state's seven (7) Planning and Policy Regions (see map below) serving as Panel regional members and two (2) members represented from affiliate state organizations serving as Chair and Co-Chair.

The map below shows the seven (7) regions in which the fourteen (14) Community Advocacy Panel regional members would represent and be selected:

TDMHSAS Regional Council Map



3. How would the Chair and Co-Chair be selected?

The Council Office would work with Affiliate State Organizations and other organizations that have experience with those affected by opioid use disorder to request referrals for two (2) non-voting candidates for Chair and Co-Chair.

The Affiliate State Organizations are those organizations that have affiliation with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) as seen in the list provided below:

- Tennessee Voices,
- National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Tennessee,
- Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association (TMHCA),
- Tennessee Association for Alcohol, Drug, and other Addiction Services (TAADAS),
- Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organization (TAMHO),

List of other organizations who may provide referrals to the Council Office include the following:

- Healthcare Providers (Hospitals, Treatment Centers, Physicians and Pharmacists)
- Government Agencies (Health Departments, Criminal Justice, Social Services)
- Community-based Organizations (Prevention, Faith-Based, Nonprofits or Foundations)
- Education (schools and youth programs)
- Legal and Law Enforcement (Drug, Juvenile and Mental Health Courts, Police/Sheriff's and Public Defender / Legal Aid Services)
- Insurance (Private and Public)
- Veteran / Military Support Organizations

4. How would Panel candidates be referred and selected?

The Council Office would receive referrals from:

- members of the Opioid Abatement Council
- affiliate organizations
- other divisions within the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS),
- members of the public

The OAC Office would publicize the instructions for submitting candidate referrals for the Community Advocacy Panel.

Instructions would include:

- Email address for sending candidate referrals
- Opening and closing dates of accepting candidate referrals
- Identifying which diverse priority population the candidate will represent
- Identifying the region candidate will represent

4a. Selection Process

The OAC Office would review and compile a slate of candidates to serve on the Community Advocacy Panel which represents all seven (7) regions. At the next called Opioid Abatement Council meeting, the OAC Program Director will present the slate to the Council for review, discussion, and approval.

After the Council votes to appoint or approve the fourteen (14) Panel regional members, Chair and Co-Chair, the OAC Program Director would send a letter to Panel members confirming their selection.

All Panel members would then be required to sign the documents listed below and agree to the following:

- Must sign a Conflict-of-Interest Statement
- Must sign a Code of Ethics Statement
- Must attend at least three (3) virtual PANEL meetings annually to maintain appointment

5. What would be the terms of service for Panel members?

The proposed term of service for Panel members is **two (2) years**. If a member is appointed to serve the remainder of a term vacated by a previous member, they will serve out that term and be eligible for reappointment to a full term.

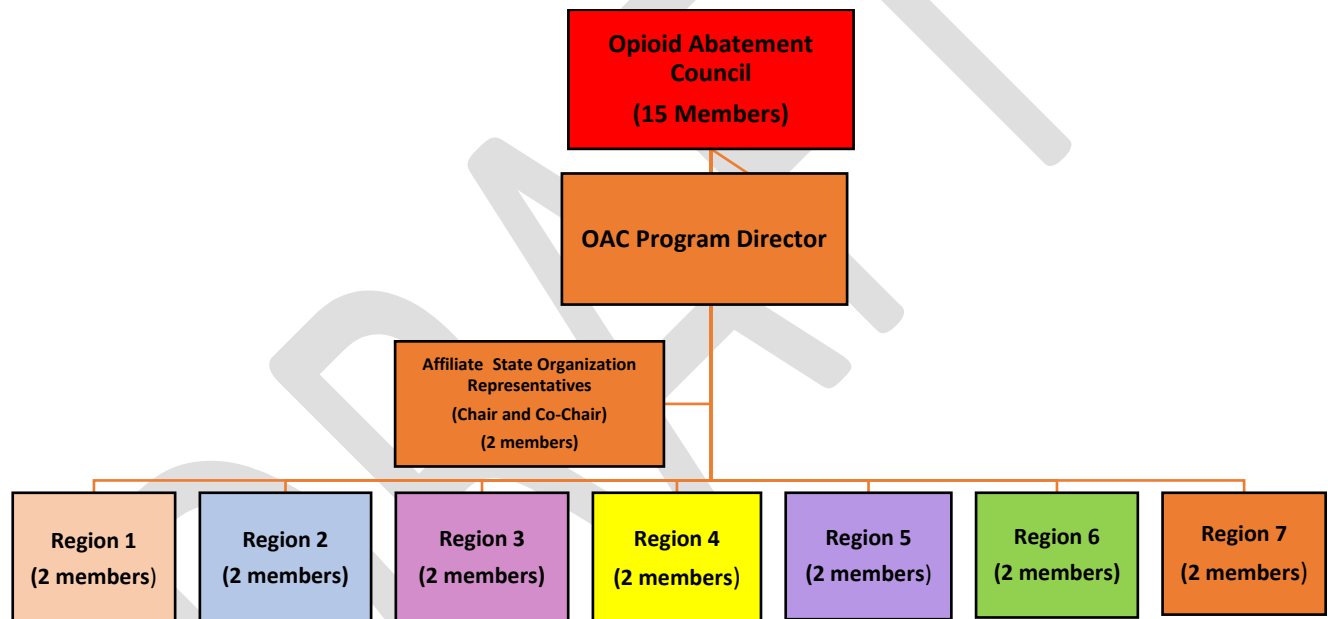
If a Panel member decides to resign from the Panel, the member must do so by providing **30 days advance written notice** to the OAC Program Director, who will then notify the Panel Chair. The resignation would become effective **30 days** from receipt of the notice unless the notice specifies a later effective date.

Once the vacancy is announced the Council would replace the vacancy by following the Panel selection process. There would also be a 'reason for termination' developed for Panel members once the operational guidelines are developed.

6. What would be the proposed organizational structure of the Community Advocacy Panel?

- Opioid Abatement Council (OAC)
- OAC Program Director
- Chair & Co-Chair (Affiliate Organization Representatives)
- Community Advocacy Panel regional members

Below is the proposed organizational chart for the Community Advocacy Panel:



6a. Opioid Abatement Council

The Opioid Abatement Council directs the disbursement of the Opioid Abatement Trust Fund to ensure the disbursements of these funds go toward funding programs, strategies, expenditures, and other actions designed to prevent and address the misuse and abuse of opioid products and treat or mitigate opioid use or related disorders or other effects of the opioid epidemic.

6b. OAC Program Director

The OAC Program Director role would be designated to design, implement, and lead the operations of the Community Advocacy Panel. The OAC Program Director's duties include but are not limited to the following:

- Create a timeline and update timeline, as needed
- Create content for OAC to review and approve
- Create all relevant documents which provides details for the operation of the Panel
- Lead the creation of the Panel including recruiting, selection process orientation and seeking approval of the members
- Schedule and lead all Panel meetings in conjunction with the Panel Chair
- Create semi-annual and/or annual reports to publicize PANEL accomplishments
- Support the Panel's administrative needs
- Serve as the liaison between Council and Panel
- Coordinate with the Policy Analyst to develop operational guidelines for the Panel

6c. Key Responsibilities of Chair and Co-Chair:

- Lead PANEL meetings
- Set the agenda
- Seek to ensure information received is accurate, timely and sufficient to keep other Panel members informed
- Facilitate open and constructive communication
- Liaising and interfacing with the Opioid Abatement Council's Program Director
- In the absence of the Panel Chair, the Panel Co-Chair will be responsible for executing the key responsibilities and all other duties determined by the Council and Council Office.

6d. Community Advocacy Panel Regional Members

The Community Advocacy Panel regional members would be those members selected by the Council to serve as non-voting representatives of their region. The two (2) Community Advocacy Panel regional members from each of the state's seven (7) regions would be tasked with becoming familiar with the needs of their region, engaging with the community, and providing feedback that will assist in providing resolutions to region and statewide needs.

The Community Advocacy Panel will have the following positions:

- Chair
- Co-Chair
- Secretary
- Co-Secretary

These positions would be nominated and selected based on the operational guidelines developed. The Secretary would be tasked with the writing of the Panel meeting minutes and relaying any communication the Panel approves to be presented to the Council.

In the absence of the Secretary, the Panel Co-Secretary would be responsible for executing the key responsibilities and all other duties determined by the Council and Council Office.

7. When and where would the Panel meet?

The Community Advocacy Panel would meet at least once quarterly via a virtual format on the date and time decided by Panel members in conjunction with the OAC Program Director.

Community Advocacy Panel meetings would be scheduled prior to Council meetings in order for any notifications from the Panel to be sent to the OAC Office for addition to the Council agenda. Any community notifications from the Panel needs to be presented to the Executive Director of the OAC at least **30 days prior** to the Council meeting.

Although the Panel meetings are **not** subject to the Open Meetings Act, for transparency purposes the meetings would be open to the public and meeting dates would be published in advance on the designated Panel webpage that would be on the main Opioid Abatement Council website.

7a. Would Community Advocacy Panel members be required to attend Council meetings?

The Panel Chair would ensure at least one (1) Panel member attends each Opioid Abatement Council meeting virtually. Since the Opioid Abatement Council meetings are all open to the public, any of the Community Advocacy Panel members may attend any meeting.

7b. Would Council members be required to attend Panel meetings?

The Council Office recommends that at least one (1) staff member and one (1) Council member be in attendance of any Panel meetings to avoid duplication of efforts and provide consistency across both the Council and Panel.

7c. How would the Community Advocacy Panel be publicized?

The Community Advocacy Panel would have a designated webpage on the Opioid Abatement Council website. The webpage would publicize meeting dates, virtual log-in information, historical quarterly agendas, and meeting minutes.

In addition, the meeting information would be posted on the following social media outlets:

Facebook

LinkedIn

Instagram

X (formerly known as Twitter)

The OAC Program Director would coordinate with the TDMHSAS Communications Director on Community Advocacy Panel posts.

7d. Would Panel members be provided orientation and training?

The Council Office recommends the Panel members offer orientation to new members to ensure awareness of the primary purpose and responsibilities of the Council.

The orientation would provide an opportunity for Panel members to ask questions and request any additional information needed to prepare for active and successful participation to serve on Panel

Each Panel member would attend an annual virtual training session. The training would be focused on the administrative activities of the Panel and current matters of the opioid crisis.

The Opioid Abatement Council Program Director would develop new member orientation and training for Panel members.

The orientation would include, but not limited to the following:

- Overview of Opioid Abatement Council
- Effective Communication
- Meeting Etiquette
- Open Meetings Act
- Planning & Policy Needs Assessment Summary
- Operational Guidelines
- All Other Opioid Concerns

7e. Would there be any fees associated with Panel members?

The Council Office does not foresee any fees associated with Panel members serving as advocates for the community. All meetings, orientations, and trainings will be offered virtually and would not require travel, meals, or hotel fees.

8. What is the proposed Community Advocacy Panel timeline?

The Council Office plans to begin implementing the Community Advocacy Panel immediately, if approved by the Council.

The chart below provides an overview of the proposed Panel timeline:

PROPOSED COMMUNITY ADVOCACY PANEL TIMELINE	
October 1, 2024-(Ongoing)	Development of Operational Documents by OAC Program Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome Packet ➤ PANEL Membership Invitation ➤ Area of Interest/Expertise Grid ➤ Other Operational Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession Planning • Reporting Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Semi-annual ➤ Annual reporting
November 1, 2024-November 30, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Panel Application • Approval of Panel Application by OAC Executive Director • Development of Selection Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Criteria developed Approval of Criteria by Legal Counsel and Executive Director
December 13, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Approves Panel • Implementation Process to Begin
December 16, 2024-January 31, 2025	Recruiting Panel Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of recruiting processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ application process open/closes ➤ contacting referrals ➤ setting up applications ➤ reviewing applications for accuracy ➤ create applicant portfolio for Council review

February 2025	<p>Election of Panel Members by Council (Quarterly Meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of candidates • Election of candidates
March 2025	<p>Panel Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Packet Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vision, mission, etc. • Scheduling of virtual orientation with Panel members • Discussion of Operational Guidelines • Structure of Meetings • Structure of Panel
April 2025-May 2025	<p>Training Panel Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Setting goals and measuring progress • Legal and Regulatory Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meeting with Council's Legal Counsel ➤ Operational Guidelines ➤ Governance Structure
June 2025-July 2025	<p>Community Advocacy Panel Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Mission Statement • Scheduling and Attendance of Meetings • Development of Governance Structure • Collaboration to discuss concerns and determine consensus of Panel to report to the Council
August 2025-Ongoing	<p>Panel Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Guidelines (ongoing updates) • Sending out meeting reminders • Annual Training • Reporting first notification to Council • All other logistics to ensure successful operations