



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kerkman announces formation of Opioid Settlement Advisory Panel**

Kenosha County Executive Samantha Kerkman today announced the formation of a committee charged with developing recommendations for the use of opioid settlement funds that the county is receiving from pharmaceutical companies.

The Opioid Settlement Advisory Panel includes representation from law enforcement agencies, behavioral health service providers and county government.

Kerkman said she believes it is important to have this blend of representation on the committee, to help the county as it seeks to develop the most efficient and effective uses for current and future settlement dollars.

“This is a unique opportunity for the county to use outside, non-taxpayer resources to address an acute health issue in our community,” Kerkman said. “We have been talking about this for a few years now, and we now have the resources to put some additional tools in our toolbox to help us address the opioid epidemic in meaningful ways.”

Under an executive order that Kerkman issued today, Kenosha County Behavioral Health Manager Kari Foss will chair the committee. The other members are:

- Kenosha County Division of Aging, Disability and Behavioral Health Services Director Rebecca Dutter
- Kenosha Community Health Center Chief Executive Officer Mary Ouimet
- Keri Pint, Certified Peer Support Specialist with Oakwood Clinical Associates
- Guida Brown, member of the Kenosha County Substance Abuse Coalition and the recently retired Executive Director of the HOPE Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
- Kenosha County Sheriff (or designee)
- Kenosha Police Chief (or designee)
- Pleasant Prairie Police Chief (or designee)
- Twin Lakes Police Chief (or designee)

Kenosha County is receiving settlement funds as a result of its participation in national, class-action litigation against several manufacturers of prescription opioids. In these cases, the plaintiffs argued that the companies marketed the medications in misleading ways, downplaying risks and exaggerating benefits.

To date, Kenosha County has received \$1.16 million as part of a multiyear payout from Johnson & Johnson, and \$590,000 from other manufacturers.

“These settlement funds and this new committee provide the perfect opportunity to collaborate as a community on ways to address this health crisis,” Foss said. “Collaboration is key, and I think this is a perfect example of that — we’re all coming to the same table to make these decisions, but we all have different experiences that make for a deeply informed panel.”

Foss said the panel is working toward holding its first meeting early in January.

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