

# **Carteret County Impact Report Narratives for Fiscal Year 2023-2024**

Each local government that receives opioid settlement funds is asked to share an Annual Settlement Update describing how they have made use of settlement funds during each fiscal year. For each strategy funded, local governments also share additional narratives to describe their progress and successes (success information is optional for some local governments). Across all funded strategies, each local government selects one progress narrative and one success narrative to spotlight each fiscal year.

Carteret County provided the following narrative information for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (July 2023 through June 2024):

## **Annual Settlement Update**

Within the current fiscal year, Carteret County successfully launched the Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT), enhancing our capacity to address substance use and overdose crises. This initiative provides timely, community-based interventions to individuals at high risk of overdose, aiming to reduce fatalities and support long-term recovery. PORT has already shown positive outcomes by connecting at-risk individuals with critical treatment and support services.

Additionally, we formed a strategic partnership with Integrated Care of Greater Hickory to bring specialized treatment services into the county. This collaboration has expanded access to essential care for individuals struggling with substance use and mental health challenges. By offering in-county treatment options, we have reduced barriers to access, ensuring that more residents can receive timely support without needing to travel outside the community.

These initiatives demonstrate Carteret County's commitment to building capacity through innovative programming and strategic partnerships. Our efforts are focused on enhancing both staff capabilities and community-based services, allowing us to respond more effectively to emerging challenges while supporting individuals on their path to recovery.

## **Strategy Spotlights**

### **❖ Exhibit A, Strategy 8: Post-Overdose Response Team**

#### **Progress Narrative**

The Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT) achieved full implementation during FY24, thanks to dedicated funding that allowed for the formation of the Carteret County PORT Team. This team has been instrumental in addressing the opioid crisis through various community engagement initiatives.

Throughout the fiscal year, the PORT Team actively hosted outreach events to educate the community about substance use disorders and the importance of overdose prevention. These efforts included distributing naloxone, a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses, to individuals at risk and their families. By increasing awareness and accessibility of naloxone, the PORT Team has empowered community members to take action in emergency situations, potentially saving lives.

The team's commitment to fostering collaboration between local organizations, healthcare providers, and community members has enhanced support systems for individuals affected by substance use.

Overall, the successful implementation of the Carteret County PORT Team reflects a proactive approach to addressing the challenges posed by the opioid crisis and underscores the importance of community involvement in recovery and prevention efforts.

#### ❖ **Exhibit A, Strategy 8: Post-Overdose Response Team**

##### **Success Narrative**

On October 28, 2023, I responded to a client experiencing an overdose. At the scene, the client implemented a safety plan, resulting in her children being placed in the care of family members. Shortly after, the client began working closely with me, meeting three times a week in person and over the phone to develop a recovery plan.

Her journey started with a brief stay at the Healing Place detox center, but after returning home, she committed to a second detox at a center in Greenville, where she completed a full 7-day program and received her certificate of completion. Upon discharge, she immediately began Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) at a local treatment center, attending weekly counseling sessions while maintaining our frequent meetings and completing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).

For three months, the client stayed in regular contact with DSS, visited her children daily, and actively participated in their care – helping with homework, spending family dinners, and bedtime routines. Her consistent efforts led to her being awarded custody of her children again. However, just as things were improving, she lost her apartment and was forced to live in a hotel.

Despite these setbacks, the client persevered. After months without stable housing, she and her daughters were accepted into a new home. With donated furniture from a local non-profit, they settled in. The client has demonstrated extraordinary resilience, achieving a remarkable turnaround in a short time, creating a better life for herself and her children.”

(Identifying details have been altered to preserve anonymity.)

#### **Progress and Success Narratives for All Funded Strategies**

#### ❖ **Exhibit A, Strategy 2: Evidence-Based Addiction Treatment**

##### **Progress Narrative**

This year, Integrated Care of Greater Hickory (ICGH) has focused on planning and implementing evidence-based treatment services in Carteret County. A key milestone has been the refurbishment of a county-leased facility, which will serve as a dedicated treatment center for individuals struggling with substance use disorders. Throughout this process, ICGH has worked diligently to secure the necessary licensure to operate the facility within the county, ensuring compliance with all regulatory requirements.

In the interim, ICGH has collaborated closely with Carteret County partners to provide treatment services through their other facilities, utilizing the opioid settlement funding received. This partnership has enabled continued access to evidence-based care for residents while the new facility is being prepared for operation. Through this approach, ICGH has effectively expanded treatment options, providing critical support to individuals affected by opioid use and ensuring ongoing service delivery during the facility’s transition phase.

These efforts underscore the commitment to integrating evidence-based practices and improving long-term outcomes for those in need of substance use treatment in Carteret County. As the facility nears operational readiness, we anticipate a significant boost in local capacity to deliver high-quality, accessible care.

### **Success Narrative**

On May 3, 2024, an individual walked into treatment feeling lost and overwhelmed. Struggling with anxiety and substance use, she felt trapped in a cycle of despair. Her first few weeks were challenging; she grappled with her emotions and the fear of change. However, with the support of her dedicated therapists and the connections she formed with fellow clients, she began to find hope.

Through group therapy and personalized coping strategies, she learned to face her triggers head-on. By July, she was actively participating in her recovery, attending workshops on mindfulness and self-care. Each small victory, like managing a panic attack without resorting to substances, fueled her determination.

Fast-forward to October 2024, she stands proud, celebrating six months of sobriety. She has embraced a healthier lifestyle, being present in the lives of her children, and becoming a person she is proud to be. Her journey exemplifies resilience, showing that with support and commitment, a brighter future is possible. She now views challenges as opportunities for growth, embodying the transformative power of recovery.

## **❖ Exhibit A, Strategy 3: Recovery Support Services**

### **Progress Narrative**

During FY24, Carteret County embarked on the initial stages of a partnership with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and Children and Family Futures to establish a recognized Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team (START). This collaboration aims to enhance support for families affected by addiction.

Currently, we are focused on building the necessary capacity and training for staff to ensure effective implementation of the START program. The partnership has also secured a grant that will help offset overall funding needs, allowing us to allocate resources more efficiently and effectively.

As we prepare to launch the START program, our primary goal remains to provide comprehensive services that support parents in their recovery journeys while ensuring the safety and well-being of their children at home. We are dedicated to fostering a coordinated approach that will enable families to thrive despite the challenges posed by addiction.

Carteret County is committed to making strides in this initiative, and we are optimistic that, through this partnership, we will develop a robust START program that delivers meaningful outcomes for our community in the future.

### **Success Narrative**

Carteret County is committed to supporting clients struggling with opioid use disorder, and that begins with our social workers. During FY24, our social workers have participated in training sessions offered by the UNC School of Social Work to enhance their skills in addressing and understanding opioid use disorders.

These training sessions have provided our team with valuable insights into trauma-informed care and effective communication strategies. This knowledge equips them to better assist clients in their recovery journeys.

Feedback from the social workers has been encouraging. They feel more confident in engaging clients and developing personalized recovery plans. This training not only helps the social workers but also leads to better support for clients, fostering a more understanding and effective approach to care.

As a result of these efforts, we are seeing positive changes in how we support individuals affected by opioid use disorder. Our social workers are playing a crucial role in helping clients find their path to recovery and stability, aligning with our overall mission.

#### ❖ **Exhibit A, Strategy 4: Recovery Housing Support**

##### **Progress Narrative**

The Carteret opioid settlement funds have enabled Integrated Care of Greater Hickory (ICGH) to provide free recovery housing for individuals seeking a stable, supportive environment. This program offers integrated peer support, treatment services, and life skills training for those recovering from substance use disorder (SUD) and opioid use disorder (OUD). ICGH is committed to ensuring that housing is recognized as healthcare, offering services to all individuals regardless of race, gender, or financial status.

In FY24, immediate recovery housing was provided in existing recovery homes operated by ICGH. The organization successfully located two homes in the region dedicated to Recovery Housing. One of these homes was purchased and opened in FY24 in Carteret County, while plans are in place to purchase the second home in Craven County during FY25. This expansion will further enhance the availability of supportive housing options for individuals in recovery, fostering a pathway to stability and health within the community.

##### **Success Narrative**

This individual's story speaks volumes to the power of comprehensive care and value unwavering support. When she arrived at ICGH Recovery Housing as our first Carteret County referral, she was facing significant barriers such as being unhoused and in active addiction. With the help of ICGH's dedicated team, she began her journey toward recovery.

Through ICGH's wrap-around care, she received the essential tools she needed to stabilize and rebuild her life. MAT, primary care medicine, and mental health support provided a solid foundation for her recovery. Despite the challenges she faced, her resilience and determination shone through. She became an active participant in the recovery community, supporting and inspiring others on their own paths. She was able to reunite with her children and family and gain a newfound sense of purpose. Today, she aspires to become a peer support specialist, sharing her experiences and offering hope to those who are struggling. She stated, "This is the first program where I have received total care. Mind, body, and soul." This is a testament to the whole-personal care that is central to ICGH's mission and values.

#### ❖ **Exhibit A, Strategy 5: Employment-related Services**

##### **Progress Narrative**

On March 18, 2024, Carteret County agreed to fund the creation of a GED Testing Assistance Program in collaboration with Carteret Community College (CCC). This program supplements CCC's free GED Preparation Classes by covering the testing fees for individuals affected by opioid use disorder (OUD) or co-occurring substance use disorder (COSUD), helping them overcome financial barriers to completing their GED.

Since the program began operations in FY24, 7 individuals have successfully obtained their GED. These individuals, participants of Hope Recovery Homes, received the necessary support to achieve this critical educational milestone. Obtaining their GED has significantly enhanced their ability to pursue employment opportunities and achieve stability in their recovery.

### **Success Narrative**

After battling addiction for many years and facing numerous challenges, one individual made the courageous decision to enter a residential treatment program at Hope Recovery Homes. This marked a turning point in their life, setting them on the path to sobriety and personal growth.

During the recovery process, they pursued a long-held goal: earning their GED through Carteret Community College. By mid-2024, they had achieved this milestone, demonstrating their commitment to building a better future. With support from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program, they are now continuing their education, working toward an associate's degree, and giving back to their community as a Certified Peer Support Specialist. Drawing on their personal experience, they now help others navigate their own recovery journeys.

For them, education has been a critical component of recovery, providing a renewed sense of purpose and helping rebuild self-esteem. These achievements have laid a foundation for long-term stability and personal growth, inspiring hope and change for others facing similar challenges.

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