

## Suffolk opioid fund seeks next round of applications



**By Vera Chinese**

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Suffolk County is accepting applications for \$20 million in funding available to organizations and public agencies that administer programs to combat the opioid crisis.

The money is part of approximately \$200 million the county is expected to receive over two decades from settlements reached with various opioid manufactures, distributors, retailers and pharmacies.

“This isn’t just any budget line in our budget. We understand where these dollars come from,” Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said at a news conference in Hauppauge Friday. “It is incumbent on us to make sure that those dollars are invested to help the victims of this terrible epidemic.”

The application portal at [suffolkcountyny.gov/opioidgrants](https://suffolkcountyny.gov/opioidgrants) will remain open until Sept. 29. Applicants should include the focus of their proposal, the potential residents served, a proposal summary as well as a detailed description, program goals, how the organization plans to sustain the program and how much money is requested. Awards will be announced this fall.

The county awarded more than \$36 million for 41 projects earlier this year which includes \$25 million for programs and \$11.2 million for four infrastructure projects. Of those projects, three were harm reduction initiatives, 23 were treatment programs, 11 were prevention programs and four were recovery programs.

First-round recipients included government agencies such as the Town of Smithtown Horizon Counseling and Education Center, and treatment providers such as the Family and Children's Association and the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.

Opioids, particularly the synthetic drug fentanyl, have claimed the lives of thousands of Long Islanders including 25-year-old Emanuel Vincent D'Antoni who died in 2017. His mother, Sharon Richmond of Northport, has become an advocate on the issue and spoke during the news conference.

"No parent should ever face the tragedy my family has had to endure," she said.

There were at least 420 opioid-related overdoses in Suffolk County in 2022, according to figures provided by the county. Newsday reported in June there were more than 300 in Nassau County that year. More recent figures were not immediately available.

"Addiction is like a thief stealing the humanity of our incredible neighbors on Long Island and in Suffolk County," said Rebecca Sanin, president and chief executive of the Health & Welfare Council of Long Island. "It creates unpredictable vulnerability, trauma and pain and depths of despair that are relentless."