

Opioid Settlement Committee
Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

Date: Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

Members Present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, Councilman Ire Bethea, Captain Jesse Blair, Christy Jergens, Beth McCall, Rich Bianculli, Chief Mike Balken, Chief Robert Kruger

Excused: Judge Robert Landt, Sheriff Billy Woods, Mayor Ben Marciano

Additional Attendees: Cheryl Martin, Kendall Stephens, Deborah Lambcke, Charles Rich, Robin Lanier, Curt Bromund, Debra Velez, Crystal Pfriendr, Hilary Jackson, Sarah Ostreicher, Will Sexton, Pete Lee

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
Call to Order	Chairman Kathy Bryant called the meeting to order at 10:30am.
Quorum	Chairman Kathy Bryant stated there was a Quorum present.
Agenda	
1. Request Approval of January 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes	Chairman Kathy Bryant asked the board to review the previous meeting minutes from January 9th 2025. Motion: Beth McCall Second: Chief Robert Kruger Action: Approved
2. Emerging Drug Trends: Kratom (Presentation) – Hilary Jackson	Hilary Jackson from the Marion County Children’s Alliance presented on the rising use of Kratom, a federally legal herbal substance (<i>Mitragyna</i>) with opioid-like effects, commonly sold in gas stations and smoke shops. New pill forms and continued availability have raised public health concerns, along with similar risks from Kava. Emerging drug trends from 2020 to the present show increasing misuse, with Florida investigating 600 overdoses in 2023. A TikTok video was referenced to illustrate usage and accessibility. Chairman Kathy Bryant asked where the support was coming from? Hilary stated through recovery communities. There was discussion from the group about legislation holding different standards than House Bill 1489 in regards to point of sale and safety within the youth community. At the County level, there is currently no synthetic drug ordinance in place. There was a City of Ocala ordinance created in 2012 but it does not include Kratom. The product is said to be regulated for age 21 and over but enforcement is questionable. There was additional discussion about creating an ordinance at the local level. Chairman Kathy Bryant explained that recent legislation allows businesses to sue if local ordinances harm their sales, advising against local regulations and emphasizing that action should come from the state level instead.
3. Substance Use & Behavioral Health	Debra Velez from Marion County Hospital District (MCHD) presented on school-based prevention efforts, including mental health training and opioid treatment programs implemented across both public and private schools. The SADD program supports substance abuse and mental health prevention. Outreach efforts included the Kimberly

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Programming (presentation) – Debra Velez	Center, which reached 30,279 students, and the Children’s Alliance, which reached 3,279 students last year. Additional initiatives included the "Lock Your Meds" campaign and previous youth mental health training programs. The Supportive Enforcement Program, a new alternative disciplinary initiative, was introduced to help youth avoid formal disciplinary records. To date, 242 students have been placed in the program, with a total of 4,777 students targeted for support. Chairman Kathy Bryant requested the average age of students. Debra clarified the program was for high school age students. It was also asked what the typical drug of choice was for the students in the program. It was clarified that marijuana was the drug of choice. And the success rates? Last school year was 90% and this year was 66% due to school referring habitual attendees differently. Chief Robert Kruger asked what a “level 3” was on campus? It was clarified that a “level 3” was when a student was found with drugs or alcohol on the school campus. Chairman Kathy Bryant asked if the County was still participating in Red Ribbon Week and Hilary Jackson clarified that the Marion County Children’s Alliance was helping to lead that effort and that they hold a kickoff at the Ocala Drive-In Theater. (13 schools to participate)
4. Current Funding & Application Updates – Debra Velez	Debra Velez presented on the construction projects currently being funded and shared that the Central Receiving Facility is under construction and should be completed September 2026. The Women’s Residential Building is wrapping up construction and will be open May 2025. Debra also shared that 2 new applications were submitted for funding. MCHD is working with applicants to decide whether the projects outlined in their applications meet the core strategies decided upon by the Opioid Settlement Committee. MCHD is also working to schedule a meeting with all CORE providers to discuss how to obtain the funding that has been allocated for this priority.

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5. Opioid Settlement Updates – Cheryl Martin	Cheryl Martin provided an update that additional funding of \$1.6 million was received in January which was an addition \$200K more than originally projected. Cheryl suggested that we keep the latest deposit of \$1.6 million undesignated until new applications are received and voted on by the Opioid Settlement Committee. Cheryl also shared that the Implementation Plan 2025-2026 will be rolled out at the next meeting for the committee to provide input. It was also shared that HB 259 (Fentanyl Awareness & Education Day) was passed by the House unanimously on 4/3/2025 but was referred to the Rules Committee. The Community Services team is keeping an eye out to watch what happens with the bill and if passed, the Opioid Settlement Committee can decide how to acknowledge the day and help raise awareness.
General Discussion/ Next Meeting Topics	An update was shared by Chief Mike Balken that there there were 3 overdoses within 48 hours. Ire Bethea also shared, "Never give up on youth. There is always a possibility they can turn around. Alternative processes do work." Action Items from this discussion: - The 2025-2026 Implementation Plan that will be reviewed at the next meeting - Keeping an eye out on social channels to promote more drug preventions initiatives (ex. Red Ribbon Week) on the County's social media page - Looking into the D.A.R.E. program and why it may no longer exist in Marion County - MCHD will bring additional data showing who MCPS is targeting from alternative school programs to enter into the MCPS Supportive Enforcement Program - MCDH to schedule a meeting with the CORE partners to discuss the funding that has been allocated from the regional fund Chairman Kathy Bryant then offered Public Comment on various items discussed during the meeting. No public comments were given. Next Meeting will be on June 12th, 2025 at 11am.
Adjournment	Chairman Kathy Bryant adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.



OPIOID SETTLEMENT

Agenda



Committee Members:

Kathy Bryant, Marion County Government
Judge Robert Landt, Fifth Judicial Circuit
Rich Bianculli, Marion County Hospital District
Capt. Jesse Blaire, Ocala Fire Dept.
Christy Jergens, Marion County Health Dept.
Sheriff Billy Woods, Marion County Sheriff's Dept.

Beth McCall, Marion County Children's Alliance
Chief Mike Balken, Ocala Police Dept.
Ire Bethea Sr., City of Ocala
Dep. Chief Robert Kruger, Marion County Fire Dept.
Ben Marciano, Active Recovery Representative

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. Location: 2547 E Silver Springs Blvd. Ocala, FL 34470

CALL TO ORDER
PLEDGE
PUBLIC NOTICE
ROLL CALL

1. **Request Approval of the January 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes – Commissioner Bryant**
2. **Emerging Drug Trends: Kratom (Presentation) – Hilary Jackson**
3. **Substance Use & Behavioral Health Programming (Presentation) – Debra Velez**
4. **Current Funding & Application Updates – Debra Velez**
 - 4.1 **Priorities Updates**
 - **Central Receiving Facility**
 - **Women's Residential Building**
 - 4.2 **Application Updates**
5. **Opioid Settlement Updates – Cheryl Martin**
 - 5.1 **Additional Funding Received**
 - 5.2 **Implementation Plan 2025-2026**
 - 5.3 **HB 0259 – Fentanyl Awareness & Education Day**
6. **Public Comment**
7. **Committee Comments**

ADJOURNMENT

The next scheduled meeting is on June 12, 2025, located at 2710 E Silver Springs Blvd. Ocala FL 34470 (Growth Services Training Room).

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Date: Thursday, January 9th, 2025

Members Present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, City Councilman Ire Bethea, Captain Jesse Blair, Christy Jergens, Beth McCall, Ben Marciano

Excused: Billy Woods, Rich Bianculli, Chief Balken, Chief Robert Kruger

Additional Attendees: Cheryl Martin, Kendall Stephens, Lauren Blaugh, Dana Olesky, Robin Lanier, Curt Bromund, Debra Velez, Crystal Pfriendr, Pete Lee

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
Call to Order	Chairman Kathy Bryant called the meeting to order at 11:01am
Quorum	Clerk stated there was a Quorum present
Agenda	
1. Request Approval of June 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes	Chairman Bryant asked the board to review the previous meeting minutes from June 13th 2024. Motion: Ben Marciano Second: Jesse Blair Action: Approved
2. Opioid Settlement Updates: Cheryl Martin, Kendall Stephens	Cheryl Martin provided an update regarding the interlocal agreement Between the Opioid Settlement Committee and the Marion County Hospital District. This was also reviewed by Dana Olesky, Assistant County Attorney. Kendall Stephens presented a funding flow chart outlining the funding priorities. The chart clarified that the Marion County Hospital District will partner with the committee to distribute prescreen applications. Applications will be accepted through invitation and referrals will be accepted from the Regional Opioid Settlement committee. Discussion ensued regarding the funding flow chart and it was stated that the funding process would be a continual process. Cheryl Martin spoke to the project update which was included in the meeting packet, noting that a lump sum allocation will fund SMA's substance exposed newborn facility and the central receiving facility projects. Additionally, the CORE will remain a priority, with no additional allocation. ○ There is a remaining \$480,000 which will be prioritized towards transitional housing projects.

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	Robin Lanier of SMA Healthcare, discussed the timeline for transitional housing projects, outlining a four-phase process over 1.5 years. The first phase, emergency services, is expected to be completed by January 2026. No further questions were raised. The County received a notice from Brown and Greer that additional National funding, will be allocated to the County that mirrors the rules of the Regional Funding. Kendall Stephens demonstrated the opioid settlement portal located at https://floridaopioidsettlement.com/resources/ , which provides specific data related to arrest, deaths and overdoses, etc. for Marion County.
3. Discuss Regional Plan Priorities- Commissioner Bryant	The committee agreed to maintain the priorities established last year for FY 2025-2026. Judge Landt proposed the possibility of establishing a local government-drug testing lab, which could be used for drug courts, pretrial release, and other necessary screenings. Cheryl Martin noted that the central receiving facility could potentially provide drug testing services. Robin Lanier discussed the various types of drug screens available. Robin Lanier explained that SMA is applying to become an addiction receiving facility, which will allow them to treat all types of detox. Ben Marciano highlighted the concern about Kratom, particularly its increased accessibility in gas stations, and suggested the need for a comprehensive approach to address such substances. Pete Lee, shared that the City has an ordinance that prohibits the sale of synthetic drugs in gas stations. Discussion ensued an educational campaign on the dangers of Kratom and other substances in convenience stores. Marion County Hospital District will bring updates on educational outreach to the next meeting.
General Discussion/ Next Meeting Topics	Christy Jergens shared recent local data sets on overdose and emergency medical services (EMS) information. Jesse Blair reported a decrease in overdose deaths, from 200 to 70 per month, due to the impact of NARCAN. Alina Stutthof from Drug Count Administration informed the board about changing drug trends, noting a decline in opioid use but an uptick in other substances requiring emergency responses. A discussion followed regarding the need to proactively address these new substances, such as Kratom, and ensure comprehensive treatment options for all types of substance use disorders.

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	Action Items from this discussion: • Follow up with Attorney General’s office on banning the sale of substances like kratom • Follow up with the City of Ocala on potentially expanding their ordinance • Presentation from MCHD at next meeting on public awareness efforts with the school system • Explore the possibility of a centralized drug testing lab Chairman Bryant then offered Public Comment on various items discussed during the meeting. No public comments were requested. Next Meeting will be on April 16th, 2025 at 11am
Adjournment	Chairman Bryant adjourned the meeting at 11:59am.

PRESENTATION DECK:

Emerging Drug Trends: Kratom

Presented by:

Hilary Jackson, MSL

Director of Prevention



April 2025

Emerging Drug Trends: Kratom

Presented by:

Hilary Jackson, MSL

Director of Prevention

- What is Kratom?
- Show and Tell
- Kratom Public Policy
- Q & A

April 2025

Kratom

Plant from Southeast Asia acting on opioid receptors for stimulation and pain relief.



Legal Status

- ◆ Legal at the federal level in the U.S., but banned in some states and cities.
 - ◆ Not FDA-approved for medical use.
-

Health Risks

Addiction, dependence, and health complications (nausea, increased heart rate, and respiratory issues).

Risks to Youth

- ◆ Affects brain development.
 - ◆ Increases addiction risk.
 - ◆ May lead to long-term health complications.
-

Appearance & Use

Form

Available as a green, brown, or red powder, capsules, or tea.

Usage

Consumed for energy, pain relief, or sedation.

Kava

Plant-based beverage used for calming effects, traditionally in Pacific Island cultures – sold as teas, capsules, and extracts.



Legal Status

- ◆ Legal in the U.S. and most countries.
 - ◆ Some restrictions or bans in Canada, the U.K., and parts of the EU (liver toxicity concerns).
-

Health Risks

- ◆ Liver damage & impaired functioning.
-

Risks to Youth

- ◆ Affects brain development.
 - ◆ Increases vulnerability to liver damage.
 - ◆ May lead to dependency.
-

Appearance & Use

Form

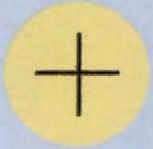
Powder mixed with water.

Usage

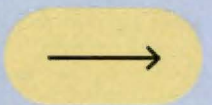
Drink for relaxation, often marketed as a natural remedy for anxiety.

Kratom

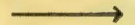




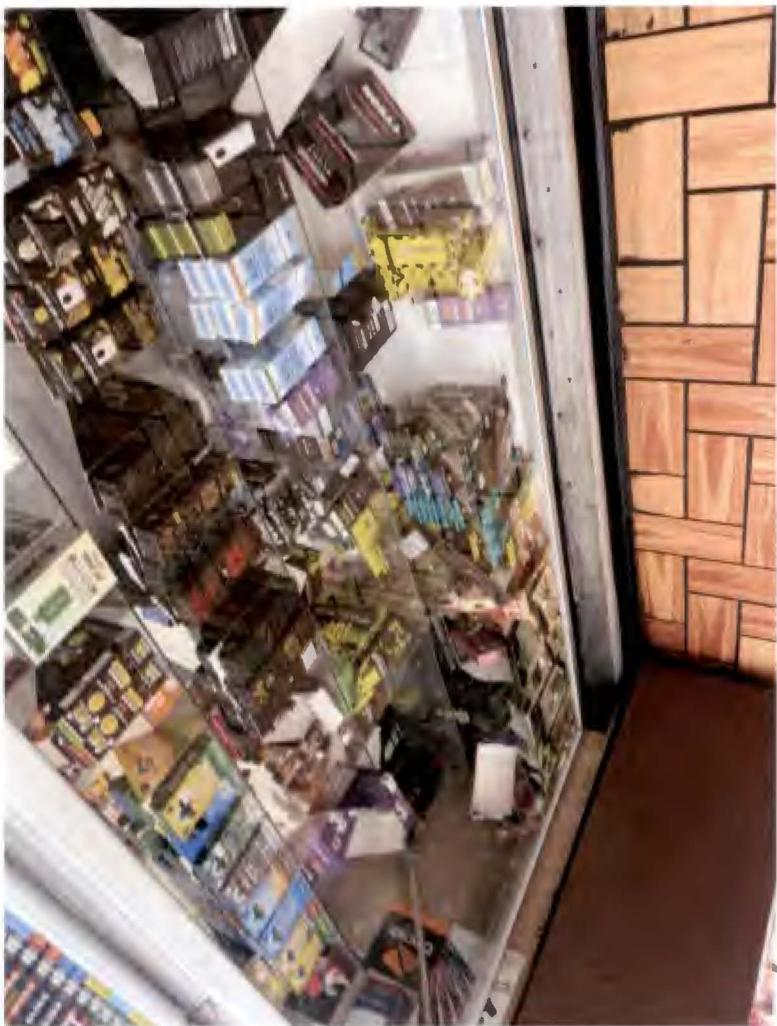
Show and Tell

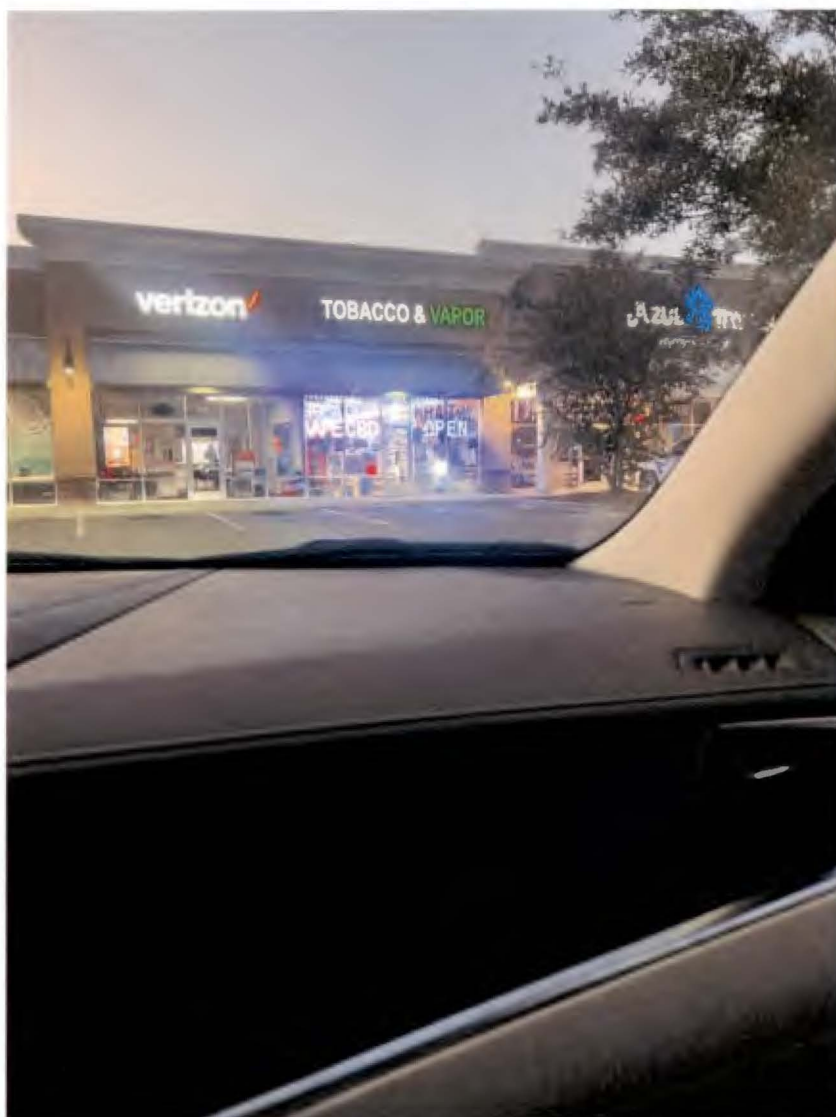


How does it look in
Marion County?







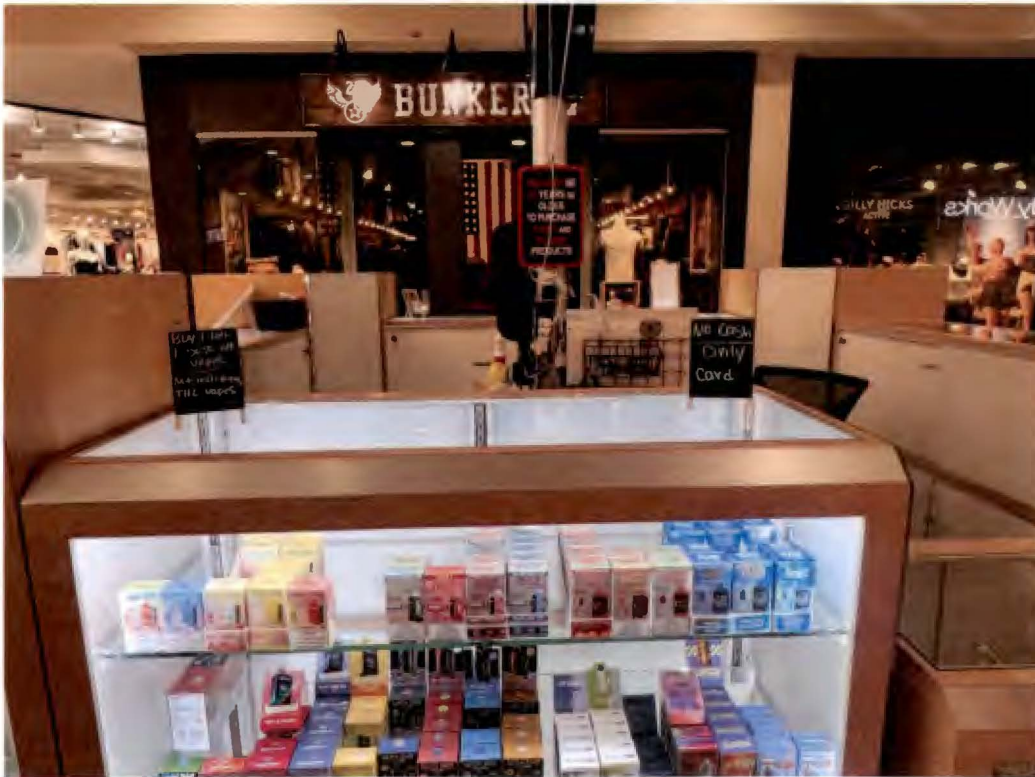






What does it look like in Marion County?

Paddock Mall



What does it look like in Marion County?

Paddock Mall



DEADLY DOSE

A Tampa Bay Times investigation



Kratom Legislation

Florida Kratom Consumer Protection Act

HB1489/SB1734

- **Prohibits** the manufacture, sale, or distribution of kratom products that fail to meet safety and quality standards
- **Establishes** permitting, registration, and certification requirements for kratom processors
- **Holds processors liable** for non-compliant or unsafe kratom products
- **Sets standards** for labs that certify kratom products
- **Outlines specific prohibitions** regarding kratom product content and marketing

Florida Kratom Consumer Protection Act

HB1489/SB1734

- **Authorizes** the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) to conduct third-party testing
- **Grants DACS enforcement authority**, including issuing administrative fines
- **Includes a funding appropriation** to support implementation and oversight
- **Legislation Status:**
 - **House Bill:** First reading in Agriculture & Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee – *April 3, 2025*
 - **Senate Bill:** Commerce & Tourism added Committee Substitute – *March 26, 2025*

How does it look in Marion County?

City of Ocala has a synthetic drug ordinance

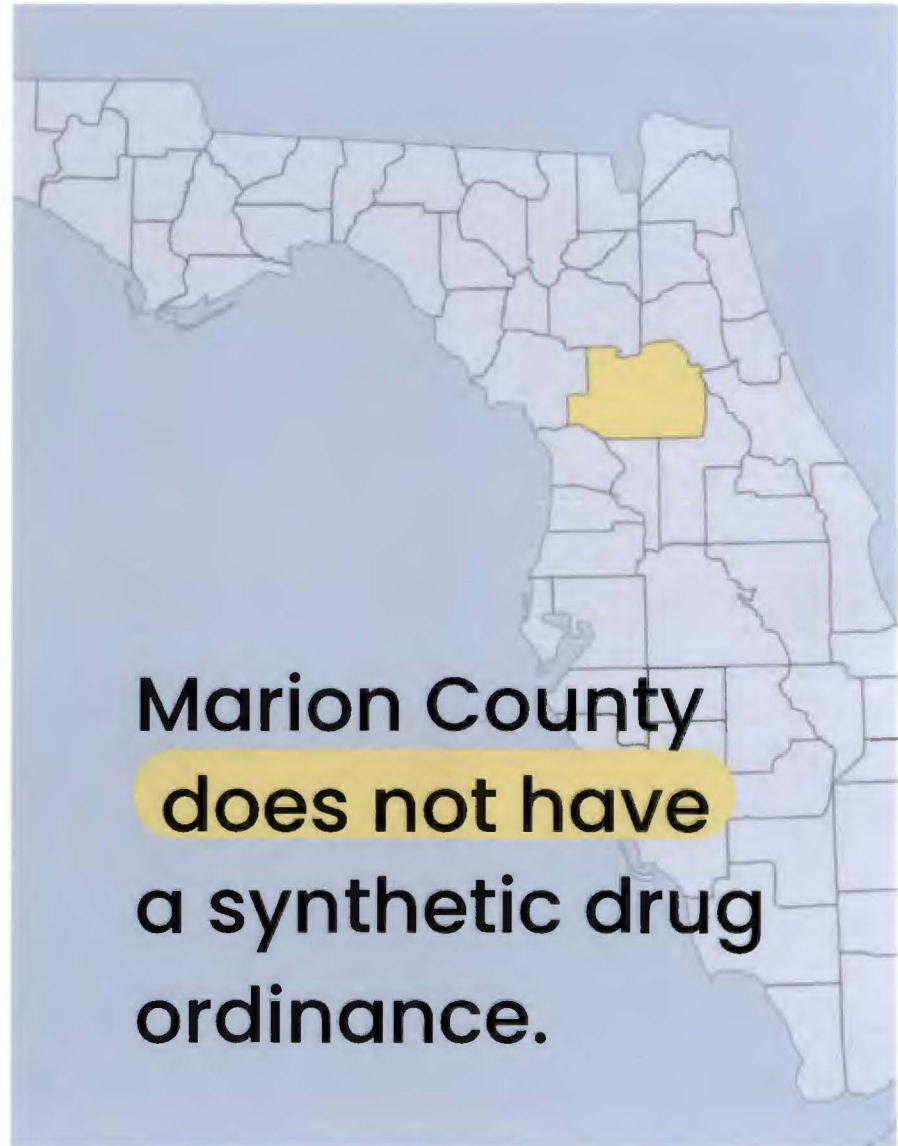
No. 2012-59, § 1 (Effective 10-2-12)

-  Synthetic drug possession, use, sale, or display is prohibited.
-  Knowledge of a drug's illegality is presumed if the seller implies it mimics effects of certain controlled substances.



[View full ordinance here](#)

Marion County
does not have
a synthetic drug ordinance.



Challenges of Local Kratom Policy

- State vs. Local Authority
- Limited Youth Data
- Industry Pushback
- Personal Freedom Claims
- Enforcement Limits
- Retail Opposition



Questions? Comments? Want More?

Reach out to us!

hilary@mcchildrensalliance.org



Hilary Jackson, MSL

Director of Prevention

Substance Use and Behavioral Health Programming for Youth in Marion County

Kimberly's Center

The Prevention Program at The Kimberly's Center, funded by the Marion County Hospital District and United Way, addresses key health concerns related to the prevention and stabilization of mental and behavioral health issues, as well as opioid prevention and treatment.

In collaboration with the Monique Burr Foundation and Marion County Public Schools, Kimberly's Center will implement the Child Safety Matters and Teen Safety Matters curriculum across every public school in Marion County. The program will be delivered to all 1st and 2nd grade classrooms, and throughout middle and high schools using a mix of face-to-face, live virtual, and recorded formats. Instruction will be provided by Kimberly's Center Advocacy staff, with support from school-based guidance staff.

These evidence-based, age-appropriate prevention programs empower students with safety strategies to address bullying, cyberbullying, digital dangers, all types of abuse, mental health challenges, suicide, and substance use.

To measure impact:

- Elementary students complete pre- and post-tests.
- Middle and high school students complete five hours of instruction and receive "Class Notes" handouts to reinforce learning.

By consistently delivering this curriculum, the program seeks to reduce victimization rates, increase communication and reporting among students, and promote mental health and substance use awareness, ultimately supporting safer and healthier futures for children and teens in Marion County.

Marion County Children's Alliance-Student's Against Destructive Decisions

The Marion County Children's Alliance (MCCA) SADD Program is a long-standing, evidence-based initiative focused on youth substance use prevention and mental health promotion. SADD Clubs have been active in Marion County for over 15 years, and thanks to the Drug Free Communities (DFC) Grant, which provides the bulk of the funding, along with additional support from MCHD, the program continues to thrive. Currently, the program operates in eight locations: five schools (four public, one private) and three community-based clubs.

Key components include:

- **MCPS:** Provides monthly prevention education to underserved youth and young adults with intellectual and physical disabilities—through the Work Study Program.

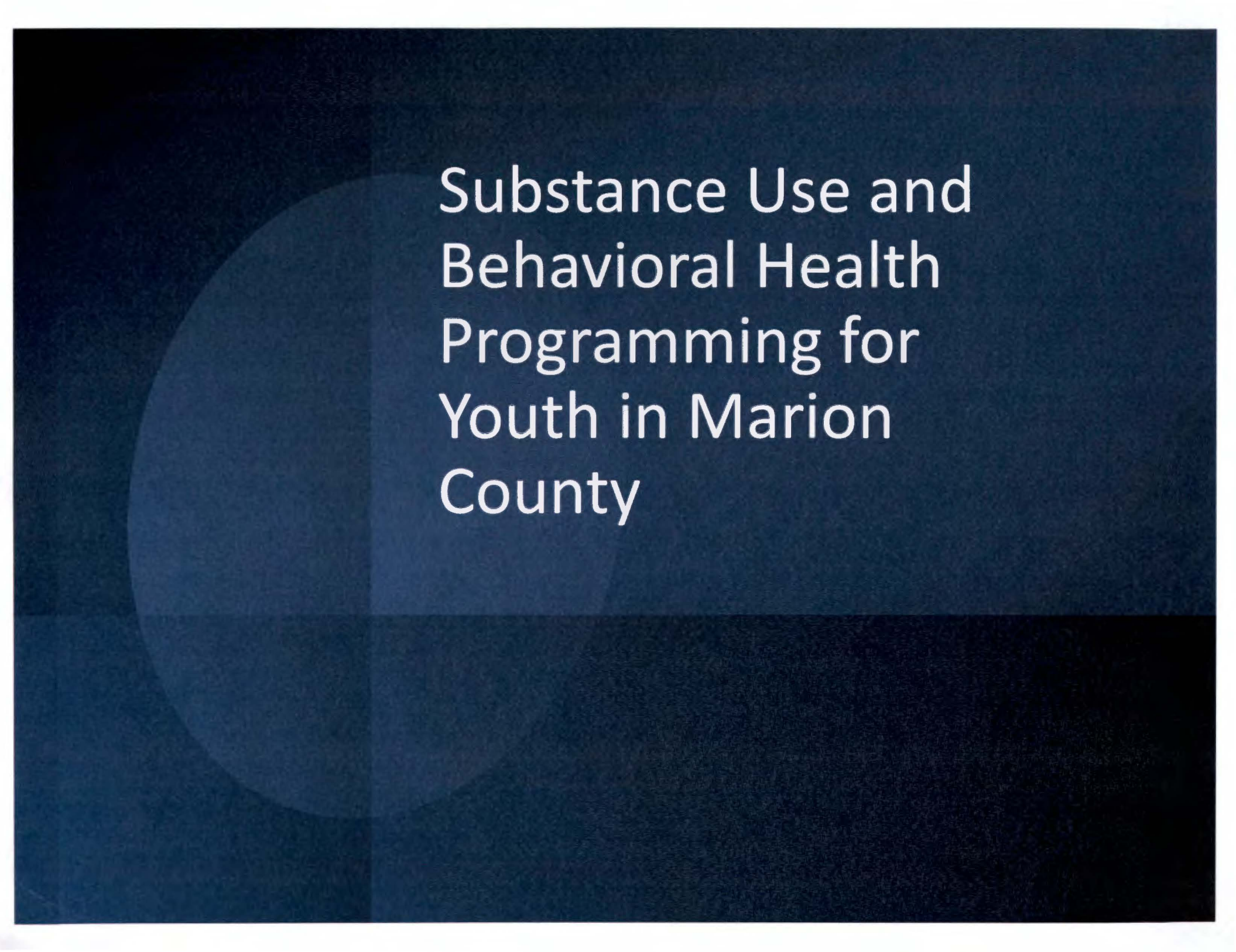
- **Private School Outreach:** Offers classroom-based prevention education via a SADD Club, ensuring that private school students receive equitable access to prevention resources.
- **SADD Youth Advisory Board (YAB):** Selects up to 20 youth leaders annually for intensive training in peer education, advocacy, public speaking, and mental health awareness. Students participate in an annual Tallahassee Advocacy Trip to engage with legislators, followed by local outreach to extend their impact.
- **Out of Reach/Lock Your Meds Campaign:** Expands adult-focused prevention by promoting safe medication storage and disposal practices. Includes the distribution of locking medication bags and collaboration with the DEA for National Takeback Days.
- **Hidden In Plain Sight Campaign:** A new addition, this campaign educates adults on how to identify hidden signs of youth substance use and risky behavior, while reinforcing positive parent-child engagement and mental health awareness.
- **Adult Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training:** Offers free training to equip adults with the skills to respond to mental health and substance use crises, promoting a more supportive and informed community.
- **Quarterly Lunch & Learn Series:** Features expert-led sessions for community members and behavioral health professionals on topics like Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), prevention strategies, and local resources—driven by coalition and task force feedback.

Marion County Public Schools Supportive Enforcement

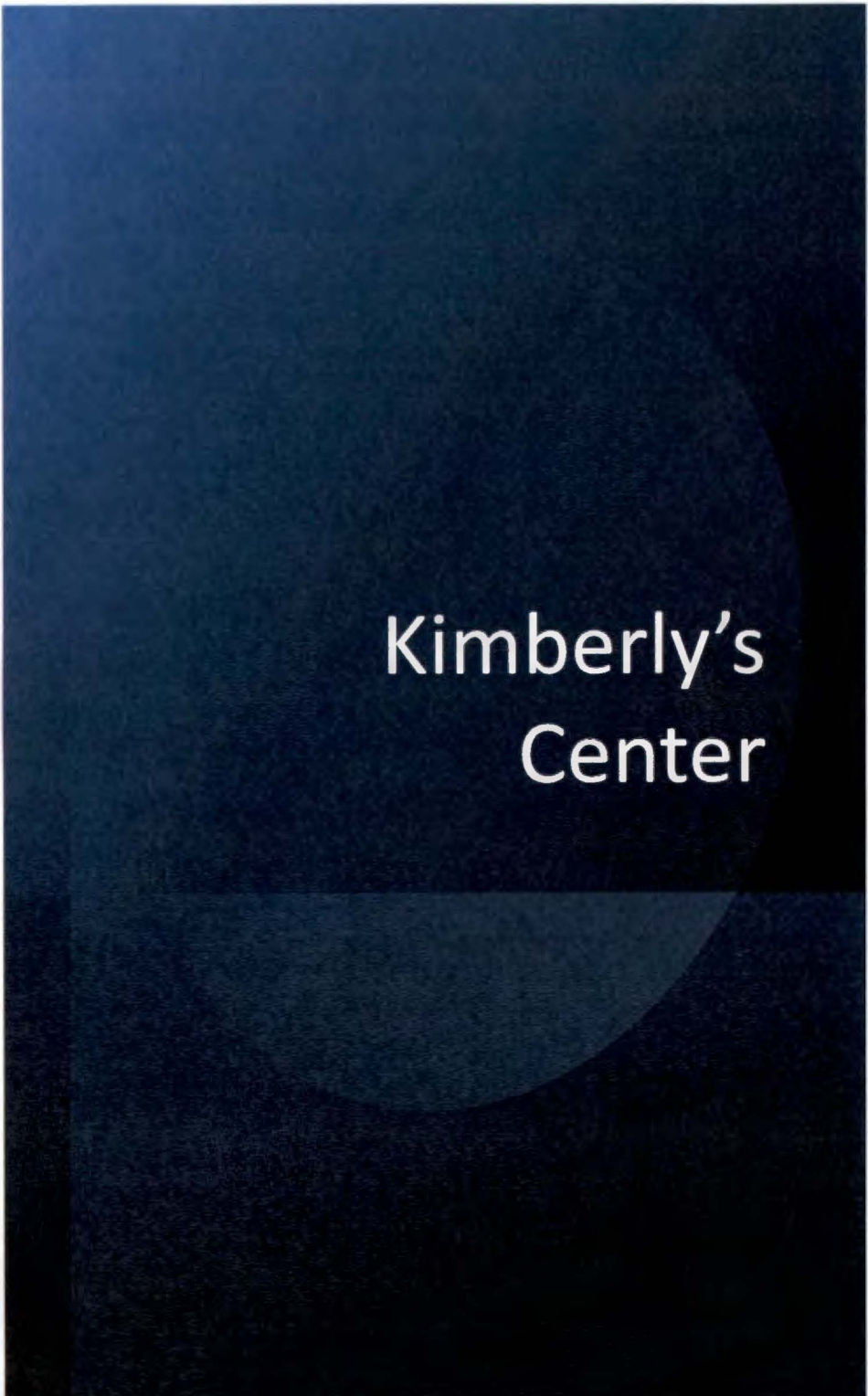
Supportive Enforcement is an alternative disciplinary program offered by Marion County Public Schools (MCPS) in partnership with the Marion County Hospital District. It is designed for students who commit a first-time Level 3 drug or alcohol offense. Rather than being removed from their school and placed in an alternative setting, eligible students are given the opportunity to participate in a supportive, education-based program focused on helping them understand the dangers of addiction, make healthier choices, and prevent future disciplinary actions.

To qualify for Supportive Enforcement, a student must be facing their first drug-related offense and must not already be enrolled in another alternative program for a different type of offense. Once the recommendation is approved by the Student Discipline Department, the school must refer the student to the program within 24 hours. Over a 45-day period, students complete 12 educational modules on topics such as the risks of drug use and goal setting. They also meet regularly with a FANS Health Educator—provided through the Marion County Hospital District—who offers guidance and support throughout the program.

The student's original school remains responsible for overseeing their participation and ensuring access to a computer to complete the required modules. This collaborative approach between MCPS and the Marion County Hospital District provides students with a second chance while emphasizing education, accountability, and long-term well-being.



Substance Use and Behavioral Health Programming for Youth in Marion County



Kimberly's Center

- The Prevention Program at Kimberly's Center, funded by Marion County Hospital District and United Way, focuses on prevention and stabilization of mental and behavioral health issues, as well as opioid prevention and treatment.

Kimberly's Center – Program Details

- In collaboration with the Monique Burr Foundation and MCPS:
- Implements Child Safety Matters & Teen Safety Matters in all public schools
- Delivered in 1st, 2nd, middle, and high schools
- Uses face-to-face, virtual, and recorded formats
- Taught by Kimberly's Advocacy staff with school guidance support

Kimberly's Center – Program Outcomes

- The evidence-based curriculum empowers students to address:
- Bullying, cyberbullying, abuse, mental health, suicide, substance use
- Impact measurement:
- Pre/Post-tests for elementary students
- Class Notes & 5 hours of instruction for older students
- Goals: Reduce victimization, increase reporting, promote mental health & safety

Marion County Children's Alliance – SADD Program

- Long-standing initiative for youth substance prevention & mental health
- Funded by Drug Free Communities Grant & MCHD
- Operates in 8 locations: 5 schools (4 public, 1 private) + 3 community clubs

MCCA – Key Program Components

- - Monthly prevention education for underserved students (Work Study Program)
- - Private school outreach through SADD Clubs
- - SADD Youth Advisory Board: leadership, advocacy, public speaking
- - Annual Tallahassee Trip + local outreach
- - Lock Your Meds & Hidden in Plain Sight campaigns
- - Adult MHFA Training
- - Quarterly Lunch & Learns on ACEs & prevention

MCPS Supportive Enforcement Program

- Alternative disciplinary program for 1st-time Level 3 drug/alcohol offenses
- Partnership between MCPS & MCHD
- Focus: Education over punishment, addiction awareness, healthier choices
- Eligibility: First drug-related offense, no current alternative program enrollment

Supportive Enforcement – Structure

- 12 educational modules over 45 days
- Regular meetings with FANS Health Educator (via MCHD)
- School ensures participation and computer access
- **Goal:** Second chance through accountability and education

Questions



Opioid Settlement Committee

<u>Opioid Funding Projections</u>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total Received Through Years 1-3
Regional Funding	\$ 2,882,761.00	\$ 1,361,107.00	\$ 1,691,997.00	\$ 5,935,865.00

<u>Approved Projects</u>	Total (\$5,935,866)	Total Expended	Remaining	% Spent
Centralized Receiving Facility	\$ 2,300,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,300,000.00	0%
CORE and Peer Programs	\$ 750,000.00	\$ -	\$ 750,000.00	0%
SENP Transitional Housing	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	\$ -	100%
Additional Transitional Housing	\$ 480,676.00	\$ -	\$ 480,676.00	0%
Admin	\$ 296,793.00	\$ -	\$ 296,793.00	0%
Remaining for Additional Priorities	\$ 1,608,396.00	\$ -	\$ 1,608,396.00	0%

