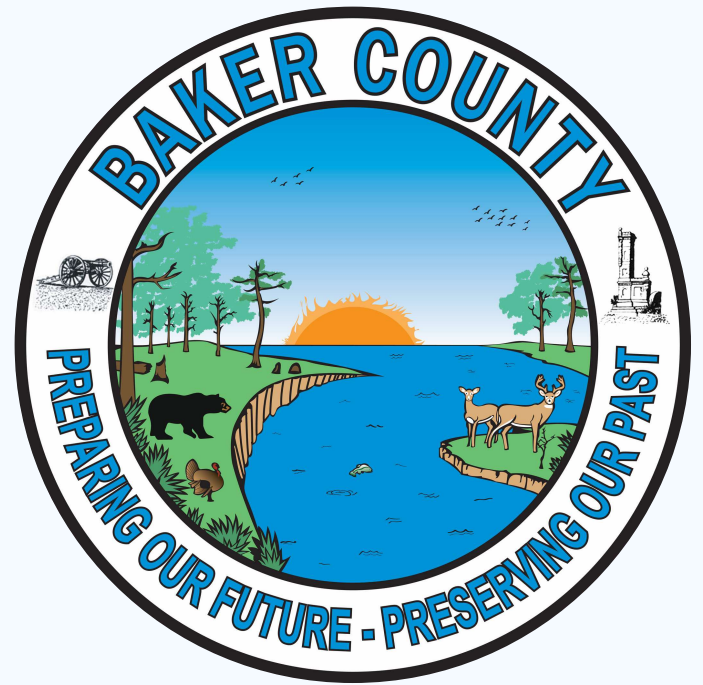


# BAKER COUNTY SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SWOT ANALYSIS REPORT



PREPARED BY THE  
NORTHEAST FLORIDA  
REGIONAL COUNCIL





# Executive Summary

Provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 105,452 individuals died due to a drug overdose from December 2021 through December, 2022, 75% of these are reported as “opioid involved.” However, due to reporting delays, the actual numbers could be higher.

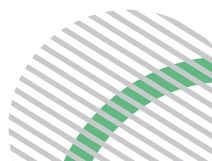
In anticipation of access to the opioid abatement settlements, the Baker County Board of County Commissioners requested the assistance of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) to conduct a community-based Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of its actions to combat the rise of substance use and mental health disorders. The SWOT Workshop was conducted on April 12, 2023, NEFRC staff provided community partners with relevant data on substance use disorder (SUD) impacts and facilitated a discussion around the three key focus areas Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support.

During the meeting, partners were able to identify which programs currently work well, what additional programs need to be implemented for Baker County residents, how the areas of prevention, treatment, and recovery support can be impacted in the short term, and how the county can prioritize initiatives for the long-term.

Community partners came to several conclusions:

- They successfully reach Baker County youth but must be more engaged with the 30-40 aged population;
- Their dependence on neighboring counties for treatment services;
- The development of a Community Paramedicine Program will assist in warm handoffs and connecting patients to treatment services offered locally; and
- Completing a Community Health Assessment will be beneficial when supporting those in recovery.

Baker County has taken the initial step to plan for the arrival of settlement funds. County leadership and community organizations are prepared to implement these funds on the most effective and efficient evidence-based solutions.



# The Impact of Substance Use Disorder

Provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 105,452 individuals died due to a drug overdose from December 2021- December, 2022, 75% of these are reported as “opioid involved.” However, due to reporting delays, the actual numbers could be higher. Additionally, reported and predicted numbers involving synthetic opioids (fentanyl, excluding methadone), methamphetamine, and cocaine have all increased.

Local provisional data from FLHealthCHARTS indicates that Baker County suffered 15 fatal overdoses in 2021, with 6 of them resulting from an opioid.

Overdoses, Baker County							
Indicator	Measure	Year	January-March (Provisional)	April-June (Provisional)	July-September (Provisional)	October-December (Provisional)	Year-to-Date (Provisional)
<b>Fatal Overdoses</b>							
Opioid Overdose Deaths ⓘ	Count	2021	1	2	1	2	6
Drug Overdose Deaths ⓘ	Count	2021	2	2	3	2	9

Figure 1: Provisional Overdose Data (FLHealthCHARTS.gov)

In 2022, data from the Agency for Health Care Administration, dating back to 2018, indicates a steady rise in Total Non-fatal Overdose Emergency Department Visits, while Non-fatal Overdose Hospitalizations have remained relatively consistent.



# The Impact of Substance Use Disorder Cont.

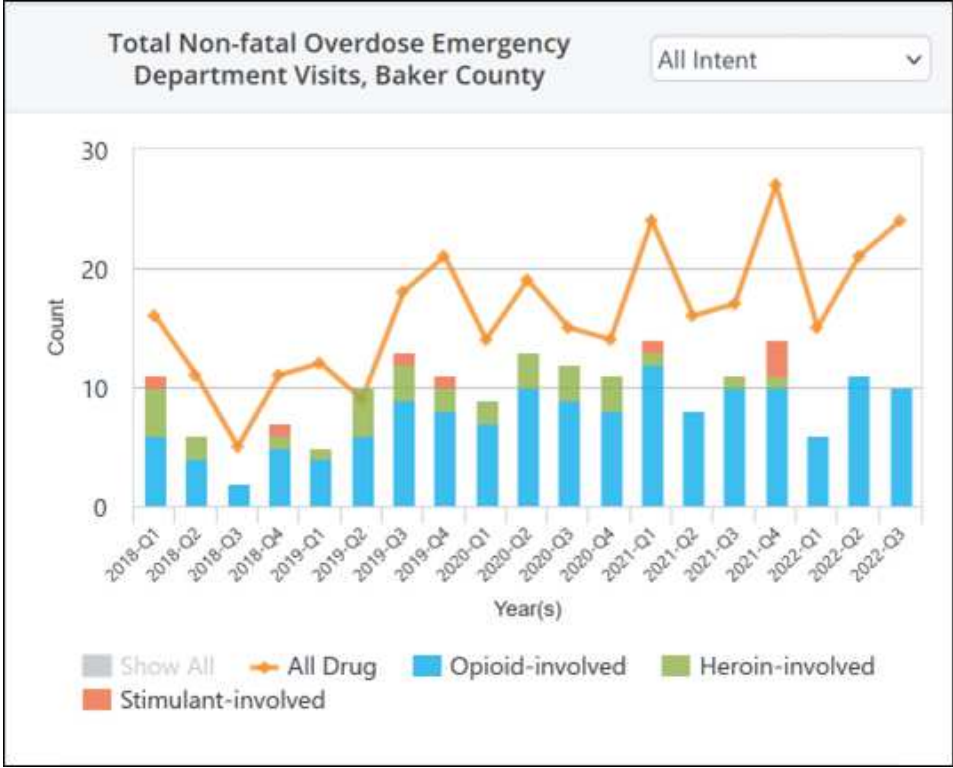


Figure 2: Total Non-fatal Overdose ED Visits (FLHealthCHARTS.gov)

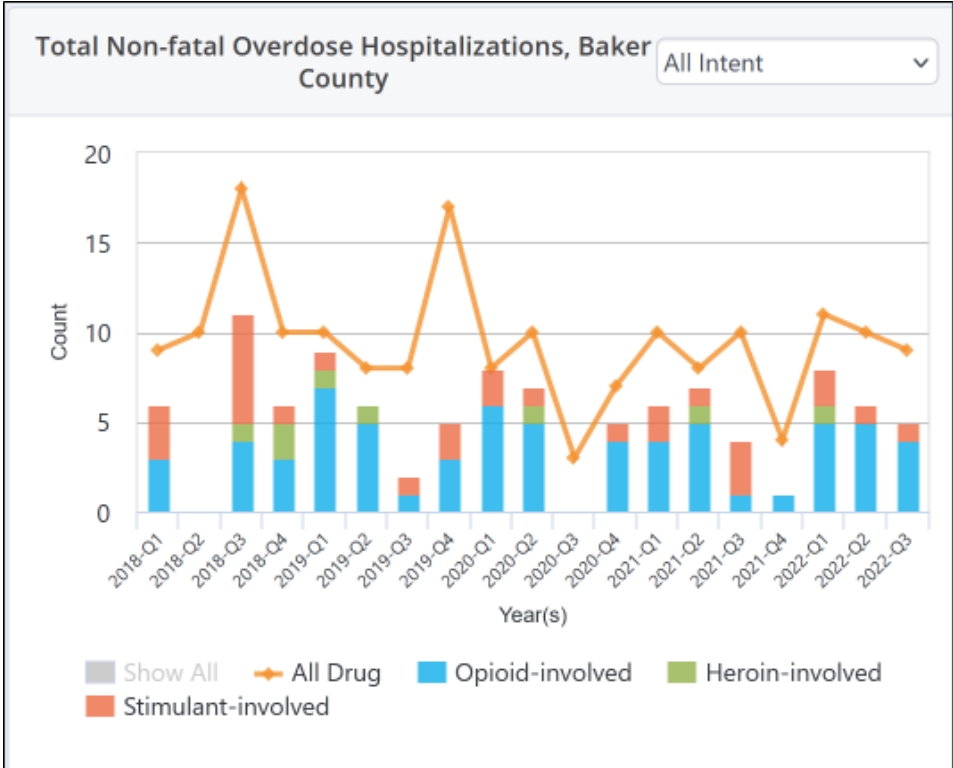
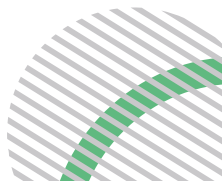


Figure 3: Total Non-fatal Overdose Hospitalizations (FLHealthCHARTS.gov)

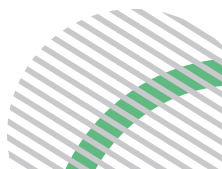


# SWOT: Prevention

Prevention activities work to educate and support individuals and communities to prevent the use and misuse of drugs and the development of substance use disorders.

The following comments were received during the community SWOT analysis meeting. These comments are not ranked in priority.

<b><u>Strengths</u></b>	<b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>	<b><u>Opportunities</u></b>	<b><u>Threats</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• County ordinances already enacted</li><li>• Community assessment of issues from a community perspective</li><li>• Several programs in the county are well funded</li><li>• Programs within the school system have proven to be effective (i.e. Project Prom)</li><li>• Community organizations have broken down organizational silos</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initiatives can be symptom-based and not on the root cause (Substance Use vs. Mental Health discussion)</li><li>• Need for a Community Health Assessment</li><li>• No organization is currently connecting programs across disciplines (expansion of warm-handoffs)</li><li>• Transportation resources to health-based services</li><li>• The largest focus of Prevention Programs is strictly on youth. More programs are needed for varying age populations</li><li>• Availability of reversal agents (naloxone)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research how nearby counties have implemented their initiatives</li><li>• Bring community leaders together to discuss initiatives with medical experts</li><li>• Increase alignment between student-focused programs</li><li>• Focused effort on elected officials' guidance on the issue</li><li>• Focused effort on working with the Faith-based community</li><li>• Expand after school programs</li><li>• Creation of mobilized outreach vehicles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stigma</li><li>• High overall ACEs score for grade school students</li><li>• Programs are confined to at school, little to no follow-up done at home</li><li>• Home insecurities leading to a decline in mental health</li><li>• Substance Use and Mental Health are often viewed as separate things</li></ul>



# SWOT: Treatment

Treatment for substance use disorders is designed to help people stop alcohol or drug use and transition into recovery to remain sober and/or drug-free.

The following comments were received during the community SWOT analysis meeting. These comments are not ranked in priority.

## **Strengths**

- Baker County Schools have mental health counselors inside the schools
- The county has several educational resources focused on treatment
- Developing a Community Paramedicine Program
- Community discussions are beginning

## **Weaknesses**

- People needing to leave the community for detox services
- Treatment services encounter staffing shortages
- The county does not have a drug court
- Most resources are confined to Macclenny
- Hospital struggles to refer patients to treatment-based facilities
- Lack of peer support housing

## **Opportunities**

- High demand grants focused on MAT
- Peer support training
- Faith-based community needs more education and resources
- Expand family support services during treatment
- Focused effort on educating the 30-40 aged population.
- A case manager for corrections
- Community leaders can play a bigger role in bridging gaps
- Expand relationships with Meridian Behavioral Healthcare

## **Threats**

- Stigma
- Youth can be good at hiding risky behavior and the need for treatment
- Patients' ability to afford the treatment cost
- County is dependent on surrounding counties for in-person services.
- Cost for services

# SWOT: Recovery Support

Recovery Support services assist individuals in their recovery and prevention of relapse in the future. Recovery is a lifelong process, and staying in recovery can be a difficult task.

The following comments were received during the community SWOT analysis meeting. These comments are not ranked in priority.

<b><u>Strengths</u></b>	<b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>	<b><u>Opportunities</u></b>	<b><u>Threats</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council on Aging provides transportation services</li><li>• Conducting a Community Health Assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The connection back to prevention-based services</li><li>• Need to expand mental health recovery options along with substance use options</li><li>• Lack of warm handoffs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand after school programs</li><li>• Expand telehealth options</li><li>• Work with the faith-based community to expand local meeting and support groups</li><li>• Expand access to substance recovery information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stigma</li><li>• Relapse can be deadly.</li><li>• Recovery is a lifelong process and relapse can be common.</li></ul>

# Analysis

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## Prevention

Currently, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimates the average return on investment of prevention services to be **18 dollars** for every dollar spent. In a small, rural community like Baker, this investment could significantly impact multiple organizations. By addressing substance use disorders and increasing mental health services, the county can save lives and reduce the costs of associated services that often have the most impact on local government.

For Baker County, prevention should continue as the number one priority. For this reason, the *Healthy Baker* program and its partners have found innovative ways to engage their school-aged youth. They have increased access to mental health services, provided education materials, and arranged student body events for detailed discussions. These programs should continue to be expanded as Baker County initiatives are prioritized. Secondly, public messaging and access to prevention services need to be developed for groups of all ages.

To accomplish this, community organizations must reach these groups in different ways and include

- various social media campaigns,
- local business partnerships,
- community discussions,
- mental health services, and
- the faith-based community.

# Treatment

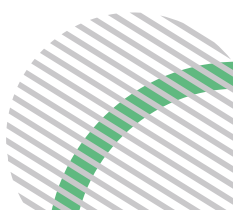
Baker County is currently heavily dependent on surrounding counties for various treatment programs. As a result, Baker County Fire and Rescue Department has been preparing for the development of a Community Paramedicine Program (CPP) to connect patients with treatment services directly. This warm handoff ensures that the patient receives the best treatment. The practice of warm hands-offs between services needs to be a focus area for treatment and recovery programs across the community.

Additionally, the county will need to expand local treatment services. The county needs more mental health professionals, detox beds, and peer support specialists. Expanding these services will increase availability while making the process significantly more efficient. By having access to convenient services, patients are more likely to participate. Simultaneously, offering programs locally will increase the CPP's efficiency and expand warm handoffs. Lastly, to be most effective with these programs and services, local organizations must focus additional resources on the 30-40 aged population.

## Recovery Support

Baker County and Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital are working together to complete a Community Health Assessment. While this information can assist the county in all three focus areas, it can significantly help community organizations to assist those in recovery as there is a diversity of needs these individuals can experience, i.e., jobs, housing, transportation assistance, access to medical services, and support groups. During this health assessment, local officials will gather data on physical community impacts, mental health assessments, and the social vulnerability index.

Using this data, community organizations can match those in recovery with organizations or programs that meet the specific need of patients and identify which services should be expanded. Immediate needs will most likely include additional services for community meetings and support groups, telehealth options for mental health/recovery services, and educational services for the families of those in recovery. Recovery is a life long process that changes for each patient over time.



# Next Steps

Baker County and its community organizations have positioned themselves well for the arrival of opioid use disorder and mental health funds. They have worked hard to provide numerous prevention-based programs to their youth, laid the foundation for the development of a Community Paramedicine Program, and are surveying their residents for an updated Community Health Assessment. Most notably, through the Florida Department of Health-Baker, they conduct regularly scheduled Healthy Baker meetings with organizations active in the community.

The county and its partners need to prioritize a few initiatives to be the most effective with their effort. Most importantly, during the development and implementation of the Community Paramedicine Program, the program will need to work closely with Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital to develop an effective reporting process. Data for substance use deaths, hospitalizations, and Emergency Department visits can be a lagging indicator. Access to real-time data will help organizations implement evidence-based solutions for areas experiencing various social vulnerabilities. Additionally, having real-time data is tremendously valuable for public messaging. It allows organizations to curate messages towards a specific audience and to identify which method of media their audience is most likely to engage with.

Additionally, Baker County needs more treatment and recovery support services to be offered locally. The county and its partners should identify how to expand the already successful local programs and work to replicate programs that work effectively in neighboring counties. A key to long term success in Baker County is to increase partnerships with the faith-based communities. Partnerships with the faith-based community will benefit prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs in various ways.

Lastly, community leaders and organizations must combat the stigma of substance disorders and mental health impacts. Unintentionally, stigma can have an amplified effect in smaller communities. Community organizations must develop various education materials to reduce stigma with messaging campaigns designed for the public. Education on these topics will be the primary way to address the stigma associated with substance use disorders. However, another effective tool to combat stigma is to design relevant programs with an additional level of privacy built-in, implemented most efficiently via Telehealth capabilities.

Baker County's leadership and community organizations have already accomplished a tremendous amount in response to substance use disorders and are preparing for the best use of their settlement dollars. The level of communication between the local government and community organizations will only continue to improve and innovate effective programs offered to Baker County residents.

