

COMMUNITY-BASED ASSESSMENT: OVERCOMING THE OPIOID CRISIS IN THE SOMALI COMMUNITY

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The Somali community in Minnesota is dealing with the opioid addiction crisis. Between 2020 and 2021 many young people have overdosed on the powerful opioid fentanyl. The exact number of overdoses is hard to track, because addiction has long been a source of shame in the East African communities, where youth's overdoses are often masked as heart attacks or unexplainable deaths. There is a great need for a community led-needs assessment to understand community knowledge, perception and needs around this issue.

Project partners would like to thank Propel Nonprofits for providing funding for the project. We also like to thank the many community members who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this work providing both ideas, advice and guidance.

NEEDS ASSESMENT GOALS

- To understand community knowledge and perception of opioid problem in the community
- To gain community input of what is needed to address the opioid crisis in the community
- To identify diverse needs among different populations (youth, elders and parents, females and males, etc
- To inform future policy and programming around this issue

WHO PARTICIPATED:

A total of 47 Somali American participated. Our community contributors included teachers, religious leaders, educators, youth counselors, mental health clinicians, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, teenagers and retirees, recent arrivals and native Minnesotans.

WHAT QUESTIONS WERE ASKED?

Questions focused on community knowledge about opioid crisis, what they attribute this crisis to, where community members go for help when impacted by this crisis and what can be done to address the opioid crisis in our community.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

Community members know about the devastating impact of the opioid crisis. They can name opioids in both Somali and English. They are tired of activities that focus on “teaching them about the issue” rather than programs that address the root causes and are focused on intervention activities. They want us to move from “What is this” to “What can we do and how do we do it”. **Community identified 8 areas that we can act on to impact this crisis.** 1. Extracurriculars 2. Early education 3. Educating Parents 4. Improving communications 5. Partnering with religious/community leaders 6. Community owned spaces for youth 7. Mental Health services 8. Reducing stigma and providing targeted services.

NEXT STEPS?

- Supporting parents to provide early education about substance use.
- Reducing stigma and providing targeted services.
- Promoting parent and child communication/education.
- Encouraging prosocial/extracurricular activities for kids.

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