

Why We Conducted This Review

This report provides information on how Louisiana oversees, distributes, and spends opioid settlement funds. In Louisiana, these funds are distributed to parishes and sheriffs' offices (sheriffs). To determine actual expenditures of opioid settlement funds, we conducted a survey of parishes and sheriffs. We conducted this review to provide information to the legislature and the public about how opioid settlement funds are used to combat the opioid epidemic in Louisiana, and to provide recommendations to improve oversight.

What We Found

Based on our survey, 20 parishes and 24 sheriffs have spent approximately \$8.6 million in opioid settlement funds as of September 2024. Some parishes and sheriffs have not yet spent any of their funds. The exhibit below shows expenditures of opioid settlement funds by parishes and sheriffs who responded to our survey categorized by the allowed uses.

Parish and Sheriff Opioid Settlement Funds Expenditures As of September 2024 (20 of 29 Parish Respondents/24 of 43 Sheriff Respondents)		
Approved Purpose	Parishes	Sheriffs
Treatment. Treat opioid use disorder; support people in treatment and recovery; connect people who need help to the help they need (connections to care); address the needs of criminal justice involved persons; address the needs of pregnant and parenting women, and babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome	\$2,284,618	\$750,840
Prevention. Prevent over-prescribing and ensure appropriate prescribing and dispensing of opioids; prevent misuse of opioids; prevent overdose deaths and other harms (harm reduction)	619,020	420,383
Other Strategies. First responders; leadership, planning, and coordination; training; research	1,714,802	2,820,065
Total	\$4,618,440	\$3,991,288
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using November 2024 LLA survey of parishes and sheriffs.		

- **No entity has been specifically tasked with enforcing the terms of the opioid settlement agreements in Louisiana.** Terms of the settlement agreements include payment amounts and approved uses.
- **The Louisiana Opioid Abatement Taskforce (LaOATF) is the advisory body for all opioid settlement funds. Louisiana's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) does not give LaOATF the authority to ensure that parish and sheriff expenditures comply with the MOU.** Half of states, or 25 (50.0%) of 50, have established oversight entities that are limited to an advisory role, similar to Louisiana.

Opioid Settlement Funds

Louisiana Opioid Abatement Taskforce/Corporation

What We Found (Cont.)

- LaOATF has distributed approximately \$98.5 million in opioid settlement funds to parishes and sheriffs as of October 2024, and retained \$21.1 million for administration and the Local Government Fee Fund (LGFF) as of September 2024. Most states, or 49 (98.0%) of 50, allocate at least some portion of opioid settlement funds directly to local governments. The exhibit at right provides the distributions of opioid settlement funds in Louisiana as of September and October 2024.
- Best practices recommend that funds be used on evidence-based practices that address substance use disorders. According to our survey, as of September 2024, 20 parishes and 24 sheriffs have spent approximately \$8.6 million of opioid settlement funds on treatment, prevention, and other strategies to address substance use. Other states have spent opioid settlement funds in various ways, such as housing and treatment services for women, workforce training, naloxone distribution, and youth education campaigns.
- According to our survey, 9 (31.0%) of 29 responding parishes and 19 (44.2%) of 43 responding sheriffs have not spent any of their opioid settlement funds. Parishes and sheriffs have encountered barriers to spending opioid settlement funds such as a lack of staff and a lack of programs and services in their area; and want more guidance from LaOATF about how to use the funds. Best practices recommend using data and experts to determine how to best use opioid settlement funds.
- Louisiana’s MOU requires that parishes, but not sheriffs, submit an annual expenditure report to LaOATF, and that LaOATF issue an annual report. As of December 2024, only 36 (67.9%) of 53 expenditure reports due have been submitted to LaOATF. Best practices recommend that parishes and sheriffs report expenditures, and measure and report outcomes. Many states, or 34 (68.0%) of 50, require some reporting of opioid settlement expenditures; however, the specific reporting requirements vary.

Distributions of Opioid Settlement Funds As of September and October 2024*	
Purpose	Actual Distribution
LaOATF Administration	\$3,653,748
LGFF Set-aside**	17,488,860
Sheriffs	20,160,204
Parishes	78,318,992
Totals	\$119,621,804
*The distributions for administration and LGFF are as of September 2024. The distributions to parishes and sheriffs is as of October 2024. **The actual distributed amounts do not match the allocation percentage due to the timing of distributions. For example, the 7.5% set aside for the LGFF must be paid within the first seven years of the 18-year payout. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor’s staff using data from LaOATF.	

According to the MOU, approved purposes means evidence-based forward-looking strategies, programming and services used to:

- provide treatment for citizens affected by substance use disorders;
- provide support for citizens in recovery from addiction who are under the care of SAMHSA qualified and appropriately licensed health care providers; and
- target treatment of citizens who are not covered by Medicaid or not covered by private insurance for addictive services.

This report contained six recommendations, and LaOATF staff agreed with all six of them.