

Date: Dec. 23, 2025
Contact: Tina Elam, Communications Manager
Phone: 651-430-6004 (office), 651-592-5989 (after hours)
E-mail: Tina.Elam@WashingtonCountyMN.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 23, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board adopts committee, commission, joint powers board assignments

The Washington County Board of Commissioners adopted 2026 assignments Dec. 23 for the committees, commissions, and joint powers boards on which commissioners serve.

As part of their duties as commissioners, County Board members serve on groups that oversee governance and functions throughout the metropolitan area and the state. The following changes to assignments from 2025 were made for 2026:

- Commissioner Bethany Cox, District 3, was added to the Mental Health Advisory Committee and to the State Community Health Services Advisory Committee as an alternate.
- Commissioner Stan Karwosk, District 2, was added to the Parks and Open Space Commission.
- Commissioner Fran Miron, District 1, was added to the University of Minnesota County Extension Advisory Committee as an alternate.
- Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, was removed as an alternate to the Minnesota Inter-County Association Board.

Contact: Megan Carlson, Office of Administration Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6001

County Board extends contracts for day support, employment support service providers through 2028

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved two contract amendments Dec. 23 with organizations to provide day support services (DSS) and employment support services (ESS) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through 2028.

The County Board extended the term of the contracts with Rise and Lifeworks Services, Inc. through Dec. 31, 2028. The board added \$167,000 per year to the Rise contract and \$57,000 per year to the Lifeworks Services, Inc. contract to provide services in 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Washington County is responsible for providing DSS and ESS to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. DSS services help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities achieve and maintain the highest level of independence, productivity, and community integration. DSS provides services related to employment, self-care, communication skills, socialization, physical mobility, and cognitive development. The county is mandated to protect the health and safety of vulnerable adults, which includes providing supervision and care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities during the day when their caregivers are not present.

The ESS program offers support and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It helps them secure paid jobs in community workplaces where people without disabilities are also employed. The program encourages regular interactions with people who don't have disabilities and aren't paid caregivers or service providers.

Contact: Denise Landry, Community Services Division Manager, 651-275-7754

Washington County Opioid Settlement Council awards \$700,000 in opioid settlement grants

The Washington County Opioid Settlement Council awarded \$700,000 in opioid settlement grants Dec. 23 to seven community-based projects that are responding to the opioid crisis.

Three projects that received grants in 2025 were selected for additional funding to continue and expand on their projects. Four new grantees that are focusing on new areas and strategies that address community needs were selected for 2026 funding.

The 15-member Opioid Settlement Council selected seven projects. This council has community members, experts from various fields, and people with personal opioid experiences. Applications were open from Sept. 2 to Oct. 10. The council received and reviewed 31 proposals.

Eligible projects had to serve Washington County community members and fall into one of 13 categories, including the priority categories of treating opioid use disorder (OUD); addressing the needs of criminal justice-involved persons; and preventing overdose deaths and other harms (harm reduction).

The budgets for the selected projects range from \$25,360 to \$145,000 and include:

- Community education and outreach campaign through ShelettaMakesMeLaugh, LLC.
- Developing a recovery community organization with peer support through Waymakers to Recovery.
- Support for veterans, first responders, and their families through Invisible Wounds Project.
- Latino mental health and opioid education through Raices Latinas.
- Expanding naloxone access and harm reduction education through Steve Rummeler HOPE Network.
- Mobilizing community resources and building capacity in faith communities through The Center of Addiction and Faith.
- Expanding the Mental Health in Motion Outreach Program through the Washington County Community Services Department.

These projects will fill gaps and meet community needs by supplementing the strong network of services and resources already available in Washington County. These services include the Naloxone Access Point (NAP) Program — a partnership with the Steve Rummeler HOPE Network providing no-cost naloxone and fentanyl test strips to community members at NAP sites across the county — and providing medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in the Washington County Jail.

The county's approach to forming the Opioid Settlement Council and awarding grant funds to community-based projects earned Washington County the Award for Excellence in the Application of the Opioid Litigation Principles from the Principles Coalition in September 2024. It also earned a National Association of Counties Achievement Award and a National Association of County and City Health Officials Promising Practice Award in 2025.

Contact: Rolando Vera, Senior Public Health Program Manager of Nursing Services, 651-430-7962