

**HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MAYOR**  
**WESTON WAMP**

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**Hamilton County Unveils State's First Overdose Prevention Team,  
Announces *Renewal Project* to Combat Opioid Crisis**

Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp and Hamilton County EMS today announced the launch of the Overdose Prevention Team (OPT), operating through two Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs), to combat the opioid crisis by delivering life-saving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and connecting individuals struggling with substance abuse to critical recovery resources. As the first initiative of its kind in Tennessee, this proactive approach aims to meet people in their moment of crisis, provide immediate support, and connect individuals to long-term recovery options.

"The first of its kind in Tennessee, the HCEMS Overdose Prevention Team will be the cornerstone of Hamilton County's aggressive approach to fighting the opioid crisis," said **Mayor Wamp**. "Hamilton County EMS is stepping further into a crisis that knows no boundaries, affecting families in every neighborhood, from the inner city to the suburbs and beyond. There is no one I trust more than the men and women of HCEMS to lead this effort with compassion and urgency."

A strategy developed by Dr. Ron Buchheit, Hamilton County Medical Services Director—the bridge training program was designed to provide timely medical care and comprehensive support for overdose victims and their families. After receiving approval from the State of Tennessee, this groundbreaking initiative is now launching as a multi-agency effort to address the opioid crisis.

"I created this model to meet individuals where they are," said **Dr. Ron Buchheit, Medical Director of Hamilton County Emergency Medical Services**. "This program bridges the gap from critical medications for opioid use disorder to long-term recovery resources, combining timely intervention with ongoing support to save lives and guide individuals on a clear path to healing."

The Overdose Prevention Team will be staffed by HCEMS outreach teams consisting of a paramedic and a certified peer support specialist. The paramedic will administer medication-assisted treatment (MAT), while the peer support specialist, with lived experience in recovery, will help identify barriers and provide ongoing support. The team will work closely with the Health Department to connect individuals with a navigator who will guide them to community resources for long-term rehabilitation. Additionally, the county will partner with organizations like The McNabb Center to ensure continuous care and sustained recovery as individuals transition out of the program.

“This quick response program marks a pivotal shift in how our community responds to the opioid crisis,” said **Gayle Lodato LCSW, Regional Vice President of The McNabb Center**. “By bringing care directly into neighborhoods, this innovative effort offers a real chance at recovery for those battling addiction through reducing barriers, lowering stigma, and increasing a personal connection—all necessary elements of recovery.”

In tandem with the launch of the Overdose Prevention Team, the county is allocating opioid settlement funds to several respected recovery organizations with significant capital needs as part of a *Renewal Project*, many of which will be key partners in the OPT initiative. Recognized for their impactful work in Hamilton County, the organizations listed below will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the county’s efforts to combat the opioid crisis, renewing hope for families and revitalizing communities.

**Proposed Funding for the *Renewal Project*:**

- **LaunchPad (\$500,000):** Sober living housing for women
- **CADAS (\$500,000):** Expansion of recovery housing
- **The McNabb Center (\$250,000):** Transitional housing for formerly incarcerated men with substance use disorder
- **Chambliss Center for Children (\$225,000):** Facility upgrades for childcare services
- **Boys & Girls Club of Chattanooga (\$225,000):** Security upgrades, equipment and supply needs
- **Partnership for Families, Children and Adults (\$150,000):** Housing to support girls aging out of foster care
- **End School-Age Homelessness Initiative (\$150,000):** Housing support for students in Hamilton County Schools

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