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CSAC Awards \$872,500 to Combat Substance Use in the Territory

At its quarterly meeting held on Wednesday January 31, 2024, at the Department of Youth and Women's Affairs in Tafuna, the American Samoa Government's Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council (CSAC) addressed critical updates on the opioid settlement and various initiatives aimed at combating substance abuse. The meeting commenced with opening remarks by CSAC Chair Lieutenant Governor Talauega EV Ale, emphasizing the council's commitment to addressing the challenges posed by substance abuse in the community.

The Governors Drug Control Office, which is tasked to provide support and coordination of the CSAC, provided updates on the Opioid Settlement, revealing details about the \$1.1 million national settlement and re-iterating the Council's "Big 3" goals of prevention, enforcement, and treatment and rehabilitation. In the presentation, they also outlined proposal guidelines, allocating 70% of funds to programs, 15% to administrative costs and staffing, and 15% to miscellaneous expenses. The disbursement process was explained, focusing on supporting committee efforts and adhering to the settlement's approved uses.

The Governor's Drug Control Office staff Pava Malologa Lagai provided a detailed breakdown of the CSAC evaluation panel's efforts in reviewing applications. This included the review of funding proposals from both the Government and non-profit organizations to ensure the efficient allocation of resources to combat substance abuse in the Territory. A total of \$872,500 of opioid settlement funds were announced and will be soon awarded to relevant ASG departments, non-profit organizations, or Non-Government Organizations (NGO) whose funding proposals aim to prevent, enforce, and provide treatment services in the community. Awarded government departments include the Department of Treasury Customs, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Youth and Women's Affairs, and the Department of Health. Non-profit or community-based organizations include: Tautua, 4-H Youth Council, and the Parents of Children with Special Needs (PCSN).

The Council then heard presentations and updates from its respective subcommittees to include education and outreach, enforcement, and rehabilitation and treatment where updates on major projects and challenges were shared. Some of these include:

- The prevalence of methamphetamine in 2023 drug cases presented by the DPS Vice and Narcotics
- Treasury Customs Seizures at our ports of entry & new K9 Kennel Facility
- Operations Assist and Trainings at DHS OTICIDE
- Increase in referrals to the Department of Health through the Court and Drug and Alcohol Testing and Counselor Certification and training
- ASG drug testing policy
- Construction of Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center scheduled to begin in 2024

Lieutenant Governor Ale expressed his commitment to ensuring that the awarded funds are utilized in alignment with Council goals. The CSAC plans to meet this week with the enforcement subcommittee to explore options for leveraging resources and to strategize its shared enforcement goals in moving forward.

“The CSAC remains dedicated to fostering a healthier and safer community, and the investments and ongoing initiatives outlined in this meeting mark a significant step toward achieving this goal”, states the Chair and Lieutenant Governor.

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