

Summary of 2026 Martha's Vineyard Substance Use Disorder & Behavioral Health Community Needs Assessment

Purpose and approach

The Martha's Vineyard Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Behavioral Health (BH) Community Needs Assessment was developed to identify community priorities and inform funding decisions by Martha's Vineyard Opioid Abatement Advisory Board (OAAB). The assessment examined existing services, community strengths, barriers to care, gaps in the service system, and opportunities to improve coordination and access.

The assessment included community surveys, provider and civic organization surveys, 17 service provider interviews, and two focus groups. More than 70 organizations were mapped to better understand the island's network of health, social, civic, and faith-based resources. Findings reflect voluntary participation and should not be interpreted as representative of the entire island population.

Key findings

- Existing resources and community support: Martha's Vineyard has an established and evolving network of SUD/BH services. Family, friends, and local providers play important roles in supporting individuals. However, many community members remain unaware of available services and may perceive that little support exists on the island.
- Significant ongoing need: In 2025, the assessment reported six substance use-related deaths, all alcohol-related, and 228 substance use-related emergency department visits. Although mortality and emergency visits have declined from their 2022–2023 peaks, needs remain.
- Gaps in access and continuity of care: Major barriers include limited case management and care coordination, staffing shortages, long wait times, cost and insurance challenges, limited on-island detoxification options, and restricted access to medication-assisted treatment, particularly methadone.
- Prevention and education opportunities: School-based education, community workshops, peer support, harm reduction, and stigma reduction were identified as valuable approaches.
- Populations needing focused attention: Children and adolescents, young adults transitioning to adult services, unhoused individuals, and Brazilian Portuguese-speaking community members face particular barriers involving service availability, continuity of care, language, cultural stigma, and trust.

Strategic recommendations

The assessment identifies five interconnected priorities for future planning and investment:

1. Improve service access and availability through expanded service hours, seasonal workforce support, culturally responsive services, and improved tracking of outcomes.
2. Expand prevention, education, peer support, and stigma reduction through school and community programming, harm reduction initiatives, and meaningful involvement of people with lived and living experience.
3. Strengthen coordination and system navigation through interdisciplinary partner meetings, improved referral pathways, secure information-sharing practices, and a centralized, accessible resource directory.
4. Strengthen the workforce through cross-sector training, seasonal employment, internships, and remote or hybrid positions where feasible.
5. Address equity and social determinants of health through mobile services, multilingual resources, housing support following detoxification, and continued community engagement.

Conclusion and next steps

The assessment highlights that addressing SUD/BH needs on Martha's Vineyard requires a coordinated, island-wide approach rather than isolated interventions. Improving access to services must be paired with stronger partnerships, workforce development, prevention, culturally and linguistically inclusive programming, and attention to housing and other social determinants of health.

The findings provide a strategic framework for the OAAB, service providers, municipal agencies, and community partners to guide opioid abatement funding, strengthen the continuum of care, and improve community awareness of available resources. Continued data collection and broader community participation will be important to refine priorities and evaluate progress.

Source: Martha's Vineyard Substance Use Disorder and Behavioral Health Community Needs Assessment, presented by Kalasiddhi Thapa and Jaden Thackston, September 17, 2026.