



Goodhue County
Health and Human Services

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DATE: February 25, 2026
TO: Goodhue County Budget Committee
Goodhue County Board
FROM: Nina Arneson, Goodhue County HHS Director
RE: Out of State Travel Request

BACKGROUND:

The Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC) grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) will cover the cost for Zach Blickenstaff, Youth Prevention Specialist, to participate in the 2026 Montana Summer Institute June 16-19, 2026, in Big Sky, Montana. (<https://www.montanainstitute.com/msi>)

Summer is an ideal time to attend while school is not in session, so it doesn't take Zach away from the youth he serves in Goodhue County. Our OERAC grant ends on June 30, 2026, but DHS has approved this travel because our work won't stop. We were awarded 2026 - 2028 Goodhue County Opioid Settlement Advisory Council (OSAC) funds that guarantee our project for at least 2 more school years. Minnesota's opioid settlement was divided between the state and local governments, and essentially this project is shifting from state opioid funding to local opioid funding.

The Institute focuses on protective factors and positive community norms - which are a huge part of our project. Zach plans to keep the student-led poster campaigns going under the new funding, and this training will strengthen that strategy. Training in positive community norms supports the goal of preventing opioid misuse.

The OERAC grant will cover Zach's staff time, registration, hotel, meals, and flight.

RECOMMENDATION: The GCHHS Department recommends approval of this request.