

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

Here in Franklin County, our Overdose Task Force has been earnestly compiling and reporting our work and specifically our data on an annual basis. We have done so because our country and our own community have been gripped by an ongoing opioid crisis for the past several years, and our community as a whole has been focused on grappling with the challenge. In 2020, the entire world was impacted by yet another public health crisis, COVID-19, and our country experienced additional layered crises related to the collateral economic impacts of COVID-19, and our socio-political challenges. 2020 was replete with crises, and our opioid crisis has remained in that unfortunate mix. For many of us in many different fields and disciplines generally, from finance to education, mental health, criminal justice, etc., the anticipated collateral fallout from COVID-19 and the necessary attendant mitigation efforts was a concern from the onset in March 2020. For those of us committed to reducing and ultimately ending fatal overdoses, we feared a drastic increase of opioid use and fatal overdoses, mostly related to the stretches of time when mitigation measures restricted normal life and social contact for much of the population.

Because of the greatly reduced access to substance abuse recovery programs and lack of social contact in general, we braced ourselves for the worst after the onset of COVID-19 and the early lockdowns.

Here in Franklin County, we lost **29** members of our community to fatal overdose in 2020. For context, the numbers of fatal overdoses since 2014 are as follows:

2014: 11
2015: 24
2016: 46
2017: 35
2018: 32
2019: 26

As a reminder, before 2015, we generally averaged 10-12 fatal overdoses per year, going back decades. While our fatal overdose final tally of 29 was indeed slightly more than 2019, it was not as high of a number as many of us feared at the onset of COVID-19. Regardless, all 29 citizens we lost are mourned by their family and friends and all of us, and there is certainly no reasonable cause for this number to be considered a “success,” even under the unique circumstances of 2020.

Usually, the annual data available nationally takes a number of months into a new year. For 2020, however, we have some early results. According to a recent ABC News article¹ written by

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/opioid-overdoses-29-higher-2020-pandemic-study/story?id=75785104>

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

Dr. Nicholas Nissen², it appears opioid overdoses generally rose 29% higher in the United States in 2020. For context, the U.S. experienced 70,000 fatal overdose deaths in 2019, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, cited in the article. Dr. Nissen's article was based upon a Journal of the American Medical Association ("JAMA") Psychiatry study. Dr. Nissen wrote, "[I]n a large cross-sectional study published in JAMA Psychiatry on Feb. 3 that analyzed nearly 190 million emergency department ("ED") visits, researchers found significantly higher rates of visits to EDs for opioid overdoses during the months of March to October 2020 when compared against the same dates in 2019. The study found that, from mid-April onward, the weekly rates of ED visits for drug overdoses increased by up to 45% when compared against the same period in 2019. Overall ED visits for opioid overdoses were up 28.8% year over year. While some survived these overdoses, many others were not so lucky."

Attached to this Annual Update is the Overdose Reduction Data Report, prepared by our partners at the University of Pittsburgh/Program Evaluation and Research Unit ("PITT PERU"). The PITT PERU report shows our specific 2020 Franklin County data related to:

1. Death rate
2. Demographic Trends (gender/age)
3. Toxicology Trends
4. Emergency Department Admissions
5. Naloxone Administration
6. Drug Take Back
7. Good Wolf Treatment Court
8. Get Back Up
9. Mental Health Statistics

Below are brief summaries of our collaborative work from 2020, broken down by specific workgroup and concentration (ongoing initiatives and programs previously announced in prior Annual Report(s) are not included, unless there is a specific update for them):

TREATMENT WORK GROUP

Christy Unger was hired as the new Single County Authority ("SCA") for Franklin/Fulton Drug and Alcohol Commission.

Two new Co-Chairs were appointed to the Treatment Work Group; Janelle Ward from PA Counseling and Christina Kamau from Roxbury.

The Treatment Work Group was sidelined for much of 2020 due to the changeover in SCA, Treatment Work Group co-chairs and COVID-19. Meetings resumed virtually in November 2020 after new co-chairs were assigned.

² Nicholas Nissen, M.D., is a clinical fellow and resident physician in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and an ABC News Medical Unit doctor.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

The Treatment Work Group has spent the majority of its time reviewing the current strategic plan and discussing which initiatives should remain as well as additional initiatives that should be added.

COVID-19 initially impacted substance use treatment within the county, specifically during the initial lockdown periods. Many outpatient providers had to quickly establish virtual options for clients that did not necessarily exist. Inpatient providers had to quickly establish new protocols and safety measures to protect staff and patients alike. Initially, outpatient clients were hesitant to receive care in person, opting for virtual options when they were approved and available. Conversely, inpatient facilities filled up due to the lockdown and lack of available shelter, recovery house spaces and other homes to go to. There were several months in which consumer confidence was low, creating low patient volume across all levels of care. While patient and client confidence continues to ebb and flow (usually based on restrictions), treatment providers are actively providing care both in person and virtually across the spectrum.

RECOVERY WORKGROUP

Leah's Legacy. Distributed 140 Bags through 10 distributions in the year 2020; covered areas from Ephrata, PA to Fredrick, MD with emphasis in Franklin/Fulton County; Leah's Legacy Operations Center was completed in October 2020, which is a 20x32 facility that serves as the hub for all operations and product storage; *First fundraiser will be June 3, 2021 with a Bluegrass concert*

Penn State Mont Alto Certified Recovery Specialist ("CRS") Training. Started with 15 CRS students and 14 completed the class; classes were completed Nov 2020; 6 students have taken the exam and received their certification; CRS exam can be taken online now, and there is a possibility that more of the 14 will receive certification but have not taken the online test yet.

Recovery Work Group Meetings. Reconvened meetings in October 2020 after a halt on all meetings at the start of March 2020 due to COVID-19; re-established consistent meetings in October, with overall steady attendance from participating group members

CRS Collaborative. Created for CRS's to share what is happening in their organizations to serve our community better and better assist each other ; it is also to encourage each other, seek solutions for ourselves and identify and advocate for solutions to sustain and our recovery and those in our Community.

September National Recovery Month. Franklin County Commissioners issued proclamation; Unity in The Community, purple lights installed downtowns Chambersburg, Mercersburg, Waynesboro and Greencastle; purple lights and yard signs for community members; September Town Hall Meeting featuring a panel and discussion on recovery

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

PA Counseling/Lighthouse. Continue to run support meetings not associated with NA or AA etc., and provide an outlet for individuals struggling with Substance Abuse Disorder (“SUD”) and looking for recovery.

Wellspan. Hiring CRSs; 1-844-WARMLINE, a 24/7 call-line to receive information about treatment and recovery options, talk about a loved one who is struggling with addiction, and get connected with family mentoring resources.

Sublocade. New deployment of this buprenorphine extended-release injection used to treat adults with moderate to severe dependence to opioid drugs.

Be a Loving Mirror (BALM”). Online 7-week course for families affected by another’s substance use disorder; funded by Franklin/Fulton Drug and Alcohol; course started in November 2020

COVID-19 and Meetings. 2020 presented a lot of challenges with COVID-19; concerns with individuals being able to attend recovery support meetings; Zoom and Virtual meetings, while not the same as in person, have become a great alternative for individuals to be able to continue with fellowship and supports that meetings have to offer

NARCAN Connections. Able to begin working with a number of local Certified Recovery Specialists in both Franklin and Fulton Counties to help in the training and distribution of Narcan throughout the community; continued our partnership with several local recovery houses and treatment providers to train and disburse naloxone as well as for them to have it on hand in case of an emergency; provided Narcan to a number of local parks throughout Franklin and Fulton Counties including Cowan’s Gap and Pine Grove Furnace Park; new connection with Franklin County Jail to provide Naloxone to released inmates, upon request of the individual

LAW ENFORCEMENT WORKGROUP

Prescription Pill Takeback Initiative. 1,077.4 lbs. of prescription pills were collected and destroyed (1,629.3 lbs. in 2019) in 2020; participating law enforcement agencies included:

- *Chambersburg Police Department
- *Waynesboro Police Department
- *Greencastle Police Department
- *Mercersburg Police Department
- *Washington Township Police Department
- *Pennsylvania State Police

Naloxone administration. Law enforcement officers successfully administered Naloxone to 34 individuals in 2020, with 1 fatality (24 Naloxone administrations in 2019)

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

Good Wolf Treatment Court. 5 graduates in 2020; 18 new participants admitted in 2020

Get Back Up. 183 individuals referred to Recovery Liaison; 126 individuals went to treatment inpatient or outpatient; 1,135 contacts in person/phone/email

The Franklin County Grand Jury was not active in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Drug Delivery Resulting in Death. 11 new cases in 2020 (6 in 2019)

Drug Chemistry Grant. In partnership with NMS Labs and through a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (“PCCD”), law enforcement agencies in Franklin County now forward all seized controlled substances to NMS labs for quick analysis; the testing/analysis of the chemical makeup provides intelligence regarding potential new trends and/or sources.

PREVENTION WORK GROUP

The Prevention Work Group of the Overdose Task Force worked to provide information throughout Franklin County to the general public and local school districts. Much of this was done virtually due to the pandemic and in some areas outreach was a challenge.

Work with University of Pittsburgh Technical Assistance Center.

Operation Save a Life (“OSAL”). In collaboration with funds from Franklin/Fulton Drug and Alcohol, the Prevention Work Group was able to provide the following:

- *Operation Save A Life Training (Overdose awareness and Narcan training provided by Healthy Communities Partnership (“HCP”) or Franklin/Fulton Drug & Alcohol): 35 trainings held with 341 attendees in 2020

- *530 doses of Narcan distributed to training participants or community organizations/first responders in 2020

- *Medication Lock Boxes - In 2020, Franklin/Fulton Drug & Alcohol distributed 210 medication lock boxes to county residents or to community providers to distribute in order to increase awareness of safe medication storage and decrease medication availability.

Too Good for Drugs (“TGFD”). HCP offered and held 273 sessions of TGFD, a life skills curriculum that teaches youth healthy habits, coping skills and decision making.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

Commonwealth Prevention Alliance PA Stop and PA Start Grant. In collaboration with Chambersburg Cares Coalition, a program of Healthy Communities Partnership, the following prevention and outreach efforts were achieved through these grants:

- *PA STOP and PASTART mailings to Faith Based Leaders

- *Met with faith leaders and staff to provide resources related to addiction, treatment and recovery including the new Faith-Based Tool Kit

- *Printed PASTART materials which were and will be distributed to communities throughout Franklin County. These materials are related to assisting families is talking to youth about safe and healthy choices through discussion.

- *Began new partnership with Trinity Episcopal Church to provide staff on site weekly to assist persons and families in locating local resources, including resources for substance use and abuse.

Drug Free Communities Grant. Healthy Communities Partnership was awarded this 5 year grant to address youth substance use and abuse concerns in the Chambersburg Area. In conjunction with the prevention workgroup, the grant provided the following:

- *Various media and social media campaigns to promote alcohol prevention, OSAL and PASTOP and PASTART

- *Created a “mock bedroom” for parents and others to get a glimpse into things to look for that might indicate substance use

- *Work with coaches on sports injury treatment and reduction of use of pain medications

- *Monthly collaborative meetings with area partners and community members to analyze substance use and abuse issues that impact our youth and develop comprehensive strategies to address these

- *“Be Kind” campaign held in February 2020, as a project of the Chambersburg Youth Advisory Board: “Teens for a Better Tomorrow,” which was aimed at providing positive messaging and ways to help others

- *Review of PAYs data for Franklin County for 2019 school year.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

Annual Update for 2020

February 18, 2021

COMMUNICATIONS WORKGROUP

Coordinated a Recovery Month campaign for September 2020, which included billboards, purple light installations throughout the county, and technical coordination of the virtual Recovery Roundtable

In this county, we work collaboratively, in the spirit of “One Team, One Fight,” and our Overdose Task Force is perhaps our best example of that. 2020 challenged our physical ability to be together, but it did not quell the spirit of unity and executing the necessary work.