

## Opioid Forum Questions 10/27/2016

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- A. How do we address the needs for recovering addicts to get employment once they complete the program? Too often they are quickly discouraged by the reality that no one will hire them. They may have a criminal record. – Heading to depression and too often relapse.
- Education of the community is paramount with this issue along with every aspect of our addiction crisis.
- B. How can I be more Pro-Actively involved in helping and saving lives in my community? (A Young Recovering addict from Fayette County)
- You could apply and train to become a Certified Recovery Specialist. Contact your county's Drug and Alcohol Department to find out more information. Educate people that you come in contact with. Our community has a negative attitude regarding addicts. Remember, this is someone's son, daughter, sister, brother, father, mother.....
- C. What about collateral damage to families; Grandparents raising children, abandonment issues for children?
- There are multiple support groups for families including but not limited to: Al-Anon, Hope for Broken Hearts and Seeds of Hope. Contact your local Drug and Alcohol Department for more information.
- D. This is a 15year growing epidemic. Why hasn't PA/DDAP provided families from the general public a septic, ongoing education to warn families about how the environment in PA has changed and the cautions parent and child need to know to avoid risk of experimentation and addiction?
- Prevention measures have been ongoing over this time period as evident by the makeup of the current victims of this crisis. Most of the casualties are over the age of 30 which shows that our young people in the community are making good decisions. But more must be done for prevention of all drugs, not just opioids.
- E. The state recognizes the need for therapeutic communities, what if any; steps have been taken to meet this need here in Butler?
- I am not sure what they mean by a therapeutic community – that is not a term used in our D&A world) – not sure how to answer this question.
- F. What about faith based? Is there a community liaison between faith groups and the county?
- There are multiple projects within the community that link faith groups and human services.

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- G. Are there grants being written for therapeutic communities?
- Every available grant opportunity for this crisis is given the necessary resources.
- H. Who is in charge of the Community based care team here in Butler?
- If the writer is referring to the Center of Excellence, Butler Hospital has that contract with the PA Department of Human Services.
- I. I heard over the years that Butler is the “Heroin Capital of the U.S.A” How and why did this start, and is it true?
- No, there are many communities throughout the United States that have experiences similar or worse addiction and death rates. This is not Just a Butler, PA problem, this is a national problem.
- J. Short term treatment 30days-90days only has a minimal success rate of less than 20%, Long Term treatment 12-14 months has a success rate of 87%. Most private insurance only covers 2-4 weeks. What does the County offer for those with no insurance and how long of a treatment plan?
- Butler County offers an array of treatment options which are determined by a level of care assessment. Length of treatment is individualized based on that assessment and based on the individual’s willingness to participate in treatment.
- K. What do you do when you find used needles on the streets? How do you dispose of them properly?
- Call law enforcement to dispose of them. Remember that any dirty needle can transmit any blood-borne infections present if you are accidentally stuck.
- L. What can be done for those released from prison or rehab? The individuals come back to the same environment and know where to go and start again.
- The prison and the Department of Community Corrections currently have various programs in place to assist these individuals, also, Butler County has some housing funding for individuals coming out of rehab or prison just for this reason. Contact the Drug and Alcohol Department for more information.
- M. Naloxone (Narcan) is such a ‘Life Saver” but the user “once saved” continue to use. Why can’t the law enforcements come down harder?
- Legally, the person who received Narcan is immune from prosecution.

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- N. Once a person gets of Suboxone to get off heroin, how do they get off the suboxone?
- Any of the MATs need to be taken in conjunction with comprehensive counseling and/or therapy. There are horrible doctors and clinics out there that are more than happy to make their money by handing out the drug with no counseling component. This issue needs to be handled both mentally and physically. The therapist/counselor will help to get the patient off when appropriate.
- O. Can the brain of an addict repair itself when the addict is in recovery?
- Yes. Evidence of this is apparent every time you see a speaker who is in recovery and has not used in some time.
- P. Shouldn't more money go into prevention? This situation is so costly, once heroin is the way of life.
- Yes. More money should go in every aspect of this issue.
- Q. Is there an awareness that detox/withdraw products/drugs such as cyboxin/methadone, etc. are rampantly being sold/bought and used illegally on the streets of Butler and elsewhere? This problem is real and rampant! The widespread ease of availability of these legally prescribed chemicals has become detrimental to the cause of eliminating the heroin epidemic. What is being done?
- The Governor's Center of Excellence program is intended to improve medication assisted treatments in the commonwealth.
- R. Is there many times repeat offenders of using Opiates who have been saved from using the Naloxone of them?
- Yes. Please remember that the addict's brain is not functioning like a normal brain. While your rational brain is saying that there is no way I would continue to use this substance after it killed me the last time, their brain is telling them that there is nothing as important as getting that substance into my body. And please remember that the majority of those using illicit opiates started because somewhere a doctor prescribed it to them.
- S. Are there follow up from 1<sup>st</sup> responders or others to these people who are saved?
- The law dictates that a person is free to walk out of the hospital, or not get into the ambulance after any treatment is given if they so choose. There are plans underway to provide specially trained staff to assist first responders of individuals revived by Naloxone as a warm handoff with the goal of engaging the individual to participate in treatment.

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- T. How can I get a Naloxone kit and how much does it cost?
- You can go into any drugstore in the Commonwealth and purchase one. There is a Standing Order from the Physician General of Pennsylvania dictating that anyone can purchase Naloxone. The price will vary depending on your insurance. Rite Aid currently has the nasal form in-stock for \$161.00 for the package of two.
- U. Virginia and West Virginia has a system that Pharmacies are all linked together in a system so that the same person cannot use multiple prescriptions because you can see when they were last filled. When will PA do this?
- PA implemented the Prescription Drug Monitoring System (PDMP) in June of this year. Any doctor prescribing schedule II through schedule V controlled substances must now access this database to both see what the patient has previously been prescribed by other physicians, and record any above mentioned substances in the database.
- V. Why does someone who has been arrested multiple times for deal heroin, while on probation and in many cases in possession of a firearm, constantly get charges dropped while the addict convicted of a petty crime is comparison is denied help and sent to prison for multiple years?
- Each case is different. Perhaps that person cooperated with police to assist in prosecuting the dealer in exchange for a lighter sentence. Everyone in the Human Services and Criminal Justice System views this crisis as a priority, and are not ignoring individual cases.
- W. Methadone clinics are out of control – it's the addicts "Mecca" or Social Hub just spreading drug behavior on their grounds, even dealing – any alternatives, i.e visiting nurses?
- Like anything in life, there is good and bad. Some people need to be on Methadone in conjunction with counseling/therapy. The counseling aspect is as important as the Methadone. This is what "repairs the brain" after the person stops using. Without the therapy or counseling, the odds of long-term recovery are much less.
- X. How is the commonwealth addressing the lack of bed space available? Too many people ready to enter recovery/detox are placed on a waiting list.
- Funds from the medical assistance program are being earmarked for expanding beds. This has already begun.
- Y. You have communication with rehabs – is there a plan to communicate with the NA/AA community?

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- The Butler County D&A program has regular contact with the NA community on this issue.

Z. Is there a plan to reach out to the physicians/pain clinics who over prescribe daily?

- Butler Hospital's Center of Excellence program has a component that provides consultation to local PCPs.

AA. How as a community do we combat this?

- Coming to the forums are the first step. Education of the community is of the utmost importance. Talk to your kids regarding all drugs. If they learn something regarding drug prevention in school, use it as a "learning opportunity" at home to build upon what they have learned. If you hear friends or family say that "an addict is getting what they deserve so why give them Narcan" or something similar remind them that most addicts did not start out that way, and 80% of them obtained their addiction through medical pain management for a legitimate medical condition. No one dreams of one day sticking a dirty needle in their arm multiple times a day.

BB. What is a person to do that needs to go to rehab ASAP but there is a 2 week waiting list?

- Individuals should access other levels of care for help and support such as outpatient treatment, a Certified Recovery Specialist and/or AA/NA meetings. If one is suffering from a serious detox, they should visit the closest emergency room.

CC. Do you think the drug industry will be held accountable for the over prescription of oxycodone and ultimate heroin addiction in the same way the tobacco industry was for cigarettes?

- In some cases they already have. Perdue Pharmaceutical Company lost a lawsuit last December and were forced to pay out millions in Kentucky. Although it is important to know what is going on with the pharmaceutical companies who developed and marketed these drugs, it is more important to focus our energy on how to combat this crisis.