

Gaston Community Healthcare Commission Minutes

Gaston Controlled Substances Coalition

Community Room/Gaston County Police Department, June 16, 2017

Attending

- Joy Armstrong, DHHS-Public Health
- Patty Brooks, Gaston Together
- Charles Chapman, GEMS
- Kayla Earley, DHHS-Public Health
- Donna Elliott, GFHS
- Jeffrey Ellison, PhD, GFHS
- Kenneth Gehrig, Partners BHM
- Lynne Grey, Partners BHM
- William Gross, Gaston Together/GCHC
- Erin Hultgren, GFHS
- Capt. Steven Jentsch, Gaston Co. Police Dept.
- Kim Johnson, Gaston County Sheriff
- Becky Jones, Phoenix Counseling
- Chrys Kolodny, DHHS-Public Health
- Donna Lockett, Gaston Together
- Misty McIntosh, Community Health Partners
- Ruth Murphy, DHHS-Social Services
- Will Neumann, Community
- Erick Neumann, Community
- Abigail Newton, DHHS-Public Health
- Shirley Ocloo, MD, GFHS
- Gabrielle Purick, DHHS-Public Health
- Joseph Ramey, Gaston Co. Police Dept.
- Debra Safrit, Gaston Medical Associates
- Hannah Sanii, GFHS
- Dottie Scher, Prevent Child Abuse Gaston
- Cheri Singleton, DHHS-Public Health
- Velma Taormina, MD, DHHS-Public Health
- Anne Wheeler, Community Health Partners

Welcome and Introductions. Chairperson Velma Taormina, MD opened the meeting at 7:30 AM; she welcomed the attendees, who introduced themselves and stated their affiliations. Ms. Armstrong, Mr. Gehrig, Mr. Neumann, Ms. Purick, and Ms. Sanii attended the Coalition meeting for the first time.

Minutes of April 28, 2017. Ms. Earley moved to accept the minutes; Ms. Wheeler seconded the motion, which the Coalition unanimously approved.

Partner Activities

Dr. Taormina asked Ms. Earley to present as she had another meeting to attend. The Healthy Communities Program will design, develop, and disseminate mass media to prevent and reduce the incidence of opioid overdoses. With State funding, health departments in Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Catawba, Gaston, Iredell, Mecklenburg, and Stanly Counties are collaborating to make the best use of their modest grants; Gaston DHHS will receive \$10,000. The program specifics are:

- The target audience is adults, ages 25-65, who use opiates legally and illegally, and their families.
- Social media messages, and other free advertising, will target: illegal users of opioids, sex workers, agencies serving people who use drugs, and agencies serving homeless populations; legal users of opioids – hospitals, dentists, surgeons, pain management clinics; family members; and Wal-Mart stores, departments of social services, jails, and courthouses.
- These media will run at times when most target populations can be reached.
- The messages will: describe the risk of opioid poisoning, signs and symptoms of opioid overdoses, securing and using Naloxone, and harm reduction for those who use opiates illegally. The underlying themes of hope and community will be conveyed to all target audiences.
- By the end of July, nine McLeod Centers will complete focus groups to identify the language used by opioid users and the types of actors that would be most credible in video advertisements.
- Buncombe County is developing 15-20 second video ads that the other counties will test.
- She asked coalition members for help in: recruiting focus groups participants; finding actors for the video ads, identifying locations where drug users and sex works congregate, and to use our Facebook pages to disseminate their messages.

Updates: Strategic Plan Implementation

Policy Adoption Committee

Dr. Ocloo stated the Policy Adoption Committee is working with community prescribers so help them prevent and treat opioid dependencies.

- The committee helped organize the Speed Dating program held at CaroMont Regional Medical Center on June 8, 2017. Approximately 50 prescribers and their employees attended.
- Three of the four sessions addressed opioid-related issues:
 - Tom Henderson, CEO of the NC Medical Board, spoke on medical prescribing and changing licensure requirements for prescribers;
 - Amar Alamarie, MD, from CaroMont Integrated Pain Specialists, discussed using non-opioid medications to manage and control pain; and,
 - Cecilia Novitt, MD, from the Veterans Administration Hospital in Salisbury, NC, presented alternative healing modalities that can help control and manage pain.
- The committee is planning a Continuing Medical Education event in October, at the Gastonia Conference Center. The group may offer sessions on:
 - Initial pain assessments;
 - Alternative treatments for pain;
 - Strategies for interviewing chronic pain patients; and,
 - Promoting the use of the North Carolina Controlled Substances Reporting System.
- Dr. Taormina continues to meet with medical practices that issue large numbers of narcotics prescriptions, to discuss CDC recommendations and the work of the Coalition.
- Documents we created for prescribers for our 2016 CME event, are updated and on our website.

Treatment Linkages Committee

In Ms. Hallisey's absence, Mr. Gross reported the committee would host a Behavioral Health Summit on Wednesday/June 21 at CaroMont Regional Medical Center from 12:30 to 4:30 PM. Thomas McLellan, PhD – a national expert on linking physical and behavioral health services – will help local leaders develop objectives for enhancing and establishing treatment linkages for opioid-dependent persons in Gaston County. Partners Behavioral Health Management is contributing Dr. McLellan's time and CaroMont is contributing the meeting rooms and catering.

Community Education & Prevention Committee

In Dr. Donigan's absence, Mr. Gross reported:

- The Coalition website, which is hosted by DHHS, will be upgraded by August 1.
- CaroMont Regional Medical Center updated the Coalition logo.
- Partners Behavioral Health is reviewing and editing the Coalition brochure so it is effective for low-literacy populations. The Coalition will print the brochure.
- The committee will start a program for medical/dental/podiatric practices to receive a Coalition plaque stating they comply with CDC prescribing policies, when all prescribers in their practices sign pledges to follow CDC standards
- The *Gazette* recently reported on a meeting on opioid abuse and misuse for faith leaders, organized by Gastonia City Councilman Robert Kellogg. As a follow-up, the Coalition formed a Clergy Committee that is planning an educational program to prepare clergy to provide education, support, and guidance to people affected by opioid dependence.
- The committee also established a Medicine Take-back Committee that will collect out-of-date and unneeded medications to reduce opportunities for opioids to be stolen from homes – by family and friends – and abused. Mr. Neumann stated the group would hold collection events at the Rotary Summer Concert Series and Gastonia Grizzlies games; it may also work with churches, Covenant Village, assisted living facilities, and funeral homes. The group will email a flyer about medical drop offs to market these programs.
- Mr. Neumann asked for a list of Coalition committees and their members, and for the website to list

each committee's mission, active projects, a calendar of scheduled events and the Coalition's Strategic Plan.

Partner Activities, continued

Data Dashboard

Once the website upgrade is complete, Dr. Taormina asked the members to share suggestions for improving the content and presentation of statistical information. Those who need additional data should call Yvonne Boafu at DHHS-Public Health.

Drug Diversion and Treatment Program/DDAT

Chief Ramey reported 11 persons are currently in the program, which is full capacity.

Clean Needle Exchange

Ms. McIntosh reported for Ms. Mathis. The Olive Branch Ministry needle exchange program needs clean syringes. Pharmacies have the prerogative to determine if they will sell syringes; Community Health Partners (CHP) conducted a survey on how individual pharmacies are managing syringe sales. State law encourages them to sell syringes to individuals with valid identification; ID cards are available from the NC Harm Reduction Coalition, and include education on properly using and discarding needles and syringes. CHP is distributing educational materials on selling syringes to all pharmacies in Gaston and Lincoln Counties.

STAR Program

Dr. Taormina reported on meeting with Gaston Family Health Services about pregnant women who misuse medications and didn't have access to Medication Assisted Therapy. Fifteen women in this status were served by GFHS and followed for six to 12 months.

STAR contributed to a 26% drop in the rate of neonatal abstinence syndrome at CaroMont Regional Medical Center, over two years. Three health departments have programs based on the STAR model.

Grant: Child Health Insurance Program

Dr. Taormina reported the NC Department of Health included \$500,000, for each of two years, in a request to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for STAR activities. These include: childcare, a van, and a residential facility for participating women. DHHS-Public Health recently answered several questions from the State and is awaiting the response from HRSA.

Grant: Empowered Communities for a Healthier Nation

Gaston County is ineligible to apply for this funding because our countywide poverty and violent crime rates do not reach the required threshold. Mr. Gross thanked Dr. Julian Montoro-Rodriguez, in absentia, for bringing this grant opportunity to our attention.

Grant: Opioids and Women

Dr. Taormina stated DHHS-Public Health is awaiting a decision from the CDC on its grant request to hire a Coordinator for the Controlled Substances Coalition who would deliver primary/secondary prevention services to women, and their male partners, in Gaston County.

Other: Twenty-first Century Care Grant, Partners Behavioral Health Management

Lynne Grey described a \$400,000 grant awarded to each behavioral health Managed Care Organization in North Carolina. The funding focuses on providing uninsured individuals with behavioral health treatments and includes: (1) payments for methadone treatments; (2) outpatient behavioral health therapy, (3) Medication Assisted Treatment, beginning July 1, 2017; (4) Mobile Crisis services; (5) outpatient substance abuse counseling; and, (6) other services. Unspent funds from the current fiscal year will roll over to FY18. The funding allocation for FY18 remains to be determined.

Ms. Grey stated: (1) patients enroll for these services by calling an 800 number to Partners' Access to Care Department; (2) funds can be used only for treatment services; (3) in FY18, Partners will have more discretion on its use of funds, including drug testing of uninsured patients in their treatment programs; (4) Partners will publicize additional services through their contracted providers; and, (5) Partners refers patients to the most appropriate service providers in their care system.

Agency Spotlight: HIV and Hepatitis C Program at GFHS

Ms. Hultgren, the program manager, presented the GFHS HIV and Hepatitis C Program; GFHS conducts the programs because its 555 HIV-positive patients are at elevated risk for Hepatitis C, as it is often spread through needle sharing. CDC reports one in eight individuals are unaware they are infected with HIV while the rate of Hepatitis C increased three-fold between 2010 and 2014 in NC. Preliminary numbers from Gaston County DHHS indicate an estimated 20 individuals were diagnosed with Hepatitis C in 2016. In addition, of the 2,000+ Hepatitis C tests administered by GFHS and DHHS-Public Health from May 2016 to May 2017, over 200 individuals were diagnosed as Hepatitis C Antibody Positive with a need for further RNA Confirmation testing.

GFHS treats patients who have designated GFHS as their medical home and have been sober for six months prior to treatment, as Medicaid and drug assistance programs currently only pay for treatments once. Of 13 individuals in the first treatment cohort, 11 have been cured and two remain in treatment. GFHS also provides education before delivering treatment and behavioral health services.

Broadly, the program is: working to de-stigmatize Hepatitis C; using more sensitive Hepatitis C testing as CaroMont expands its testing facilities; having linkage to care discussions with DHHS-Public Health, CaroMont the county Jail, and Partners Behavioral Health; planning community education about pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP), treatment as prevention (TasP) services; and, establishing Syringe Services Programs (SSPS) with Olive Branch Ministries. Nurses and Advanced Practice Specialists, who receive special training, conduct the PrEP and TasP conversations. While these conversations are difficult, Ms. Armstrong (DHHS-Public Health) stated patients are supported with behavioral health services and work with staff to create personal treatment plans.

GFHS will soon begin community education about the programs and looks forward to collaborating with independent medical practices and agencies that provide support services. This approach supports the integration of behavioral and physical health services.

Other

- Mr. Gross will resend the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire, which the Coalition is using to develop a Membership Directory of Coalition Members.
- Ms. Scher reported Prevent Child Abuse Gaston is training staff at Shady Grove Baptist Church on the Darkness to Light, child sexual abuse prevention program. They will also provide opioid education.
- Ms. Murphy reported Bethlehem Church, in partnership with Meals on Wheels, is conducting two daily meal delivery routes in South Gastonia.
- Deputy Sheriff Johnson reported 120 women are currently in the County jail.
- Mr. Gehrig reported the Gaston Complete Health Program will soon open at 2505 Court Drive – the home of Phoenix Counseling Services – through a collaboration of Partners Behavioral Health, GFHS, Monarch Counseling, and Phoenix Counseling to provide primary behavioral health care and substance abuse treatment.
- Ms. Hultgren noted by DHHS-Public Health will observe National HIV testing Day on June 27.

Next Meeting: August 18, 2017.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:56 following a motion by Ms. Grey, a second by Ms. Safrit, and a unanimous vote of approval.