

# Gaston Community Healthcare Commission

## Minutes

### Gaston Controlled Substances Coalition

Community Room/Gaston County Police Department, October 20, 2017

#### Attending

- Patty Brooks, Gaston Together
- Nazrul Chowdhury, Community
- Todd Davis, MD, CaroMont
- Tiffany Donnelly, DHHS-Social Services
- Donna Elliott, GFHS
- Jeffrey Ellison, PhD, GFHS
- Lynne Grey, Partners BHM
- William Gross, Gaston Together/GCHC
- Thomas Henry, CaroMont
- Erin Hultgren, GFHS
- Becky Jones, Phoenix Counseling
- Brittain Kenney, Gaston DHHS
- Donna Lockett, Gaston Together
- Maceo Mayo, RHA Health Services
- Misty McIntosh, Community Health Partners
- Karen Melendez, MD, Community Health Partners
- Michele Mathis, Olive Branch Ministry
- Ruth Anne Murphy, DHHS-Social Services
- Will Neumann, Community
- Abigail Newton, DHHS-Public Health
- Josie Polhemus, Pharmacist, CVS
- Joseph Ramey, Gaston Co. Police Dept.
- Debra Safrit, Gaston Medical Associates

**Welcome and Introductions.** Chief Joseph Ramey chaired the meeting in the absence of Dr. Taormina. He opened the meeting at 7:30 AM and welcomed the attendees. After discussing Strategic Plan Implementation, the attendees introduced themselves and stated their affiliations. Mr. Chowdhury attended the Coalition meeting for the first time.

**Minutes of August 18, 2017.** Ms. Murphy moved to accept the minutes; Ms. Mathis seconded the motion, which the Coalition unanimously approved.

#### Updates: Strategic Plan Implementation

Mr. Gross presented reports for the three Coalition committees, as their chairpersons could not attend the meeting. He described their recent activities and compared them to our Strategic Plan, which was described on the document *Update: Implementation Plan for March 1, 2017 – February 28, 2018*.

#### Policy Adoption Committee

Year-to-date the committee:

- Put print resources from its October 2016 CME event on the GCSC website
- Held a speed dating education program with three sessions on opioids and pain management
- Is working on a CME program for February 10 or 17, with PAINWeek, a national group that conducts opioid education programs. We are seeking presentations on: (1) Assessing Chronic Pain, (2) The Gentle Art of Saying No, (3) Non-opioid analgesics, (4) How acute pain becomes chronic, and (5) The NC STOP Act. The event may be supported by local health and behavioral health organizations.
- Reviewed our CME event documents once.
- Promotes understanding of opioid resources in the county when Dr Taormina visits prescribers to discuss the work of the STAR Program and associated opioid-related activities.
- The committee will begin tracking classes without CME credits and professional meeting updates on opioid issues.

#### Treatment Linkages Committee

Using the results from the Behavioral Health Summit, the committee identified the following activities for its strategic plan. It will present recommendations for integrating these concepts into its strategic

plan at the next Coalition meeting.

#### Over the next year

- Establish Opioid Overdose Response Team; in process
- Increase availability of Drug-free housing; in process
- Conduct a professional development workshop for community members interested in identifying and mentoring youth with vulnerabilities; not initiated.
- Develop 211 content, following the United Way model; not initiated.
- Develop MOU's/MOA's with agencies collaborating around the vision of improved care for addictions and promoting recovery; not initiated.
- Share success stories via media, speeches, and more (Community Education & Prevention Committee); not initiated.

#### Over the next two years

- Ask methadone clinics to report their distribution of methadone to the NC Controlled Substances Reporting System to assure patient safety.

#### Over the next three years

- Develop a GCSC Healthcare Navigator program.
- Share medical records among providers.

Year-to-date the committee:

- Held the Behavioral Health Summit
- Worked with Phoenix Counseling to establish a support group for family members and friends of individuals affected by opioid dependencies. Phoenix assigned a skilled support group facilitator to establish, pilot test, and develop guidelines for the support group. This work was completed in the summer and the group is now actively recruiting members.
- Is developing an Opioid Overdose Response Team with CaroMont Health that would use the teachable moment of opioid resuscitation to help individuals prevent future overdoses. It would seek volunteers with *lived opioid experiences* to speak with resuscitated individuals in the ED to: convey their concern, help patients understand their resuscitation, and encourage them to speak with trained program staff, within 48 hours, about treatment resources and harm reduction strategies.

### **Community Education & Prevention Committee**

Year-to-date, the committee:

- Established a Medicine Take-back Subcommittee that held events at two Grizzlies games and a concert at the Rotary Pavilion. The Gaston County Police Department is currently unable to expand the number of drug drop-off sites it can support because of staff vacancies.
- Established a Clergy Opioid Outreach Subcommittee that will conduct *People of Faith and the Opioid Crisis* at Tabernacle Baptist Church on November 16.
- Updated the Coalition website, which is on the DHHS website and is managed by Ms. Kenney.
- Launched the program for distributing certificates to prescribing practices that pledge to follow prescribing guidelines consistent with the NC STOP Act. Participating practices will be listed on the Coalition website. Gaston Medical Associates is the first practice thanks to Ms. Safrit.
- Developed a brochure that Partners Behavioral Health Management is testing, designing, and printing.
- Established a Coalition Facebook page through the auspices of Gaston-DHHS.
- Received and continues to promote earned media from the *Gaston Gazette*.
- Plans to conduct a trial community presentation on November 17; details are forthcoming.

Ms. Polhemus reviewed opioid prescription policies from CVS, which are consistent with provisions of the STOP Act. The group noted Humana and Cigna are also setting prescription issuing limits.

Mr. Neumann suggested the Coalition ask CVS/Caremark to print the locations of drug take-back locations on the bottom of their register receipts. The CVS safe disposal program will install take-back boxes in 750 stores across the nation by mid 2018.

### **Agency Spotlight: Community Health Partners (CHP): Pharmacy Education**

Ms. McIntosh is a registered pharmacist with CHP, which manages healthcare utilization by Medicaid recipients. She visits 77 pharmacies twice a year, including independent stores, to provide education on: meeting STOP Act provisions; using the Controlled Substances Reporting System; enabling clients to decline a portion of opioid pills they are prescribed; and selling naloxone kits without prescriptions.

Lincoln County Public Works provides free sharps containers to pharmacies for clients who use needles and syringes to administer insulin, opiates, and other medications. By properly using these containers to dispose of needles, waste haulers are less likely to get stuck. She also gives pharmacists cards that emphasize the value of harm reduction, including the proper disposal of sharps.

### **Partner Activities**

#### **CaroMont Medical Group**

Dr. Davis reported:

- Chris Peek, the CaroMont CEO is passionate about opioids and providing resources to help our county address this issue.
- Dr. Andreou was named Executive Vice President for CaroMont Medical Group and oversees the medical practices in their health care system.
- CaroMont will hire a physician as Vice President of Quality, Population Health and Post Acute services. Along with Dr. Davis and Dr. Andreou, s/he will focus on programming to reduce opioid dependency.
- CaroMont is the third NC hospital where clinical pharmacists will join the medical staff; this will improve interactions between pharmacists and providers and between pharmacists and patients.
- Data from CaroMont ED's show their use of intravenous opioids has dropped 28% over the past six months and the number of opioid prescriptions has decreased by 33%.
- Dr. Kirsten D'Amore was named Medical Director of Pain Management and Assessment. She will promote their mandatory non-pharmacological pain management protocol, non-opioid pharmacological protocol, and pain management protocol on short acting opioids.
- CaroMont will be making a gift of Narcan to Gaston County Law Enforcement agencies.
- CaroMont may host the opioids CME event that is being planned for February, in its cafeteria.
- Dr. Klasing, CaroMont's Chief of Psychiatric Medicine, is establishing a Suboxone Clinic.
- Key requirements of the NC STOP Act limit opioid prescribing for acute and chronic pain. He noted the Controlled Substances Reporting System is not user friendly as takes 4-5 minutes to log on. Providers' delegates must apply to use this system.
- CaroMont is setting policies that prohibit drug representatives from meeting with physicians in the hospital and they may extend this policy to CaroMont Medical Group practices.
- There is a national shortage of intravenous opioids because of a variety of reasons, including the destruction of manufacturing plants in Puerto Rico by recent hurricanes.

In describing the *60 Minutes* presentation on the Drug Enforcement Administration, he stated providers are part of the problem with opioids and there is "rot in lots of places." Hospitals are forced to treat pain as an emergency condition and can be fined if patient surveys show they are dissatisfied with this treatment. Patients who seek opioids are often critical of conservative opioid prescribing policies.

Mr. Neumann asked that the Coalition prepare a letter to Gaston County's national, state, and locally elected officials describing Coalition activities so they will understand and support our activities. Staff will prepare the letter.

### **Partners Behavioral Health Management (PHBM)**

Ms. Grey reported PHBM opened Gaston Complete Health to provide care to patients with drug-related emergencies and to deliver integrated primary medical care to patients receiving substance use treatment. The office is on Court Drive in the building occupied by Phoenix Counseling and Monarch.

PBHM is providing funding for three Oxford Houses in 2018; their residents govern these evidence-based facilities that require sober living, and, may elect to house individuals receiving Medication Assisted Therapy. One house will be for single women and mothers and their babies.

PHBM is planning its next Opioid summit for April 2018 that will focus on solutions to the epidemic.

### **Gaston DHHS**

The STAR program won a Child Health Recognition Award from the GalxoSmithKline Foundation.

Ms. Earley presented the plans of the Healthy Communities Program, which DHHS-Public Health is conducting with a \$10,000 state grant. Through focus groups they learned: most opioid-dependent individuals wish they knew opioids were addictive before they began using them, did not know about the provisions of the Good Samaritan Law, and did not know why and how naloxone is used.

The program initiatives are: (1) screenings of a brief video from the CDC before each movie at the Regal Franklin Square Theater ... for 70 showings a day; (2) a second video will feature first responders and law enforcement; (3) opioid messages on placards on Gastonia City Transit buses; (4) opioid messages on bags to be distributed by the Harris Teeter pharmacy in Belmont; (5) including opioid articles in the monthly newsletter the City of Bessemer City sends to 2,500 residents; and, (6) providing opioid users with lunch boxes to store their drug paraphernalia and will contain harm reduction information, including guidance printed on bottles of hand sanitizer.

The two-year \$500,000 *Child Health Insurance Program* grant request from NC DHHS to the federal government is still under consideration. If funded, the STAR Program could pay for childcare, purchase a van, and upgrade a residential facility for its clients.

### **Gaston Family Health Services**

Dr. Ellison noted GFHS:

- Is a partner in the Gaston Complete Health program, previously described by Ms. Grey.
- Requires patients to sign an agreement stating they understand the practice will be providing less chronic pain medications.
- Is opening a clinic on X-ray Drive that will include chiropractic care for chronic pain management.
- Is providing Medication Assisted Therapy treatment to approximately 35 STAR Program participants who are receiving Suboxone and Subutex. This service is also open to patients with diagnosed Hepatitis C and HIV disease. The agency is planning to expand this service to Hickory.
- GFHS provides Naloxone to its uninsured and underinsured opioid dependent patients.

### **Drug Diversion and Treatment Program (DDAT)**

Chief Ramey reported DDAT is coming to the close of its first-year pilot program. While it has been successful and currently has 23 patients, the program will run out of funds by mid-November. Staff is working to raise funds and secure grants to sustain this initiative.

### **Clean Needle Exchange**

Ms. Mathis reported that since January 1, 2017, Olive Branch Ministry has provided 10,208 clean syringes to heroin users and has collected 4,258 used syringes. Program participants are: 54% males and 46% females; 93% are Caucasian, 3% are Black/African American, and 3% are Latino/Latina; and, 40% are 30-39 years of age, 29% are 40-49 years of age, and 24% are ages 20-29.

The program is running out of naloxone kits and clean syringes, because of insufficient resources, and is referring clients in eastern Gaston County to harm reduction personnel in Mecklenburg County.

Ms. Mathis spoke with at nursing leadership group at CaroMont and staff at Phoenix Counseling about harm reduction. She is developing materials with Ms. McIntosh for pharmacists in Lincoln County. And, she reminded the group to let her know when individuals have sharps they need her to pick up.

### **Other**

- Mr. Gross asked the members to provide their profiles for the Coalition Directory. Mr. Neumann said the provided link is incorrect; staff will secure and share the correct link.
- Ms. Lockett or Ms. Elliott cited an article in the Wednesday edition of the *Charlotte Observer* on addressing the opioid epidemic.

**Next Meeting:** December 15, 2017.

**Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 9:01 following a motion by Ms. Murphy, a second by Mr. Mayo, and a unanimous vote of approval.