

Gaston Together Healthcare Commission
Minutes Gaston Controlled Substances Coalition
February 15, 2019 Gaston County Police Department

Attending

Amy Boyd, Gaston Together	Earl Mathers, Gaston County Government
Jim Burke, Cooperative Extension	Laurel Morris, Gaston County Library
Charles Chapman, GEMS	Ruth Anne Murphy, DHHS-Social Services
Nazrul Chowdhury, Community	Abby Newton, Gaston DHHS-Public Health
Todd Davis, CaroMont Health	Shirley Ocloo, GFHS
Donna Elliott, HealthNet Gaston	Ada Osemeka, Teen Action Council
Jeffrey Ellison, GFHS	Josie Polhemus, CVS Pharmacy
Ann Elliott, Gaston College	Haley Potter, Community
Ken Gehrig, Partners Behavioral Management	Teresa Pruett, CaroMont
Trish Goble, Junior League of Gaston County	Joseph Ramey, Gaston County Police Dept.
William Gross, Healthcare Commission	Patty Schaeffer, Olive Branch Ministry
Barbara Hallisey, Partners Behavioral Health	Courtney Shepherd, Gaston DHHS-Social Services
James Hanks, Gaston DHHS-Public Health.	Sherry Singleton, DHHS-Public Health
Thomas Henry, CaroMont Health	Linda Slade, United Way of the Gaston County
Becky Jones, Phoenix Counseling	Anne Soule, Community Health Partners
Rev. David Julen, Consulting staff	Ernest Sumner, Gaston Community Foundation
Chasty King, Community	Marlena Thomas, Gaston College
Chrys Kolodny, Gaston DHHS-Public Health	Kelly Wentz, Community
Tara Knight, Gaston DHHS-Public Health	Adrian White, McLeod Center
Ellen Leong, Community	Leigh Yount, Gaston DHHS-Public Health
Robert Martin, Startbupe.com	

Welcome and Introductions. Dr. Ellison opened the meeting at 7:30 AM with the members introducing themselves: James Hanks, Chasty King, Ellen Leong, Robert Martin, Ada Osemeka, Haley Potter, Patty Schaeffer, Courtney Shepherd, and Linda Slade, attended their first coalition meeting.

Minutes of December 14, 2018. Chief Ramey moved to accept the minutes, Mr. Burke seconded the motion which the group unanimously approved.

Participation in the Community Run

Mr. Sumner stated the Community Run, sponsored by the Gaston Community Foundation, is in its 16th year and has distributed nearly \$20,000,000 to local nonprofits. Mr. Chowdhury asked the members to contribute to Team Austin as all donations, and matched funds, will be given to the Coalition. He distributed brochures, car magnets, a flyer on how to support Team Austin, and will give **\$3,000 if community donations exceed \$10,000.**

Committee Updates

Policy Adoption Committee: Dr. Ocloo provided the committee update:

• She brought a motion from the committee to change its name to the Professional Education Committee given its role in educating health professionals on the dangers of overprescribing opioids and on non-narcotic alternatives for managing pain. This differs from its initial mission of promoting CDC policies that are incorporated into the NC STOP Act. Ms. Morris seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

- The committee will organize a free buprenorphine waiver training with the Governor's Institute if it secures a sufficient number of enrollees. Participants will receive a waiver to administer medication assisted therapy in their medical practices.
- She distributed descriptions of the Opioid Lunch & Learn Series hosted by Partners Behavioral Health Management (PBHM). Produced by the Northwest Area Health Education Center, the programs will be shown at the PBHM Auditorium; continuing education units, and lunch will be provided at no charge.
- The committee is considering a second Speed Dating Event at CaroMont Health, featuring an evening of 30-minute programs on opioids.
- Because support staff at clinical offices are typically not trained on using Narcan, the group will consider a series of trainings to prepare them to use naloxone and to assure they have an on-site supply.

Treatment Linkages Committee: Ms. Hallisey reviewed the Committee's 2019 Scorecard which features new priorities and outcome metrics. On the previous day a Request for Proposals was issued for funding new Adult Recovery Courts. If our forthcoming application is approved, we would receive four years of funding to operate the court, so persons arrested on opioid charges would be diverted to treatment rather than jail. The Committee will also elect a new chair at its next meeting, as Ms. Hallisey is stepping down from this role.

Community Education & Prevention Committee: In Dr. Donigan's absence, Mr. Gross reviewed the Community Education and Prevention Committee update:

- The first draft of our new website will be complete at the end of February; in March we will open the site for Coalition members to review and comment.
- The City of Gastonia is promoting drug drop boxes to 60,000 persons through social media. Staff will ask other municipalities to do the same using the City of Gastonia's graphic.
- DHHS-Public Health is working to show 30-second CDC videos on opioids at the Regal 14 Theater.
- PBHM is printing 10,000 copies of our updated brochure.
- At our recent CEU program, the Coalition distributed 40 framed certificates to clinical practices stating they check the NC Controlled Substances Reporting System. Dr. Andreou is also helping distribute these to CaroMont Medical Group practices, and the Coalition will distribute them to independent practices.
- Dr. David Julen presented the *Gaston Faith and Opioids Program*. While the county's 600-800 churches hold many views of addiction and drug treatment, he believes they all agree prayer is essential. On February 28 the Coalition will convene clergy at First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia to discuss the scope of the opioid problem and will ask them to invite their peers to attend our community-wide program on April 11, to be held at the Gastonia Conference Center. Our goal is for 75 pastors and lay leaders to attend, to pray, and to learn about our program, which will provide monthly resources on prayer to build understanding of opioids and to remove the associated stigma. The program will host bimonthly meetings for church representatives to collaborate as they build their programs. Ms. Hallisey moved for the Coalition to adopt the plan, Mr. Chapman seconded the motion, which the Coalition unanimously approved.
- Ms. Osemeka described the Teen Action Council, which is developing a peer education program, in the Gaston County Schools, to discourage teens from using opioids.

Measurement Workgroup: The group will report at the next Coalition meeting.

Steering Committee: Mr. Gross reported the Coalition will make a 15-minute presentation on its activities to the County Board of Commissioners on April 9. The group suggested the following topics: an overview of our activities including the Recovery Court, Teen Action Council, Faith and Opioids, and Champions programs; building on our successes with commissioners' support; our funding sources and how we are resourceful; harm reduction; the need for a long-term treatment center instead of sending persons to jail; the signs of addiction and why it isn't a choice; and, inviting them to join the Coalition.

The Coalition will receive a grant from Austin's Opioid Education Fund for: community education, school education, the Opioid Overdose Response Team, our CEU event, the Champions Program, and the Faith and Opioids Program.

Agency and Program Reports

CaroMont Health: Dr. Davis reported their President/CEO strongly supports programming to address opioids, including: (1) community outreach, including the Coalition; (2) Outpatient care, by implementing the STOP Act while causing the fewest disruptions to provider activity. He cited Mr. Henry who created templates for managing patients who receive opioids, maintaining opioid information in medical records, standardizing consent forms, implementing an e-prescribing system to replace paper prescriptions, and developing a way for their EMR to measure total Minimum Morphine Equivalents, by patient, to identify higher-risk patients, and prescribers who exceed opioid prescribing norms. (3) Inpatient care, which focuses on pain management for patients in hospital beds. He cited Ms. Goble and nurses who are increasingly using non-opioid analgesics and non-pharmacological methods to manage patient pain. CaroMont is also establishing standardized protocols, working to reduce post-operative pain, and is helping ED staff address the significant increase in drug-induced assaults by hyper-aggressive patients, who may be formulating drugs at home; CaroMont is working on this with law enforcement. They are also training staff to de-escalate patients who are angry after being resuscitated with Narcan, and they are exploring solutions for preventing guests from smuggling drugs into the hospital while not compromising access to patients by their family and friends. They also give Information to provider offices on how patients can safely dispose of opioids. A growing number of prescribers, social workers, and navigators are working together to slowly taper patients' use of opioids, and they are expanding their use of adjunctive medications to handle side effects during withdrawal.

Gaston Family Health Services: Dr. Ocloo stated the GFHS Medication Assistance Therapy Program continues to treat pregnant and new mothers, and they continue to screen and treat their patients for Hepatitis C, with a near 100% success rate for treatment. This year, they began using *PREPARE: Protocol for Responding to and Assessing Patient Assets, Risks, and Experiences*, a survey that illuminates patients' socio-economic status for such measures as: literacy, poverty, addiction, employment, food insecurity, housing, and transportation. GFHS administers the survey at least once a year and ensuing conversations adds 5 minutes to patient encounters.

Partners Behavioral Health Management: Ms. Hallisey reported PBHM received additional state funding in January to expand medication assisted treatment to uninsured patients in each of its eight counties. PBHM is also increasingly assigning drug treatment providers to physician offices. It also kicked off its Medication Assisted Recovery Services (MARS) program, with a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant, which provides treatment services to uninsured patients in **Catawba, Gaston, and Lincoln** Counties. They are also testing a community Naloxone training which presents the signs and symptoms of opioid use disorder and overdoses. The initial programs were not well attended, so they will look to the methods used in Iredell County, which recently had 40 program attendees.

McLeod Addictive Disease Center: Mr. White reported their weekly Medication Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA) group has as many as five clients. In time, they will have the members lead program, will move it into the community, and will invite community members to participate. This is a critical resource as individuals in medication assisted recovery are often shunned at AA and NA meetings because they are not fully abstinent, even though this is an optimal treatment modality. With funds from PBHM's SAMHSA grant, McLeod is accepting uninsured NC patients who might otherwise stop drug treatment for a lack of funds.

Opioid Overdose Response Team and Clean Needle Exchange: Ms. Schaeffer, from Olive Branch Ministry, reported 78 individuals participate in their mobile and fixed site syringe exchange sites; the fixed site, at the

Phoenix Counseling Outreach Center, is open on Mondays and Fridays. Using data from GEMS, law enforcement, and the emergency department, a peer support specialist visited 61 businesses in high-risk areas and provided information on emergency response services and Good Samaritan Laws, and delivered naloxone training and gave 2 doses of naloxone to each of eight organizations. Since April they received 52 referral calls, including 10 from GEMS and 6 from McLeod; 43 of these persons (83%) were successfully linked to community resources.

Gaston Emergency Medical Services: Mr. Chapman reported a decline in naloxone administration in the field: from January 2017 to January 2019: 360 persons received naloxone in contrast to 279 recipients from January 2018 to January 2019. In the later reporting period, they referred 10 clients to the Opioid Overdose Response Team, and distributed 48 overdose kits, which include naloxone. Chief Ramey stated the County Police administered Narcan to 25 fewer people in the period October 1, 2018 to October 1, 2019 as compared with October 1, 2017 to February 1, 2018.

Department of Health and Human Services: Ms. Newton reported the STAR program is working well, that DHHS is waiting to hear if the Child Health Insurance Program will fund additional transportation and housing resources for STAR patients, the Healthy Communities is running opioid advertisements on Gastonia Transit busses and WFAE radio, and is working on restarting 30-second ads in the local movie theater.

United Way 211: Mr. Gehrig reported he will reach out to coalition members to assure there are no gaps in our list of opioid services and agencies. He will also use this system to promote drop boxes and pharmacies that sell Narcan. He will bring data on the use of this system to our next meeting.

Other agency reports

- Ms. Elliott reported the Gaston College Human Services Program/Substance Abuse track held an on-campus opioid summit in October 2018 for more than 200 persons. She will work with Student Government to conduct another manage, in response to the Coalition's recent request. She recently published an article on opioids in the College's employee wellness newsletter, and she recognized 2 students in the Substance Abuse program who attended our meeting. Ms. Marlena Thomas cited the strong work of interns from the program.
- Mr. Chowdhury stated Gaston College will award two scholarships next year to substance abuse track students.
- Chief Ramey stated Mr. Mathers will put \$25,000 in the Police Department budget to support the Coalition.
- Ms. Goble described the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program for nurses who deliver medication assisted treatment. Information is available at: <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-sud-workforce-loan-repayment-program.html>
- Mr. Martin described Startbupe.com as a Medication Assisted Therapy program conducted via smartphone. Rev. Fred Rudder runs online groups on a HIPAA-secure Skype connection. Their group has more patients from Gaston than from Mecklenburg County.

Presentation

Dr. Ellison tabled his presentation on our recent program, *Managing Pain in the Age of the Opioid Crisis*.

Other

Dr. Ellison asked the members to submit their profiles on our Survey Monkey questionnaire for our directory and to like the Coalition Facebook page.

Next Meeting

The next Coalition meeting is May 17, 2019.

Adjourn

After a motion by Chief Ramey, a second by Mr. Burke, and a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 9:00am.