

Gaston Community Healthcare Commission
Gaston Controlled Substances Coalition
Minutes
Gaston County Police Department, April 20, 2018

Attending

- Crystal Armstrong, Junior League
- Charles Chapman, GEMS
- Nazrul Chowdhury, Community
- Tammy Chowdhury, Community
- Todd Davis, MD, CaroMont Health
- Anette Demany, Council of Governments
- Seth Derner, Gaston DHHS
- Jessica Donigan, Student
- Tiffany Donnelly, DHHS-Social Services
- Kayla Earley, Gaston DHHS-PH
- Maya Feemster-Jones, Junior League
- Ken Gehrig, Partners Behavioral
- Virginia Gil-Rivas, PhD, UNCC
- Patricia Goble, Junior League of Gaston County
- Jennifer Graham, Community
- William Gross, Healthcare Commission
- Barbara Hallisey, Partners Behavioral
- Rebecca Jones, Phoenix Counseling Center
- Donna Lockett, Gaston Together
- Michele Mathis, Olive Branch Ministry
- Misty McIntosh, PharmD, Community Health Partners
- Earl Mathers, Gaston County Government
- Julian Montoro, PhD, UNCC
- Ruth Anne Murphy, DHHS-Social Services
- Shirley Ocloo, MD, GFHS
- Josie Polhemus, CVS Pharmacy
- Joseph Ramey, Gaston Co. Police Dept.
- Joe Shepherd, DHHS-Social Services
- Velma Taormina, MD, DHHS-Public Health
- Brooke Thomas, CaroMont Health
- Celeste Thompson, Junior League of Gaston County
- Anne Wheeler, Community Health Partners
- Erin Wiggins, Community Foundation Gaston County
- Heather Zampogna, Piedmont Charter School

Welcome and Introductions. Dr. Taormina opened the meeting at 7:33 AM and welcomed the attendees who introduced themselves. Anette Demeny, Dr. Virginia Gil-Rivas, Jennifer Graham, Erin Wiggins, Brooke Thomas, Jessica Donigan, Seth Derner, Crystal Armstrong, Heather Zampogna, and Maya Feemster-Jones attended their first Coalition meeting.

Minutes of February 16, 2018. Ms. Earley moved to accept the minutes, Ms. Mathis seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved, pending the correction of the meeting date from 2017 to 2018.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Gross presented the Coalition's updated *2017-2020 Strategic Plan* by saying:

- The Coalition adopted its first plan in February 2017 and has refined it over the past 14 months.
- Given the dynamic nature of our work, we will change and update this living document. As an example, the Treatment Linkages Committee added new projects after its 2017 Behavioral Health Summit.
- While much of the plan content is familiar, we've added a program summary in the three sections, that we will convert to a scorecard to track and report our progress.
- We will also have a Measurement Workgroup develop outcome objectives that we will add to the document.
- By describing our programs, the plan prepares us for writing grant proposals and describes how people and organizations can support our work.
- For the Coalition to succeed, we rely on community organizations for leadership, collaboration, and resources.
- Policy Adoption Committee:
 - The plan calls for: (1) an annual continuing medical education program, with the next one scheduled for fall 2018; (2) ongoing education and information programs for health professionals; (3) visits to clinical practices to discuss opioid prescribing and programming; (4) providing opioid-related documents for prescribers; and, (5) maintaining the Gaston County Opioid Dashboard.

- Staff will add the Measurement Workgroup which will develop objectives demonstrating the effect of our work; these may include: fewer opioid-related arrests, opioid prescriptions, and prescriptions by morphine milligram equivalents. This data will be posted on our website.
- Community Education & Prevention Committee:
 - The plan calls for: (1) an upgrade of the Coalition website; (2) conducting a community information program; (3) securing earned media; (4) making opioid presentations; (5) conducting opioid education in schools; (6) increasing access to opioid-related addiction and treatment information; (7) providing opioid education to clergy; (8) promoting and conducting medicine take-back events; (9) conducting the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Champions program (with Treatment Linkages Committee); and, (10) working on emerging opportunities.
 - At its next meeting, the Committee will rank these programs and their component activities.
- Treatment Linkages Committee:
 - The plan calls for: (1) advocacy for new and expanded opioid treatment services; (2) increasing the availability of Narcan; (3) collaborating with law enforcement on issues of opioid use and misuse; (4) increasing the availability of drug-free housing, (5) increasing access to opioid-related addiction and treatment information; (6) building the capacity of organizations to deliver opioid treatment and recovery services; (7) educating judges on alternatives to jail for opioid users; (8) removing barriers to employment, housing, and government benefits for persons convicted of drug-related felonies; (9) sharing medical records among providers; (10) conducting a Behavioral Health Summit; and, (11) Conducting the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Champions program (with Community Education & Prevention Committee).

Ms. Mathis moved to accept the updated strategic plan, with the described changes; Ms. Donnelly seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Program Updates

Policy Adoption Committee: Dr. Ocloo stated the committee provides resources to help prescribers safely manage the use of opioids by their patients. The committee is now organizing its second CME program for September 2018.

Dr. Ocloo, Dr. Davis, and Dr. McIntosh described the March 21 meeting of several Coalition members and staff from Carolinas Healthcare System Lincoln. Our group described the Coalition and emphasized the critical role of CaroMont in advancing its work. Staff from CHS Lincoln now attend Lincoln County Coalition meetings, which is now organizing, looking for staff, and planning events including a community summit.

Following a conversation with Catawba County's Assistant County Manager, Mr. Mathers hosted a meeting with their staff. Mr. Mathers emphasized that government must engage all stakeholders as it cannot do this work alone. Dr. Taormina stated Catawba County has many programs and has initiated a STAR Program. She said it is good for organizations to learn from each other and it is critical to build opioid program funding into county budgets.

Ms. Mathis reported she led a Naloxone training in Cleveland County where the attendees, key community stakeholders, asked about activities in Gaston County.

Community Education & Prevention Committee: In Dr. Donigan's absence, Mr. Gross reported the Clergy Outreach Subcommittee is planning four workshops. He summarized the list of our opioid presentations since January 1. The Medicine Take-back Subcommittee held its first church-based collection at Bethlehem Church on March 25, where it collected 15 pounds of medications and distributed over 600 Coalition brochures and cards on fixed medicine drop-off sites. Its next events will be at First Presbyterian Church, Belmont (May 6), First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia (May 20), and First United Methodist Church, Gastonia (June 10); in addition to the Gaston County Police Department the County Sheriff's Office will help with these events. He also reviewed local media coverage of opioids and cited a recent article on the STAR Program based on an interview with Dr. Taormina.

The number of friends on the Coalition's Facebook page has grown to 323, which is nearly 200 more than reported at the previous Coalition meeting. Mr. Gross thanked Ms. Earley for her work in building this following.

Treatment Linkages Committee: Ms. Mathis described the Opioid Overdose Response Team, stating patients who receive naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses and are brought to the CaroMont Emergency Department will sign a release form, so they can speak with a Certified Peer Support Specialist (PSS) from Olive Branch Ministry (OBM). During a brief conversation, the PSS will convey s/he knows what the patient is experiencing, would like to help, and will set plans to meet within a few days. For up to six months, the PSS will encourage clients to use harm reduction practices and to pursue opioid treatment; they will document patient decisions and activities for evaluating the program. GEMS staff will give cards on the Overdose Response Team to individuals to whom they administer Naloxone and refuse transportation to CaroMont, so they can contact peer support specialists. Ms. Mathis recently led an orientation to the program for CaroMont staff, will soon hire the first PSS, is organizing legal paperwork, and thanked Dr. Davis for his support. She is receiving inquiries about the program, which will likely launch during the second week of May.

Ms. Mathis also reported the PSS at McLeod Addiction Center will work five days a week, an increase from three days, to help clients engage in harm reduction and secure community resources. The PSS with the Opioid Overdose Response Team will also work at McLeod so if these clients relapse and are brought to the emergency department, they will be more likely to know the PSS, which will facilitate their entry into the program. McLeod treats some 300 people for opioid-use disorders.

Ms. Hallisey stated starting April 2, PSS's were assigned to work in opioid treatment programs in PBHM's eight-county region. In support of this work, Ms. Mathis trained them on Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT).

Ms. Mathis also reported on December 30, OBM established a fixed-site needle exchange program at the Phoenix Community Outreach Center, a day shelter for homeless people in Gastonia. Through March, more than 40 individuals have enrolled, following the posting of a Facebook ad and through word-of-mouth. At the site, clients exchange dirty needles for clean needles, and receive peer counseling and Narcan, making it a safe space for this population.

Mr. Gehrig reported on the NC 211 program, a 24/7 information and referral service of the United Way of NC, that is largely unknown and unused by persons with opioid-related needs in Gaston County. He and Ms. Kolodny met with local United Way staff and submitted descriptions for three opioid-related programs; the United Way will track if the system refers callers to these resources and expects to have this information in June. Mr. Gehrig believes NC 211 can grow to provide information on opioids and opioid support groups. A key step is promoting the PBHM HOPE Line (1-888-235-HOPE (4673)) which provides general opioid information and guidance on finding opioid-related care; contrary to popular belief, it is not a crisis line as it serves clients at all times on all behavioral health circumstances.

Opioid Progress: Agency Reports

Open floor: There were no comments

CaroMont: Dr. Davis stated CaroMont CEO, Chris Peek is a strong supporter of hospital and community-based opioid programming. He introduced Trish Goble: Director from Medical Surgical Nursing and Brooke Thomas, the Orthopedic Coordinator. He stated the hospital:

- Educated 1,600 nurses on non-pharmacological pain management methods such as using hot and cold, distraction, and movement.
- Increased, by four to five times, its use of pre-surgical regional anesthetic blocks to diminish post-operative pain; as a result, they have reduced the use of post-surgical intravenous morphine and Dilaudid by 49%.
- Hired a new outpatient pharmacist to provide opioid education to clinic patients.
- Is hiring LCSWs for their primary care practices to address social determinants and opioid-related issues.
- Has some 35 Navigation Nurses who will address opioid-related issues and will focus on skilled nursing and other long-term care facilities.

Dr. Davis said the exceptional impact of Mr. and Ms. Chowdhury's presentations show the effect of opioids on families and our community.

Drug Diversion and Treatment Program: Chief Ramey reported the County Police Department has received county funds and will soon begin recruiting new candidates for the program.

Healthy Communities Program: Ms. Earley stated:

- A Facebook promotion of the county's syringe exchange program generated 9,000 views and 96 shares.
- The video of Mr. and Ms. Chowdhury telling Austin's story on our Facebook page was seen by 46,000 persons, 22,000 watched a significant portion of the video, more than 100 shared it, and 1,003 people visited our website as a result. Many who posted comments described opioid issues in their families. The program:
- Is running messages on WFAE for two weeks, to direct people to our website.
- Is shooting video on naloxone and good Samaritan Laws, featuring Chief Ramey and staff from GEMS.
- Purchased a vinyl sign at Sims Park and an ad in the Grizzlies' game programs; the team averages 2,000 fans a game.
- Will receive funding next fiscal year for advertising and to promote syringe exchange.

Ms. Earley asked the group to like and share the Coalition's Facebook page. She has taken a position with the Ryan White Advisory Group at the Mecklenburg County Health Department and her last day with DHHS-Public Health is Thursday/April 26. The Coalition expressed its thanks for her exceptional service.

STAR and Child Health Insurance Program grant request: With the passing of the federal budget, Dr. Taormina reported DHHS-Public Health will keep its request in the State's Child Health Insurance Program funding budget; if approved, it will receive funds for STAR to: renovate a housing structure so postpartum women with Opioid Use Disorders can live with their children; transport STAR participants to clinical services; and, provide child care during drug treatment sessions. STAR will receive a Promising Practice Award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

She also reported approximately 175 women in the County Jail, 90% have drug-related behaviors. DHHS-Public Health is now educating these women on reproduction and birth control and provides birth control if they choose to delay pregnancies until they are successfully treated for drug use. Following the first education session, one woman received Depo Provera and five received Nexplanon. The program will meet with 12 women every two weeks to discuss birth control pills and intrauterine devices. Brochures on these services are being distributed at McLeod Addiction Center.

Community Foundation Request: Dr. Taormina stated Austin's Opioid Education Fund, at the Community Foundation of Gaston County, awarded the Coalition a grant of \$29,800. She thanked Mr. and Ms. Chowdhury for their support.

Other

- Ms. Polhemus described the handout *A guide to safe use of pain medication* being used by CVS, which is initiating a soft rollout of a medication disposal bin at their Court Drive location. Their pharmacists counsel clients when filling their first opioid prescriptions. When asked if pharmacists discuss Naloxone, she noted it was on the handout and she will discuss this with a supervisor. She said a local candidate for Congress is including the opioids crisis in his campaign.
- Ms. McIntosh stated the North Carolina Association of Pharmacists is conducting robust education for its members, including harm reduction and needle exchange. She will push to engage pharmacies in Gaston and Lincoln Counties.
- Ms. Mathis reported OBM ordered testing strips to detect fentanyl; while they don't describe the amount and type of fentanyl, this is an important harm reduction tool. The cost is \$1 per strip; OBM used an online fundraiser to purchase 1,000 strips and will train intravenous drug users to use them; strips will be available at fixed needle exchange sites.
- Ms. Hallisey reported McLeod Addiction Center is recruiting uninsured persons to receive no-cost suboxone, buprenorphine, and methadone through their Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT) program. Insured clients who receive MAT are not reported to their employers.

Other

Dr. Taormina noted our website data dashboard is continually updated. She encouraged the members to submit data for the Directory of coalition Members and she encouraged them to like and visit the Coalition's Facebook page; the web addresses are both listed on the meeting agenda.

Next meeting. The Coalition will meet on June 15, 2018.

Adjourn. Chief Ramey moved to adjourn, Ms. Hallisey seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.