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**PRESS RELEASE: FRANKLIN COUNTY OVERDOSE TASK FORCE COMMUNITY UPDATE,  
FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF GET BACK UP**

Calling the current opioid epidemic a "crisis" is not hyperbole. Nationally, heroin-related overdose deaths have quadrupled since 2010, as heroin and fentanyl (synthetic heroin) use has markedly increased during that time frame. From 2014-2015, heroin overdose death rates increased by 20.6%. In Pennsylvania, there was a 37% increase in overdose deaths from 2015 to 2016. In Franklin County, overdose deaths in general have remained fairly static historically, rarely exceeding 10-12 per year. In 2014, for example, there were 11. However, that number more than doubled in 2015, when there were 24 overdose deaths.

In that context, the Overdose Task Force was formed. In November of 2015, over 70 citizens from all walks of life across Franklin County united to form our first Overdose Task Force. Members of the Overdose Task Force include the District Attorney, the Chiefs of Police, the Single County Authority (Franklin/Fulton Drug and Alcohol), the Franklin County Coroner, physicians, nurses, health care administrators, State Representatives/Senators, community organizations, the Warden of Franklin County Jail, members of the faith community, judges, county government representative, treatment providers, Healthy Communities Partnership, recovery support providers, CYD, Franklin County Adult Probation local business leaders, and Franklin County Emergency Services. Most importantly, the Overdose Task Force enthusiastically welcomed citizens in long-term recovery, and their family members. Their input and candid guidance has been the most influential voice within our ranks.

This loosely-assembled and all-inclusive collaborative effort initially focused upon an authentic and exhaustive understanding of the intricacies of the problem, specific to Franklin County, and what local

deficiencies were contributing to the problem. Frankly, the picture was bleak, but the collective will was strong and failure was simply not an option.

The Overdose Task Force has met very regularly since the Spring of 2016, when we formed Workgroups to focus on 4 specific areas of concern in order to prevent overdose deaths: Prevention, Treatment, Recovery and Law Enforcement. Later, in 2017, we added a Data Workgroup. Each workgroup put forth a deliberate effort to bring solutions to the table for every deficiency we discovered, and continues to do so.

In our first full year, the crisis reached a tragic peak, as the numbers of overdose deaths in Franklin County almost doubled yet again, and 46 of our community members perished. Last year, in 2017, our overdose deaths decreased, as we lost 32 of our citizens to overdose. While that decrease is arguably encouraging in the context of the 46 in 2016, it is not acceptable. 1 overdose is not acceptable, and so our work continues. As we move forward and continue our work to improve the health and safety of our community, it is appropriate that the entirety of our community is fully informed of the reform that has taken place to date. Below are the major accomplishments/initiatives to date:

- \*Developed a treatment provider resource document that lists all providers within the Commonwealth, across payor types and service populations and identifying current service/resource gaps.
- \*Initiated and participated in two Continuing Medical Education workshops sponsored by Summit Health, to educate prescribers on community needs, lack of resources, Medication-Assisted-Treatment ("MAT") options and proper prescribing methods.
- \*Initiated the development of "Need Help" cards to assist the community to the SCA for linkage to treatment providers and case management services in Franklin County for Substance Use Disorder ("SUD").
- \*Developed/supported PDMP education to prescribers in Franklin County.
- \*Created a comprehensive resource list of all Franklin County pharmacies carrying/stocking Naloxone.
- \*Educated the members of the Overdose Task Force on Franklin County Jail Services for offenders with SUD needs.
- \*Provided a Single County Authority employee to implement the "Warm Hand Off Process" within Summit Health for overdose survivors.
- \*Implementation of Mobile Vivitrol in Franklin County for individuals in need of this form of MAT.
- \*Employment of Peer Support Recovery Specialists.
- \*Distributed English and Spanish versions of "Drug Monitoring Flyers" to pharmacies throughout the entire Franklin County area, including Shippensburg.
- \*Distributed PASTOP materials to employers and various service agencies.

- \*Promoted and had a table presence at the 2016 and 2017 Home Run Derbies.
- \*Provided Operation Save-A-Life Training (Naloxone).
- \*Wrote a successful grant application to fund a portion of the Chris Herren event at Chambersburg Area Senior High School (August, 2017).
- \*Provided promotion for Chris Herren event to schools, coaches, athletic departments and parents.
- \*Provided support services during Chris Herren event, for attendees impacted by the message.
- \*Presented with other workgroup members on a panel for Chambersburg and Waynesboro Hospital Clergy.
- \*Worked with the University of Pittsburgh Technical Assistance Center ("Pitt TAC") on a Franklin County Stigma Survey.
- \*Distributed over 160 Stigma Surveys at two health fairs.
- \*Distributed Stigma Survey via electronic link to various individuals across the county. To date, Pitt TAC has received 625 surveys that will be used for base line data.
- \*Developed an employer survey that was used for employee training, and captured responses from 12 Human Resources professionals who work with over 1,000 employees.
- \*Conducted employer training on "PA Drugfree Workplace."
- \*Worked on Robo-Call scripts and content, to be used with schools and in church bulletins. The group used Pennsylvania Youth Survey ("PAYS") data to create messaging about how parents can prevent and reduce substance use in youth.
- \*A list of overdose related data points and contacts was created and forwarded to Pitt TAC for analysis. Collected data is under constant review by the Data Workgroup and will be posted to Overdosefreepa. A plan to publicly release the data is under construction and will be forthcoming.
- \*Several members of the Overdose Task Force joined to create Noah's House for individuals leaving residential treatment and transitioning back into the community.
- \*Hosted several Town Halls in Chambersburg and Waynesboro.
- \*Empanelled a Grand Jury, focused on overdose death (homicide) investigations.
- \*Began providing all Law Enforcement ("LE") Officers with Naloxone in April of 2016. For that year, Naloxone was used by LE on 49 occasions, with 45 reversals. In 2017, Naloxone was used by LE on 44 occasions, with 41 reversals. It has been used once in 2018.
- \*Good Wolf Treatment Court began in April 2017 and there are currently 32 participants.

\*Prescription pill/MEDreturn boxes at Chambersburg Police Department, Waynesboro Police Department, Greencastle Police Department, and Mercersburg Police Department. Began collecting "Sharps" in 2016.



**“Let me tell you something you already know.**

**The world ain’t all sunshine and rainbows. It’s a very mean and nasty place, and I don’t care how tough you are, it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life.**

**But it ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done!**

**Now, if you know what you’re worth, then go out and get what you’re worth. But you gotta be willing to take the hits, and not pointing fingers saying you ain’t where you wanna be because of him, or her, or anybody. Cowards do that and that ain’t you. You’re better than that!”**

**-Rocky Balboa**

April Brown, the SCA, has provided an embedded Drug and Alcohol Case Manager to the District Attorney's Office, and to date, that embedded position has been used as a Drug/Alcohol responder to our instances of Naloxone use. Now, that Case Manager will also work with law enforcement through a new initiative called Get Back Up. The intent of Get Back Up is to provide an authentic and effective solution to the underlying problem rather than continuing this cycle of heroin use and criminal behavior that occupies so much of law enforcement time and which absolutely crushes families.

The initiative is 2-fold. First, a person can walk in and drop off their drugs and ask for help. The Get Back Up Case Manager will respond to the police department and get the individual to treatment as necessary, and law enforcement will then destroy the drugs and any paraphernalia. This is sort of amnesty

because no criminal charges will follow, but we wouldn't know about their possession anyway because the individuals are walking in voluntarily.

The second part is a diversion aspect where law enforcement officers have the discretion (as ever) to get a person into treatment instead of charging them via criminal complaint. When a crime occurs and the would-be affiant determines that treatment just makes more sense than charging someone, that officer will contact the Get Back Up Case Manager. This has already been occurring informally, with officers/troopers/deputies calling the District Attorney's Office. Often, families are the ones victimized and this is all they want. And often, they never report because they don't want to "jam up" their loved one. This allows those people in particular a way to get the loved one help and not unnecessarily blaming themselves for "bringing down a hammer." If the person doesn't accept this "gift," it's business as usual and they can be charged. If they abscond from treatment, then a criminal complaint will be filed.

The current environment is complex, and different than what we have ever previously confronted in law enforcement. It is correctly called both an epidemic and a crisis. Conventional thinking does not apply and it is time for law enforcement to respond unconventionally on both strategic and operational levels. The Treatment Community has totally risen to its challenge and is operating with true fidelity. The Community has risen to the challenge, through the work of the Overdose Task Force. We need their help and they need ours.

One Team, One Fight.