



Preventing Substance Abuse and Drug Overdose

Strong state, county and local partnerships must be reinforced with appropriate resources to effectively address the opioid epidemic.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- ▶ Additional state resources for increased local capacity for prevention, intervention and treatment.
- ▶ Implementation of best practices to reduce community impacts and the number of overdose deaths.
- ▶ Collaboration among state and local authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to addressing the opioid and heroin epidemic.

Substance abuse and drug overdose has reached unprecedented levels in both the commonwealth and the nation. Alarming, an estimated 13 Pennsylvanians are dying each day from drug-related causes, and the presence of an opioid (illicit or prescribed by a doctor) was identified in 85 percent of drug-related overdose deaths in the state in 2016. This trend in substance abuse has become a major cost driver across state and county budgets. Impacts are felt in the courts, law enforcement, emergency rooms and publicly funded human services programs.

County drug and alcohol programs, run by Single County Authorities (SCAs), are responsible for developing and implementing prevention, intervention and treatment programs. The SCAs work with community leadership and stakeholders to assess local circumstances and develop an array of programs that meet the individual needs of each community.

In recent years, progress has been made – expanding access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone, continued implementation of “warm handoff” protocols to help get overdose survivors directly into addiction treatment, and ongoing investigation into manufacturers and distributors of prescription opioids. However, more can and must be done.

Counties’ focus will be developing an integrated cross-systems work plan and examining the barriers to information sharing. Only through integrated planning at the local level with all stakeholders involved (law enforcement, emergency and medical personnel, first responders, treatment staff and community leaders), coupled with additional resources to expand local capacity, can Pennsylvania begin to reverse the epidemic.

Counties will continue to work in partnership with the commonwealth to ensure coordination of local and statewide strategies and comprehensive solutions to this public health crisis.



THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

For more information on **preventing substance abuse and drug overdose**, contact **Michele Denk** at (717) 736-4704 or mdenk@pacounties.org.