

Greetings,

I am Timothy Susick, D.Ed., Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at California University of Pennsylvania and a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) A.O.D. Coalition Steering Committee. I am Donna George, Coordinator of the PASSHE AOD Coalition.

We would like to thank Barry Denk, Director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for the opportunity to speak before you.

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) is made up of 14 state owned universities of which 12 of the 14 are rural settings.

The fourteen PASSHE Universities have a long history in AOD Prevention Programs that address substance abuse. We would like to

walk you through some of that history and where we are today in AOD prevention.

In the 70's and 80's as in many institutions of higher education, PASSHE Universities were focusing on Alcohol and marijuana abuse. In the ninety's and into 2000, pills, cocaine and LSD was on a comeback. PASSHE through its collaboration with the P.L.C.B. and its grants program led to data that landed a 3 year \$497,000 U.S. Department of Education Grant which lead to the development of the PASSHE AOD Coalition. Though the grant focused on Alcohol Abuse due to the funding source; after the grant expired, the PASSHE Council of Presidents found that the work of the coalition was impressive enough to fund a PASSHE AOD Coordinator position and to expand the Coalitions efforts to other drug prevention.

The concept of a Coalition is a vehicle for achieving the Goals of creating environmental change.

Through the PASSHE AOD Coalition it was able to:

- **Identify consistent practices at PASSHE institutions.**
- **Identify gaps/weaknesses in services provided**
- **Collect data to support future Federal and State Grant opportunities**
- **Communication and Collaboration**
  - **Seek partnerships with all constituent groups within our campus and borough communities and counties**
  - **Communicate to students and parents, about alcohol and other drug issues, prior to campus arrival and continue efforts during their enrollment**

- **Organizational**

- Provide visible leadership, support AOD staff, engage the community, enforce policy and procedure
- Create university-wide alcohol and other drug advisory counsels

- **Programmatic**

- Implement activities; strive for consistency in enforcement; build sustainable campus community coalitions
- Develop system-wide training, intervention, and treatment programs

- **State System Support**

- Articulate a system-wide stance on AOD issues
- Support system-wide AOD Coalition Coordinator

- Provide system support for grant writing
- Sponsor workshops or other learning activities
- Promote system efforts to address the AOD issues and to expand on Drug prevention

Though national surveys indicate that less than 1% of College Students use heroin, we at PASSHE have seen requests for medical withdraws from school to enter in-patient rehabilitation. Some of these are for alcohol and prescription drug abuse, but students are also starting to identify themselves as users of opiates and heroin.

We at PASSHE as well as almost every community are finding some students who self-medicated from parent and grandparent medicine chests and became dependent on the oxycodone and other pain killers moved to a cheaper and available drug, heroin.

It is apparent that students who use opiates and heroin are mostly immune to traditional outreach efforts that we might use for alcohol and marijuana. We need to be prepared to address heroin as this abuse increases. Most schools are stretched to their limits just responding to alcohol and marijuana issues.

Donna will expand on the PASSHE Schools efforts in drug prevention and the resources needed to combat heroin use.

**DONNA GEORGE**

Good Morning. As I said earlier, my name is Donna George and I am the new PASSHE AOD Coalition Coordinator. Prior to being hired for this position, I held the position of Alcohol and other Drug Prevention Specialist at California University of Pennsylvania. I will be summarizing what staff across the state system of higher education are doing to address the problems created by drug abuse and addiction both on their campuses and in the communities surrounding them. I will also

summarize the obstacles that stand in the way of solving the problems, and what kind of help the universities could use to accomplish results.

The abuse of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs impair the academic achievement and productivity of the university students who engage in these high risk behaviors. The fourteen universities that make up PASSHE have had a long history of creating comprehensive plans to address these threats to student success. The one thing that has remained constant is that alcohol is the number one drug used by our students. Much programming on all campuses is carried out with the goal of reducing underage and dangerous drinking by students. Beyond this priority, each school's plan includes strategies aimed at the reduction of drug use by students. Some specific prevention and intervention strategies include:

- **Collaborations with neighboring communities**

It is the task of the Single County Authorities, or SCAs, to implement alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) prevention, intervention, and treatment services through county based planning

and management. Many universities partner with their county's SCA agency toward these common goals. Some of the community activities that universities have been involved in with their local SCAs are:

Community Town Hall meetings addressing the problems created by drug abuse including overdoses

Drug Overdose Task Force Units being created

Education and Media outreach to all members of the communities, and some to targeted groups such as healthcare workers and at risk groups

Disseminating of information on the use of Narcan given during heroin/opiate overdoses

Drug Take Back collection boxes which are in place across the state, marketing their use and making them available to campuses

- **AOD programs/initiatives on campuses**

Prevention and Education efforts include compliance with Drug Free Schools mandate; notification to all in the university



communities about drug policies; mandatory ATOD programs for NCAA athletes, Greek organization members, and Club Sports teams with a focus on the current drug trends; programming in Residence Halls, classrooms, and elsewhere on the topics of the dangers and consequences of drug use as well as addiction and the addiction process; online tools that provide education on alcohol, other drugs, and sexual violence; bystander intervention programming which equips attendees with decision making tools on how to intervene in problematic situations; and use of motivational interviewing within alcohol (BASICS) or marijuana interventions. On some campuses, peer educators are utilized for prevention education.

- **Mental Health initiatives**

Realizing that drug prevention is multi factorial and needs to address all the precipitants leads many universities to address the following: stress management, desire for risk taking, impulse control, and other mental health challenges. In addition to offering

mental health services through Counseling Centers, PASSHE universities have employed several initiatives with the goal of improving students' mental health: bystander intervention programs such as Mental Health First Aid and a web based tool to help all in the campus community identify students who are in need of counseling services; workshops on such topics as Sexuality, Anxiety and Depression, and student led organizations dedicated to raising mental health awareness among college students. In addition to mental health initiatives, one campus has a behavioral health awareness committee.

- **Treatment**

One on one and group counseling services are offered to students through campus Counseling Centers. Some universities have practitioners who specialize in working with people with drug abuse/addiction problems. In addition, all campuses offer Student Health Services on their campuses to address any medical services related to drug use. PASSHE universities work closely with local

hospitals and treatment facilities and refer students when appropriate. Some schools offer Narcotics Anonymous or other 12 step meetings on campus, and some refer students to ones off campus. Many schools are beginning to address the need for internal support services for students who either come to them in recovery or who begin recovery during their time at the university.

- **Data Collection**

Utilizing traditional ATOD use surveys can be very costly. A new survey has been developed by the PASSHE AOD Coalition for use by all the universities at no cost. Most schools will distribute the survey for the first time during the upcoming academic year (August, 2014 to May, 2015) Questions regarding the use of specific drugs including heroin will give schools a closer look at the prevalence and use patterns of students. Collected data, along with evaluation and research are used to guide future prevention and intervention efforts as well as application for grant support and continuous improvement.

- **Enforcement**

All PASSHE schools have a Student Code of Conduct that addresses the prohibition of illegal drugs. Enforcement involves both the Student Code of Conduct and all state and federal laws, and mandatory law enforcement notification for all substance abuse violations. Schools hold “Zero Tolerance” judicial sanctioning guidelines.

Some schools utilize drug dogs as part of their police/safety squad and universities utilize mandatory student athlete drug testing as a deterrent.

There are several challenges faced by PASSHE universities’ staff as they work to prevent and intervene with drug abuse. Unlike elementary and secondary schools, universities find it hard to mandate prevention programming, and attendance is often low. The lack of adequate financial resources poses a problem for ATOD staff at some of the universities. There are some barriers to

reaching the students who have a drug abuse/addiction issue.

Regardless of the environment, addiction still has a stigma attached to it that is hard to break and sometimes people within the university community (including faculty and staff) do not realize that addiction can impact all types of people, nor do they realize that it is not a moral issue. Universities need administration's support to bring about a cultural change, and not all of them feel that they have such support for such initiatives as social norms campaigns and campaigns addressing healthy alternatives.

Sometimes other stakeholders have a low level of concern about the problem of student drug abuse/addiction such as alumni and fellow students. Some schools feel that an increase in staff support would make them more effective as many ATOD offices are a one person operation (and some lack clerical support). Lastly, some feel that more education is needed regarding current trends in drug use so that everyone has an accurate picture.

Institutions see several ways that state government can assist them in dealing with drug abuse/addiction (including heroin). Pennsylvania and other states should discourage the legalization of recreational marijuana and other drugs in an effort to reduce conflicting messages to students about the dangers of recreational drug usage. Improving access to treatment services is seen as paramount. In addition, universities want up to date information on drug concerns in their local communities, and would like it to be made available to them on a regular basis. In addition, one school suggested a state-sponsored workshop for university teams made up of ATOD staff, Health Center staff, and other interested individuals that focuses on the latest drug trend information and offers an opportunity for participants to brainstorm and develop a take-home plan for their particular institution. Another suggestion offered is for creation of an interactive, college-level “packaged” educational program for use by all schools. Grants and/or other resources offered by state government would help schools to create a comprehensive

approach toward the reduction of drug abuse. Funding for alternative activities would be helpful. In addition, funding for campus/community partnerships with local law enforcement are needed that do NOT force universities and municipalities to compete against each other for slim funding dollars. Lastly, the state could institute mandatory education in high schools about ATOD issues. Students come to PASSHE institutions with pre-established ATOD practices. Some prevention/education efforts need to be focused at the pre-collegiate level.

Thank you.

#### **SUSICK CLOSING REMARKS:**

In closing; most would not think college students as IV users. A lot of people have an image in their minds of what IV drug users look like, and it is not a college student. In reality it is in our high schools. When I talk about heroin in my community, people are shocked. Addiction

knows no prejudice; it can cover all races, gender and socioeconomic status. Heroin users on campus usually are addicted before they get to campus. Though marijuana and alcohol are on university administrator's minds every weekend, many are less aware of opiate and heroin users as they are not busted at the large parties. Heroin users hide their addictions and unless there is an over dose or probable cause for a search, they don't get caught. It is difficult to know the extent of the problem because heroin rarely comes to the surface. We can't treat what we don't see, but we need to make a decision as the old adage says.

“We can put a guide rail on the mountain or an ambulance in the valley.”