

LUZERNE-WYOMING COUNTIES DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAM

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Good Afternoon, my name is Michael Donahue and I am the Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program Administrator. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Yaw and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for conducting these Hearings to review the devastation caused by heroin/opiates usage, and the critical social issues caused by this epidemic.

- The opiate epidemic in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties, as is the case throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania continues to take a toll on our Communities health and economic stability.
- The Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program continues to see heroin/opiates usage as the primary substance of abuse requiring treatment within our Single County Authority (SCA).
- As the Drug and Alcohol Administration for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties, the SCA has expanded the medicated assisted treatment available and has continued to refer to inpatient treatment those individuals suffering from heroin/opiates use disorders for all of our residents. Specifically, there are two methadone programs with a capacity of over 700 slots available to individuals from the Northeastern Region in Pennsylvania.
- Over the past 10 years heroin and other opiates are the number one or number two substance of abuse for Wyoming and Luzerne County. The total number of overdose deaths in Luzerne County for Calendar Year 2014 was 67, and the total number of overdose deaths in Wyoming County for Calendar Year 2014 was 17. It is estimated that 67% of the afore-mentioned deaths had heroin and other opioids identified as the cause.
- Funding limitations and capacity issues are concerns which must be dealt with on a daily basis when attempting to coordinate care for individuals seeking help.
- The Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Case Management Unit provides assessments and case coordination for Wyoming County Residents through appointments scheduled at several sites in Wyoming County. These services are also available in Luzerne County.
- It is estimated that 70% of all drug treatment court and criminal justice referrals have a substance use disorder with the primary drug of abuse being heroin/opiates.

- As a response to the heroin/opioid epidemic, the Luzerne-Wyoming Counties SCA is working with first responders throughout the two county region. This will assure that Naloxone is available for administration onsite for those individuals who are found to be unresponsive due to opioid usage. The SCA has also been involved with the District Attorney in Luzerne County to discuss establishing a Regional First Responders Initiative to improve the potential for further reversals of overdosed individuals. To date there have been 20 reversals reported, with 3 individuals being from Wyoming County.
- The SCA has also encouraged the Prevention Providers in both Luzerne and Wyoming Counties to incorporate the harms and effects associated with heroin and opiate usage into all of their middle school and high school prevention programming.
- The Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program is also working closely with the District Attorneys from Wyoming County to identify gaps in services needed to help those individuals who are involved with heroin/opioid use disorders. The SCA was involved with a mapping of Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services available to Wyoming County residents.
- The Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program is also very much involved with the Probation Offices of both counties to assure that screening and assessments are completed in a timely fashion with coordination of client continuum of care as the primary goal.
- Further development of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) is occurring in both Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. The main objective of this initiative is to establish recovery centers where individuals can go and be with others who are attempting to maintain a drug free lifestyle. Also, the second objective is to train and hire Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS) to meet with those individuals returning to their home environments thus giving additional support to their recovery efforts.

In closing thank you for the opportunity to share our efforts and challenges as we try to intervene and assist those individuals suffering from the disease of heroin/opioid use disorder.