



## LACKAWANNA/SUSQUEHANNA

### OFFICE OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAMS

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*Good Afternoon, my name is William Hoban and I am the Single County Authority Director for Lackawanna and Susquehanna Counties. I would like to open my remarks this afternoon by extending my sincere appreciation to Senator Yaw and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for taking on the critical social issue of substance use disorder, particularly the heroin/opioid epidemic. I would like to also extend my thanks to the Pennsylvania legislature for the recent passage of Act 139 which allows first responders and family members to have access to the life-saving medication naloxone and offers protection from prosecution when assisting in an overdose episode.*

- Latest figures estimate substance use costs in the United States to be \$430 billion dollars, annually, as related to crime, the economy, and healthcare. While the very nature of this cost is as distressing as it is unsustainable, it does not calculate the thousands of lives that are negatively impacted by substance use and its associated heartache, tragedy, and death.
- The opioid epidemic (prescription opioid pain medication and heroin abuse) prevails as the major public health crisis; its menacing reach is felt at national, state, and local levels.
- The Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs observes alarming trends pursuant to opioid use disorder, such as:
  - an increased number of individuals in need of formalized substance use treatment services;
  - substantial opioid overdose deaths; and,
  - an increase in the number of persons who transition from prescription opioids to heroin abuse.
- As a County Drug and Alcohol Program, we are charged with a commitment to our local community, and to individuals with substance use disorder, to streamline eligibility and access to services and to enhance the quality and coordination of those services.
- Funding limitations, capacity issues, and widespread stigma associated with substance use are persistent and considerable impediments that the Program faces, daily.
- Despite barriers, the Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs works, arduously, to promote the highest degree of functioning and quality of life for all individuals in our system.

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- As a direct response to the heroin/opioid epidemic, the Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs was quick to establish a Naloxone Distribution Program for first responders. This initiative was made possible through a collaborative partnership between the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office, Marworth Treatment Center, and PA Ambulance Services.
    - Operational since March of 2015, our local Naloxone Program has saved the lives of 4 individuals in our community, with 16 police municipalities and the District Attorney's office active with Naloxone.

- The Program's Partnerships For Success initiative is building community coalitions and increasing education pursuant to opioid prescription pain medication. Specifically, the Program partners with several local colleges and universities to support their efforts to reach the young adult population in providing programming and information regarding the dangers of opioid use and addiction.
  - The Program is enhancing its efforts and outreach to the medical community. Recently, the Program disseminated opioid prescribing guidelines to over 100 area dentists. This coming year, the Program will establish a formalized ER referral protocol where individuals in need of substance use treatment services can transition directly from the hospital to treatment.
  - By way of diversion control, several drop boxes are located at police municipalities and the Lackawanna County Courthouse. Prescription "Take Back Events" and "Safe Medication Disposal Days" are conducted throughout the year at area personal care homes, hospice agencies, pharmacies, and police departments.
  - The Program collected 244 pounds of prescription medication in 2013-2014.  
Lackawanna County: 136 pounds / Susquehanna County: 108 pounds
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*A few words about recovery and community support services...*

- The concept of recovery is fast becoming the prevailing paradigm in behavioral health policy arenas. Consequently, systems are trying to align their services with a recovery-oriented approach, one that supports long-term recovery for individuals and families and promotes community health.
- The central focus is to create an infrastructure with the resources to effectively address the full range of substance use problems within communities.
- In this system, individuals and families are presented with more options with which to make informed decisions regarding their care, services are better designed for accessibility and easier to navigate, and whole person/community health and wellness thrives at the forefront of care management.
- This movement represents a shift away from a crisis-oriented, acute-based model of care to a public health/recovery management model that emphasizes the reality and hope of long-term recovery, and recognizes the many pathways to healing for people with addiction challenges.
- Like other chronic health conditions, substance use disorders typically require long-term involvement with the health care system and parallel informal networks.
- A public health approach offers a menu of comprehensive services which are individualized, appropriate, and flexible across the lifespan.
- It is in this vision of care that the substance use system will continue to develop, ultimately changing the way we think, learn, and act.
- At a local level, peer and community-based recovery supports are being developed and integrated into treatment settings and community contexts.
- The Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs is committed to best practices as identified in the scientific literature and through the collective experience of people in recovery.
  - We continue to elevate and expand the current system of care so that individuals can actualize and achieve long term recovery and enhance their lives and the lives of others.

*In closing, thank you for this opportunity to share the various challenges that confront our system and the multiple initiatives underway that help individuals who suffer from the insidious, heart breaking disease of substance use disorder.*