

To: Senator Gene Yaw, Chairman  
Center for Rural Pennsylvania

From: Kami Anderson, Executive Director  
Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission

Re: St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA  
Center for Rural Pennsylvania  
"Heroin and Opioid Addiction Treatment and Recovery"

Date: July 15, 2015

Dear Senator Yaw and members of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania:

On behalf of the Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission and the hundreds of clients that we serve annually, we thank you for the opportunity to address this critical issue. I testified at the 2014 Center for Rural Pennsylvania hearings and I want to thank the members of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for their comprehensive report on "Heroin and Combating the Growing Epidemic in PA" and their support of the Bill that passed in 2014 for the increased access to naloxone and the good Samaritan law addressing reporting of overdoses. The Commission is also thankful for the full Medicaid expansion that Governor Wolf implemented soon after his inauguration. Our staff assist clients with applying for health coverage using the COMPASS website or the federal Health Marketplace. This has been one of the most significant positive developments for persons with substance use disorders in PA, many of who previously would not have qualified for Medical Assistance in the past. This action has allowed the SCA to expand services for prevention, education, recovery support and case coordination in our area.

Heroin and opiates are the #2 Drug of Choice for those seeking substance abuse treatment in our three rural Counties. With all of the efforts the Commission has implemented in the last few years, we still have experienced a spike in heroin and opioid overdoses in our three Counties since the beginning of 2015. Each County has had more overdose deaths in the first six months of 2015 than the entire year of 2014. Citizens Ambulance of Indiana County reports an average of 90 overdoses in 90 days.

In order to address this overdose problem, our Single County Authority has focused on educating the public, expanding medication assisted treatment, and improving treatment by implementing the following initiatives:

- 1) Created Drug Free Communities Coalitions in every county;
- 2) Provide or attend local Town Hall meetings to educate the public on the growing heroin and opioid issues;
- 3) Since 2007, our agency has been concentrating on developing a Recovery Oriented System of Care (or ROSC as it referred to) in our three rural Counties that focuses on substance abuse treatment as a chronic disease, instead of an acute disease. In 2008, the Pennsylvania Certification Board created a new certification title called Certified Recovery Specialist, meant for people in long term recovery to provide Recovery Support Services to others battling addiction. We now employ four full-time CRS staff at our agency that assist clients with drafting a recovery plan, engage clients in the support service while they are in residential care in order assist them through the Outpatient treatment process when they arrive home, and assist them with their recovery needs, such as attending local support groups and finding a sponsor. It has been a very effective service in our rural Counties.
- 4) Implemented the first Medical Assistance County Jail Pilot in PA to assess inmates and transfer them directly to a residential treatment facility on the date of their release;
- 5) Worked with the local coroners in each county to create an Overdose Task Force that meets regularly to analyze the overdose situation data and where the gaps in service may exist that we can address through our programs. The Task Force includes Emergency Department physicians, 911 staff, Ambulance Companies, Treatment Providers, and Crisis Line staff. The Coroners are working on entering their overdose data back to 2007 on the website [www.overdosefreepa.org](http://www.overdosefreepa.org) that is operated through the University of Pittsburgh to track and analyze overdose issues.
- 6) Applied for and received a \$50,000 grant from the Staunton Farm Foundation to provide naloxone and training in the Southwestern PA Counties. As of today, six overdose prevention trainings have been held in the three Counties. Alice Bell of Prevention Point Pittsburgh was the trainer and attendees were able to access free naloxone kits at the end of the training. All outpatient providers in our three Counties have a supply of naloxone kits to distribute for free to opioid-addicted clients after they have been trained on the administration of the naloxone;
- 7) Required Providers to include Overdose Prevention training in their treatment regimens;
- 8) Recruited new treatment providers to the area including a non-hospital detox and residential rehab to provide choice for our clients;
- 9) Encouraged first responders to be trained in and to carry naloxone for overdose victims. The Commission has applied for naloxone grants from PCCD to supply naloxone kits to first responders, treatment providers, and overdose patients from area hospital Emergency Departments;
- 10) Created a media campaign in the three counties on the signs and symptoms of opioid addiction and how to get help with substance use disorders;
- 11) Received a \$600,000 federal grant from the Office of Rural Health Policy to create a warm hand-off program by placing a mobile case manager and a peer



recovery specialist in each of our three hospitals. Patients being treated by the hospital for overdoses and/or substance use disorders will have an assessment by the mobile case manager who can provide a direct transfer from the hospital to a treatment facility. The peer recovery specialist can provide recovery support to the patient, education to the family members, and addiction education to the hospital staff;

- 12) Received a \$450,000 grant from the Office of Rural Health Policy to create a Nurse Navigator position in each of the drug and alcohol treatment facilities in the three Counties. The Nurse Navigator is a registered nurse that meets with the client to assess their physical issues and provide assistance with physical health needs and medications.
- 13) Administratively apply for and manage the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) grant funds for the operation of Restricted Intermediate Punishment programs, such as Drug Treatment Courts or similar programs in all three Counties. We also employ Criminal Case Managers to participate on the Treatment Teams for those programs.
- 14) Participated in an overdose prevention workgroup led by US Attorney David Hickton and various committees at the statewide level;
- 15) Developed Family Education and Support groups in each county to provide family members with information and support when there are family members struggling with the disease of addiction;
- 16) Conduct annual overdose prevention and education with local urgent care centers and medical providers so that they have the resources they need to make referrals for appropriate individuals to treatment;
- 17) Refer appropriate clients to one of the two Methadone clinics located in our three county area;
- 18) Maintain suboxone/buprenorphine treatment programs at three local outpatient treatment facilities in our three county area;
- 19) Provide for Vivitrol medication through a mobile unit with a Doctor and a Registered Nurse that visit each provider every two weeks. We contract for this service with Positive Recovery Solutions, representatives of which are here today on this panel to discuss the mobile unit and Vivitrol.

As a member of the Overdose work group created by US Attorney David Hickton, I was very influenced by one of his main messages to the Single County Authorities which was to **“do everything that we can possibly do to address the overdose problem in Western PA”**. Those words often come back to me and resonate in my thoughts when a new initiative is suggested. Our SCA staff are extremely busy fighting the heroin and opioid problem in our area. However, I will not be satisfied with our programs until I can state that “we have done everything that we can possible do to address the overdose problem in our three Counties”.

The main reason that I wanted to be here today is to introduce to you a remarkable young man that came to us about 10 years ago requesting treatment for his heroin addiction. Our staff was able to work with this man to provide treatment and case management services through his battle to overcome heroin addiction.

Michael Krafick is now an employee of the Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission, serving as the Certified Recovery Specialist Supervisor, carrying a caseload and supervising three other Certified Recovery Specialists. Mike was recently named the County Commissioner's Association of Pennsylvania's Affiliate of the Year for his advocacy and leadership as a person in long-term recovery.

I am very proud to introduce to you Mr. Michael Krafick, to tell you his story of heroin addiction and recovery in rural PA.