

**OPIOID ADDICTION COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019
2:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Rob Sassi, Chairman,
Kevin W. Hines, Kevindaryan Lujan, Janet Sutherland, Darcie Miller

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Thomas Faggione, Legislator
Kathy A. Stegenga, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Mary Pat Smith, Assistant to the County Executive
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health
Michael Ventre, Deputy Commissioner of Health

Mr. Sassi called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. All committee members were present.

Mr. Sassi stated that the first item on the agenda was expanding the Opioid Addiction Committee. The main purpose of this committee is to act as an educational board. He wanted to expand it to include the Health Commissioner or designee, but also outside organizations like ADAC or Catholic Charities. This would give them a seat at the table to provide brief updates. They are the agencies that are in the trenches and see what we do not see. He asked for the committee to provide their thoughts and concerns on his proposal to expand.

Ms. Miller stated that the County has had the Opioid Prevention Taskforce since 2013. They converted that to Changing the Ecosystem. They have 200 stakeholders who are included in the steering committee with Changing the Ecosystem. They have five workgroups that operate underneath that. This would be another responsibility for them to participate and in some ways repetitive.

Mr. Lujan thought it was an exceptional idea but having heard that there is a workgroup in place, maybe we could revolve each meeting around specific subjects and have them present. Perhaps that would allow them to focus on key issues that are impacting this epidemic that we all want addressed.

Ms. Miller added that since the beginning of the taskforce they had representation from the Legislature.

Mr. Hines commented that if they want to come, they are welcome. He did not think it would be necessary every time.

Mr. Sassi thanked committee members for their input and noted that he would leave it alone for now.

Dr. Gelman was next on the agenda to provide her observations on the Opioid Epidemic.

Mr. Sassi shared some statistics announcing that they are closing in on 800,000 deaths since it has been tracked in 1999. There are 130 people per day in the United States that are dying from the opioid epidemic. Last month was the biggest fentanyl bust ever in the history of the United States. Today in Newark, New Jersey a bus driver who was high on heroin crashed a bus with students on it. Yesterday in Wayne, New Jersey a person high on marijuana and other drugs crashed into a gas station killing a father and son. As most of you know there was a big drug bust in Middletown. We are seeing it everywhere. There are three waves, first was in the 1990's with prescription drugs, that went to heroin and now it is fentanyl. It will get worse before it gets better. Congress passed the Power Act which provides officers with electronic resources call TruNarc which we will learn more about later on.

Dr. Gelman stated that the use of opioids is a crisis affecting all counties, not just in New York State but across the nation. There were multiple handouts provided to the committee (see original minutes). She addressed addiction and what it means. Treatment must be ongoing and adjusted based on how the patient responds. Resources are needed in order to conduct accurate statistical analysis of how many people are using and overdosing. It is a challenge to obtain the most accurate up to date figures because it requires timely reporting across all sectors, and it is currently a work in progress on national state and local levels. There is a proposed bill that has a recommendation for preventive pediatric healthcare screenings. It is a standard treatment protocol as you would have in a dentist office.

Mr. Sassi clarified that when you bring your child to the doctor, they screen for a lot of different things but also screen for potential drug abuse.

Dr. Gelman confirmed that was correct.

Dr. Gelman continued to state that the American Pain Society aggressively pushed this concept for pain as a fifth vital sign that you have to treat, that is where the treatment shifted, and we found ourselves prescribing more and more. With patient surveys they found that patients would complain or file a lawsuit.

Ms. Miller added that the pharmaceuticals took advantage of that and marketed their drugs. The CDC put out specific guidelines on how drugs should be prescribed and under what conditions they should prescribe, they could choose to ignore it and if so, they would be held liable.

Dr. Gelman stated that if she asked people what is diabetes, she did not think there would be a lot of discrepancy that it is a disease. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for addiction. This was a number one point made after it went through a few panels. As an organization tasked with collecting data and disseminating local data, there are discrepancies with local response and state-wide reportable statistics. It is a challenge to obtain the most up to date figures because it requires timely reporting across all sections which are; EMS, law enforcement, emergency departments, treatment facilities and other community organizations. It is a work in progress. She shared that a minor as young as 14 can request a parent or guardian to be excluded from the examinations for privacy issues and parents can be excluded

from the treatment protocols because of HIPAA. This is not just for drugs or opioids it is also true for STDs

Ms. Miller gave a scenario of a 16-year-old who displayed unusual behavior at school. The parents get called, the 16-year-old is taken to the doctor and turns out they are high on marijuana. The doctor cannot tell the parent because the 16-year-old does not want parents to know. There are rights for minors, and they can exclude their parents from being involved.

Mr. Sassi asked who informs the kids of these rights, a school nurse.

Ms. Miller responded that the doctors have an application for the minor to fill out.

Mr. Sassi addressed Bill No. 7935 which basically says when you bring your child to the doctor, they are doing a bunch of different screenings, but they would also screen for potential drug use.

Dr. Gelman stated that it is a powerful tool that allows for early detection and true prevention. She added that if we could all agree that addiction is a disease, it would be a lot easier to follow through with the treatment.

Dr. Gelman noted the looming recreational marijuana legalization in New York State, and she commented on the negative health impact. Polls show that New York State residents reject legalization when given choices, even decriminalization.

Mr. Sassi stated that it is not just marijuana, it is gummy bears and pop tarts which are making its way into schools.

Dr. Gelman requested to come back to the committee because she would like to address CBD oils.

Mr. Hines asked if they thought that the major drug bust in Middletown will alter the numbers since it will not be available through them.

Ms. Miller responded as big as the bust was, it was not big enough to stop addiction.

On the motion of Mr. Hines, seconded by Ms. Sutherland, the meeting adjourned at 3:29 p.m.