

**OPIOID ADDICTION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020
4:15 P.M.**

PRESENT: Janet Sutherland, Chairwoman
Kevin W. Hines, Kevindaryan Lujan, Rob Sassi

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Barry Cheney, Legislator
Thomas Faggione, Legislator
Joel Sierra, Legislator
Peter Tuohy, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Angela Jo Henze, Managing Director, Mental Health Association
Lacey Trimble, Deputy Commissioner, Mental Health
Annette Kahrs, President, Tri-County Community Partnership,
Hope not Handcuffs Program
Dominick Blasko, President, Police Chief's Association of
Orange County

Ms. Sutherland called the meeting to order at 4:17 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. All committee members were present with the exception of Ms. Miller who was absent.

Ms. Henze provided an update on the 311 Call Center. She stated that they went live on April 1, 2019 with the 1-800-832-1200 and were able to go live with the 311 number on May 1, 2020. They collect data monthly and weekly and since they went live, as of August 31, 2020, they took a total of 40,694 calls. They are 24/7 with thirteen clinical staff and seventeen non-clinical which means they need to have a bachelors degree or higher and they have some staff with PHDs. They make sure there is a clinical staff member on every shift. There is a total of thirty staff members. They broke down the number of calls and of the 40,694 they were able to report 100% on 357 general substance abuse calls and 165 opiate calls. This year they plan to try and better capture how many are substance use and how many opiate calls. In collaboration with the police departments in Orange County and crisis intervention, of those 40,694, they supported 869 crisis intervention reports and follow ups, and 111 developmental disabilities. They are trying to report more accurately. Since Covid-19, as of February they had 4,598 specifically related to disaster relief. They receive a lot of referrals which could include people who want to get into treatment and that is 3,825 calls. The largest number of calls is mental health which is 15,035. There is a category called "other" which was almost 10,000 calls. Often those "other" calls are people trying to reach 311 in New York City but they try to be helpful. The Rape Crisis Program goes through the call center and that was 375 and the Text for Teens was 687. She concluded by stating that through the Department of Health funds they are creating kits and the kits will be given out when someone has overdosed. Inside the kit there will be information about the call center, a Narcan kit and information for family members.

Mr. Hines asked when a call comes in to 311, do they send police, ambulance or someone from Mental Health. How is that determined.

Ms. Henze responded that when a call comes in, they identify who they are and try to assess the situation. They reach out to local response teams and they make an assessment. There is a lot of police interaction. They worked with the police on 869 crisis intervention team calls and connect the individual to a peer. They offer the opportunity for mobile response when they finish up the call. There are times when police are already on the scene and are struggling with someone who has mental health issues and instead of arresting them, they call the call center and give the information and then they reach out to mobile response and will join them on the scene. They will make further determination at that time.

Ms. Trimble reviewed the overdose map which provided suspected overdoses and fatalities. The official numbers come from the Medical Examiner's Office which she followed up with to confirm information. The highest year was 2018 with 118 fatalities as a result of an overdose. In 2019, the Medical Examiner confirmed 110 overdoses, 97 of them related to opioids, which is over 88%. That was a decrease of 7% from 2018 to 2019. From January 1st through September 15th there are 362 suspected overdoses with 111 fatalities and 124 naloxone administrations. These are unconfirmed numbers, they are suspected and they could be higher or lower. The Medical Examiner's office finalized that 73 of them are overdoses, with 67 being opioid related. The monthly average is at 11.7 lives per month. May was the highest month with 24 fatalities. One of the worst substances is fentanyl and heroin. Fentanyl is 95% of the suspected overdoses have been fatal and heroin 24% suspected overdoses have been fatal. There has been an increase in alcohol substance abuse and treatment in the hospitals with more people coming in which coincides with the increase in alcohol sales at 25% nationwide since the pandemic started.

Mr. Lujan asked if Ms. Trimble could send the information to all Legislators. He stated that they are seeing a rise in domestic violence, homelessness, suicide rates and a rise in substance abuse, there is definitely a connection. It is sad to see this, not just in Orange County, but across the country and other countries. He thanked Ms. Trimble for her hard work.

Ms. Sutherland noted the staggering numbers are very sad. She thanked Ms. Trimble for all that she has done and continues to do.

Ms. Sutherland announced that last on the agenda was Ms. Kahrs and Chief Blasko to discuss the success that Hope Not Handcuffs has been bringing to the communities. It was about a year and a half ago they began discussions with Ms. Kahrs who came to the Opioid Addiction Committee meeting and told the committee about themselves and what they do. It was not long after that they went through the Public Safety and Emergency Services Committee and the Police Chief's Association to appropriate \$10,000 to help them do what they need to do in order to be successful. She invited them back because as they hear the numbers and statistics, she thought it might be something they would like to do again.

Ms. Kahrs thanked the committee for the \$10,000 that was appropriated for them because it has been incredibly important to them. They are a small non-profit and \$10,000 for others may not seem like a lot, it means the world to them and they have been able to do so much with the money. When they first started the program, which is nationwide, a year and a half ago, they had no idea how much it was going to explode. They started with one police

department and now they have 15 in Orange County. They are in three other counties and starting in their fifth county. They have a total of 30 police departments. The largest area is Orange County and a bulk of what they do is here. They use something called the "grasshopper line" which allows them to track data. When the number is called you will hear, press 1 for Orange County, 2 for Dutchess, etc. They took 24 calls a month in 2019 and in 2020 the calls more than doubled at 55 calls a month and they are strictly substance abuse. They have three digital billboards in the Town of Walkkill which is great exposure. They ask people how they found out about the program and the response is often a police referral. They purchased cards with the money they were given and the police officers carry them. If an officer revives someone with narcan after an overdose and the person refuses medical, they will hand them a card and refer them to Hope not Handcuffs. She is very careful on what she spends the money on because this is the only source of funding. Some state senators gave them a \$13,000 grant but they never received it. It was given to them last summer but they never received it and were told they will not be receiving it. They do a fundraiser which raises about \$30,000 but that is not happening because of Covid-19, it will be done virtually like everyone else. This year they will be lucky if they hit \$7,000. She mentioned that the International Association of Chiefs of Police reached out to them and were interviewed for about four hours and there will be a published case study about the Hope Not handcuffs program coming out very soon.

Chief Blasko thanked the Legislature for all their support. He said that the angels that come in are local people that the addicts know and are able to help get them into treatment. A kid he played little league with a few years ago did not want to get help. A mutual friend's daughter who is an angel came in and talked him into getting help and he has been in recovery for seven to eight months. His mother sends him messages all the time. The angel's personal touch is a great tool.

Chairman Brescia thanked Ms. Sutherland and former Chairman Rob Sassi for lobbying for the \$10,000 and he was sure they will pass it in October. He was sorry to hear that the state did not come through with the money. He commended Ms. Kahrs for all her effort, especially with the opioid crisis which is getting worse during the pandemic. He thanked Chief Blasko for all his hard work and he was happy that the Legislature can help in a small way.

Ms. Bonelli questioned the pending expenditures in the document Ms. Kahrs provided, it states expansion of Washingtonville. Does that mean Washingtonville is new to the program or they are expanding the program even further.

Ms. Kahrs responded that it means they are waiting to come on board. They have not officially launched yet. They had a few police departments in waiting and then Covid-19 hit. They stopped sending their angels into the police departments right when it hit.

Ms. Bonelli asked what they planned on doing with the balance of \$2,356.00 that was left over. She further asked what did she plan to do with the anticipated upcoming money.

Ms. Kahrs responded that the billboards are expensive. She mentioned that transportation can be an issue for some so she wondered if billboards were the best choice, maybe more lawn signs and local signs. She did not think they would do as many billboards, maybe a mailer and flyers. She would like to make more bins which contain supplies for the individuals who come in for help and put it towards additional training for the angels.

Mr. Hines made motion to bring to the Rules, Enactments and Intergovernmental Relations Committee, recommendation by the Opioid Addiction Committee to enter into a contract with the Police Chief's Association, seconded by Mr. Sassi.

On the motion of Mr. Hines, seconded by Mr. Lujan, the meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.