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Responding to the Rise in Heroin and Prescription Pain Medications in Rochester

By Jennifer Faringer

In response to the ongoing rise in heroin abuse and prescription pain medication misuse as well as rising numbers of overdoses in our community, DePaul's National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Rochester Area (NCADD-RA) brought together individuals from multiple sectors to create the Monroe County Opioid Task Force.

During bimonthly meetings, local and state data have been reviewed, assets and barriers specific to the opioid epidemic have been identified, and a mission and set of goals have established.

There have been several successes that include the passage of the NYS Comprehensive Opioid Legislation package and the passage federally of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.

The Monroe County Opioid Task Force seeks a comprehensive multi-sector response with approaches that include prevention education, treatment, recovery and enforcement strategies. The goals include access to services equal to that of other diseases, immediate access to treatment as well as after care and wrap around services, access to Narcan to reverse opioid overdoses, access to prevention education services, clear process for low level crime referral to treatment, and access to medications to support treatment and recovery.

Progress is underway and resources have been created that include the

"Treatment Availability Dashboard" found at the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) website at www.oasas.ny.gov; a series of NYS OASAS YouTube videos (Navigating the Substance Use Disorder System of Care Series) found at www.oasas.ny.gov/treatment; and the resource-rich Combat Heroin website at www.combatheroin.ny.gov.

The Monroe County Opioid Task Force continues to move forward to ensure that individuals and families impacted by the disease of addiction will have full and complete access to services equal to that of other diseases.

We seek to remove the stigma surrounding the disease of addiction. Prevention education efforts, with requests to NCADD-RA for education on opioids, are at an all-time high. To request more information or schedule a presentation contact Jennifer Faringer at jfaringer@depaul.org.



Jennifer Faringer is the director of DePaul's National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Rochester Area. For more information, visit www.ncadd-ra.org