



Suffolk County Heroin and Opiate Epidemic Advisory Panel-Meeting Minutes 5-3-19

Meeting Date: May 3, 2019

Location: Hauppauge Legislative Auditorium, William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, NY

Next Meeting Date: July 12, 2019

Members in Attendance:

Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker, Chair
Suffolk County Legislator Samuel Gonzalez
Michael Caplan, Suffolk County Medical Examiner
Elizabeth Alexander, Office of Suffolk County Legislator William Spencer
Karen Klafter, Office of Suffolk County Legislator Tom Donnelly
Colleen McKenna, Office of Suffolk County Sheriff Errol Toulon
Gerard Gigante, Office of Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart
AnnMarie Csorny, Suffolk County Division of Mental Hygiene
Cari Faith Besserman, Suffolk County Division of Mental Hygiene
Jeffrey Reynolds, Family and Children's Association
Mary Silberstein, Suffolk County Communities of Solution
Steve Chassman, LICADD
Deborah Tarantino, Families in Support of Treatment
Richard Rosenthal, Stony Brook University Hospital
David Cohen, Eastern Long Island Hospital
Janine Logan, Nassau/Suffolk Hospital Council
Pamela Mizzi, Long Island Prevention Resource Center
Patricia Ferrandino, Family Service League
Michael Chiappone, Hope House Ministries
Antonette Whyte-Etere, NYS OASAS
John Venza, Outreach House
Kristie Golden, Stony Brook University Hospital

Recorder: Laura Logan, Legislative Aide for Legislator Sarah Anker

I. Welcoming Remarks- Legislator Sarah Anker

II. Pledge

III. Moment of Silence

IV. Panel Member Introductions

V. Events

Stories from Suffolk – This event was hosted by Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone. A number of panelists participated and contributed to this event, including Pamela Mizzi, Kristie Golden, Jeff Reynolds, and John Venza. Legislator Anker mentioned that she highly encourages cross communication and brainstorming with other panelists. Legislator Anker also mentioned to the panel that if there are any issues or concerns that panelist would want to be discussed that she would add them to the agenda. She sees this forum as an informative opportunity to discuss the issues facing this task force and the community, and help find solutions to tackle addiction.

Community Resources from Suffolk County Town Hall Meeting – The Division of Community Health and Mental Hygiene hosted an event with New York State OASAS. Presentations were provided by various groups and individuals including AnnMarie Csorny, Cari Besserman, and Antonette Whyte-Etere. As part of the event, each panelist received a copy of the resource guide from Suffolk County Behavioral Health Services. The PowerPoint and the guide from this presentation are both on the Suffolk County website. The guide is updated at least twice a year. Topics discussed at the event included crisis services for adults and children, and the opening of the new DASH program.

DASH (Diagnostic Assessment Stabilization Hub) Ribbon Cutting Ceremony – The DASH center is the first of its kind in Suffolk County. In the first month of opening, the center took in over 700 calls. Calls come in and mobile support is going out. DASH is not an ongoing treatment facility, but is meant to assist someone in starting treatment and identifying the need for treatment. The design of the DASH program was to allow Family Service League to help coordinate and link all services countywide.

- Steve Chassman from LICADD reported that thus far its hotline has taken in 753 calls. 262 of the 753 were dealing with alcohol. 35% of calls report alcohol as being the drug of choice, next is heroin at 33% and 158 calls, opioids at 58 calls and marijuana at 54 calls. As a result of their engagement and follow up, 293 cases have found placement in drug treatment facilities.
- Legislator Anker asked that all agencies around the horseshoe bring in their numbers, statistics, and/or annual reports to share and put on the record.

THRIVE Press Conference – Jeff Reynolds gave an update on the press event hosted by THRIVE. The program is funded by the state by OASAS. Additional money was put into the budget for a center in Nassau County. The Long Island Senate delegate was alerted about the need for these funds to be approved this year. The location of the Nassau THRIVE Center is 1025 Old Country Road in Westbury. In addition, OASAS provided another grant called THRIVE Everywhere which provides the ability for services to be taken out of centers and brought into the communities where traveling may be more difficult, i.e. the East End. The furthest east end recovery center is located in Islandia. Legislator Anker commended Jeff Reynolds and mentioned that it is crucial to have the Long Island NYS Senators working together on this important issue and funding. She also noted that the event was facilitated by Senator Monica Martinez. She also mentioned the need for recreational programs for youth to

keep them out of trouble or feeling like they need to be involved in drugs and alcohol to have fun. She gave credit to the North Shore Youth Council that has a program every Friday night for young people. Antonette Whyte-Etere mentioned that there is legislative support to establish a clubhouse in Suffolk County for youth and that they are working with HUGS to facilitate this.

Mike Chiappone informed the panel that there is an Interfaith Healing Festival on May 11 hosted by FIST and Hope House Ministries.

Mary Silberstein told the panel that she is a member of the Northport-East Northport Drug and Alcohol Task Force because of the grant her organization received to develop a “one life” campaign with its youth coalition. This youth coalition was able to get approved by the school district to hold a “wellness week” to help connect to other students and teachers, and subsequently were able to present to the community a “Mental Health First-Aid Training” at the library.

VI. Current Discussion Topics

Vivitrol as an Alternative to Methadone – There was a lengthy discussion on the acceptance and benefits of this alternative as presented by Jeff Reynolds, who is concerned with various aspects of the culture in administration of these alternatives. John Venza is concerned with contingency management plans. Steve Chassman reminded the panel not to discount methadone as a drug that has been successfully prescribed and administered along with counseling that is effective. There was an invitation to bring together members of this advisory panel to further discuss and explore this alternative. Legislator Anker asked if once a person is on these drugs, if they have to be on them for life. The answers were “yes” and “no.”

New Plan for Detox (Emergency Room) – An article was brought up by Legislator Anker regarding a voluntary/pilot program plan used in Nassau County. Another question was raised regarding this program and how it would be beneficial to implement this plan in Suffolk County.

- The Medical Examiner and the Suffolk County Police Department took this time to provide updates on overdoses and fatalities. SCPD does real time tracking of overdoses and aligns their numbers up with what the Medical Examiner’s statistics are at the end of the year. In the first quarter of 2019. There have been 78 fatalities, down from 85 fatalities from the first quarter of last year, and down from 118 fatalities in the first quarter of 2017. There has been an 8% drop from 2018 to 2019, and a 34% drop since 2017. There were 349 non-fatalities in 2018 and 344 in 2019. Narcan usage fell 29% over the past two years. The department continues to focus on the communities of Shirley, Coram, Central Islip, West Babylon, and Centereach. A question was asked about the distinction between the numbers representing those that live in those hamlets or those that visit and do drugs in those hamlets. The answer was “both;” if individuals visit the location and overdose, it will be included in the statistics within those hamlets.
- Steve Chassman provided updates on the program “PIVOT” (Preventing Incarceration Via Opportunities for Treatment), which has expanded into 4 precincts. In the first 4-5 months of the program, they have received 163 referrals and LICADD has connected with 78 of them and have confirmed that 67 are in treatment.

- Chief Gigante mentioned that the collaboration and referrals to LICADD and others is working very well and that the SCPD tends to concentrate on the areas with higher than average overdoses. Legislator Anker asked about the mapping of areas of high concentration of opioid prescriptions. The response was that with the electronic prescriptions program in place, a large part of the problem with pharmacy point of sales is eliminated.

Suffolk County Initiatives Drug Court – Legislator Anker reported that she has appointments to meet with several Suffolk County Judges. One of the courts produced a video of the Drug Court Initiatives as seen through the lens of the participants of the program. Legislator Anker that she worked with the former Suffolk County Sheriff to obtain funds from the asset forfeiture to create family counselor programs and worked with Stony Brook Hospital and realized that the recidivism rate dropped with working with drug treatment and rehabilitation versus incarceration. Because of that drop in recidivism and crime, the county did not have to build another jail. In addition, Legislator Anker reported that there have been several court created to address the drug issues. These courts allow the judge the ability to offer rehabilitation/treatment instead of incarceration. There was discussion on two other programs, DOORS and CARE. DOORS (Diversion Opening Opportunity Recovery Services) is a LICADD program in conjunction with the DA’s office and the Police Department. The program is focused on post-arrest and pre-arraignment. A LICADD representative will met at one of two pilot assigned police departments, one in an underserved community and provide assessments and conduct screenings, interventions, referrals, and treatment. This information will be shared with the DA’s office and hope to get the individual into a program like the ones represented around the horseshoe. Another LICADD program is CARE, a program that looks to work out post-arraignment opportunities. There are different tiers before incarceration where families are given opportunities to receive treatment as a diversion. Legislator Anker asked the panel to let her know about programs being rolled out so that they may be included in the final report. There was discussion regarding the effective use of such programs through collaboration between all participants and law enforcement.

Perdue Pharma – Legislator Anker reported that the Sackler Family must face opioid lawsuits in New York. Suffolk County will continue to move forward against opioid distributors.

Criminal Charges Against Opioid Distributer – A case involving Dowd Drugs awaiting a jury verdict on an overall scheme to bribe doctors to boost sales of an opioid painkiller.

Increase in Benzodiazepine Prescriptions – Legislator Anker discussed an article from NPR where doctors are over prescribing benzodiazepines. Legislator Anker reviewed a draft letter intended for the NYS Department of Health Commissioner Howard Zucker. Legislator Anker asked the panel to read the letter and send her their amendments so that an approved copy may be sent to the Commissioner.

VII. Updated Recommendations for 2019

Legislator Anker asked all panel participants to review the 2018 recommendations and provide any changes or additions before the next meeting.

VIII. Questions for Discussion

Legislator Anker spoke with Legislator Spencer regarding creating a youth committee to partner with the panel and asked his Chief Aide, Liz Alexander, to help facilitate this through connecting with the North Shore Youth Council to possibly create this subcommittee. This youth committee can provide much insight and direction to the panel. Liz Alexander also mentioned that there is a specific individual who would like to work on this youth committee and would use various media platforms to engage other youth to participate.

Legislator Anker asked, “Can or should doctors collect unused prescription medications?” A panel member noted that she once discussed this with her own doctor and that the response was that doctors are unable to collect unused prescription medication. It was also noted that when dropping off unused prescription medication at the police precincts, there is no interaction at all. A person can walk into the precinct and drop the medication in a secure bin. The question was also asked whether or not CVS or Walgreens are required to take back unused prescription and it was mentioned that they have not set up such a program in their stores yet.

IX. Public Comment Period

Claudia Friszell addressed the panel and asked questions regarding DASH, marketing for treatment programs, Medically Assisted Therapy (MAT), recovery within jails, and recovery high schools. John Venza responded by saying that recovery high schools are possible if there is funding for it. There are numerous challenges when creating these schools. A panelist discussed expanding recovery high schools to patients with anxiety, depression, or other mental illnesses.

Another panelist addressed the issue of marketing and noted that OASAS has successfully funded an Addiction Resource Center.

Mary Silberstein suggested that the panel pull in other coalitions and organizations and hear what is being done in order to gain insight on possible youth committees.

X. Adjournment