



Partnering with Local Health Departments to Combat the Opioid Epidemic: A Statewide Approach Customized by County

Introduction

Each county is unique, therefore combatting the opioid crisis must begin at the local level. NYSACHO recommends a statewide program that empowers local communities to develop their own comprehensive plans, designed to reduce opioid overdoses and deaths within a specified time frame.

Rather than dictating *how* to accomplish results, an incentive program would be created to *reward progress and results*. Communities would be provided a basic framework/model only, based on a foundational triad: Reducing Supply, Reducing Demand, and Improved Treatment and Recovery.

Objective

To assist the Local Health Departments and community partners in combatting the opioid epidemic by reducing the supply, reducing the demand and improving treatment and recovery outcomes on a county by county basis.

Funding Request

NYSACHO respectfully requests a line item for \$8 million, or roughly \$100,000 per department, directed to local health departments to combat the opioid epidemic. Funding could be realized from the proposed opioid surcharge, which is projected to generate \$127 million.

FRAMEWORK

1. Reduce Supply: This component encompasses all the critical work being done by the law enforcement/criminal justice community to aggressively pursue drug traffickers, as well as regulatory checks on the prescribing process to identify abuses in the system, such as over-prescribing by a particular doctor or “doctor shopping” by a particular patient. Also included are the unused medication collection boxes in police agencies, and that may soon be required by NYS to be located in retail chain pharmacies.

2. Reduce Demand: Reducing demand is a complex process that includes awareness and education throughout the community. This is achieved by implementing evidence-based practices in our schools; physician education; building and supporting strong local community coalitions; creating and implementing ubiquitous counter-advertising (similar to tobacco/smoking prevention advertising); producing community awareness forums, and possible participation in a class action lawsuit designed to hold pharmaceutical companies responsible for their aggressive tactics with regard to marketing their highly addictive products.

3. Improved Treatment and Recovery: It is vital that people with addiction get the appropriate and specific help that they need. Finding *the right help* and the funding (health insurance coverage) to pay for treatment is critical, as is continually exploring new and innovative practices that can help improve the availability and effectiveness of these services.

Action Plan for Each County: Based on the above, develop 2-3 specific and realistic actions per each category (reducing supply, reducing demand, improved treatment and recovery) that will have a significant and measurable impact on the goals of reducing opioid overdoses and fatalities.

Local Health Departments are currently engaged in the following activities to address the opioid epidemic:

- Naxlozone training for first responders
- Naxlozone training for families/communities
- lead or participate on a local taskforce
- community educational forums
- advertising/educational messaging
- Drug takeback sites or events

Current activities are funded through the already strained Article 6 for staff time providing health education, some through a \$50,000 prevention grant ending this year, and some are working even longer days.

With additional funds, Local Health Departments could:

- Increase access to treatment and support, including how people can link into training, prevention and crisis response
- provide prevention education to high school students, medical and dental students, law enforcement, local emergency personnel, and pharmacists
- add personnel to work with community providers, etc.
- produce and distribute more educational materials
- enhance data collection to better monitor the epidemic
- enhance community training schedules
- increase Narcan distribution
- train more local police departments on Naxlozone

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