



Plymouth County Drug Abuse Task Force
May 5, 2023
Plymouth County District Attorney's Office
166 Main Street, Brockton, MA
10:00-11:30

Meeting Minutes

DA Cruz:

- Welcome & Introductions:
- The number of overdoses in Plymouth County have been trending downward lately. This is due in large part to the layers of collaboration that stem out of Drug Abuse Task Force. Our success is attributed to how well all of us, involved in this Task Force continue to work together.
- Last month (April), several of us attended the Prescription and Illicit Drug Summit down in Atlanta. PCO and BAPC did great jobs with each of their presentations.
- What we are doing here in Plymouth County is cutting edge compared to what some states are doing. The summit hosted 3,500 participants from all 50 states. There were stakeholders from all facets addressing the latest strategies for prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- Recently, we have been seeing Xylazine, the powerful cutting agent in the drug supply here in Plymouth County and we are monitoring it.
- Xylazine can cause over-sedation, decreased consciousness, low blood pressure, slowed heart rate, and reduced breathing.
- In combination with opioids, Xylazine increases risk for overdose, and over-sedation for long periods of time can cause damage to muscles, nerves, and kidneys.
- Narcan will not reverse the effects of Xylazine.
- On May 4th, Dr. Dan Muse from Signature Healthcare was at our office to tape a segment about Xylazine that will be shown to police departments and EMS at roll call.

- Dr. Muse created a power point that touched upon what first responders should look for at a scene and orders on how to respond to the overdose victim in a way that keeps members of law enforcement safe. Our office has edited the segment, and it can be viewed via this link: <https://youtu.be/eQN0WQeW2Zo>.
- We will be releasing this video to Plymouth County first responders very soon.
- April 22 was another successful DEA Drug Take Back Day. I had the opportunity to stop by the Plymouth Police Department where PCO was assisting with their collection of unwanted, unused medications. They had a great turn out.
- During Hanson's Drug Take Back Day, Hanson Police collected 112.5 pounds of medication.
- Even though 24/7 accessible Med Return drop boxes are located in all of the police departments across Plymouth County, and police departments on the campuses of Bridgewater State University, Massasoit Community College and Stonehill College, these one-day DEA Drug Take Back Day initiatives bring awareness and are effective.
- Through our Plymouth County Comfort Dog Program, Abington, Brockton, East Bridgewater, Hanson, Hanover, Hingham, Hull, and Plymouth are all currently using Comfort K-9's in school settings. Whitman is picking up their comfort Dog Nola on May 11th. Nola will be in the Whitman Schools by mid-late May. Hingham Comfort Dog Opry was our Comfort Dog pilot project. We worked extensively with Hingham Chief Dave Jones and School Resource Officer Tom Ford. The school department fought the comfort dog due to the fact that she was handled by a uniformed officer, and would not allow Opry in the schools. During this standstill, Chief Jones and SRO Ford agreed to have Opry work with our DEC and child victims at our CAC. The Hingham schools saw the benefit and value that Opry brought, and eventually let SRO Ford and Opry into the schools. This paved the way for other towns in Plymouth County to work with my office to secure a comfort dog for their towns.
- The dogs have been well-received by students in the schools and throughout the towns, and have been a big hit on social media.
- Our Handle With Care conference scheduled for June 2 at the BSU Moakley Center. Registration is free. Follow this link to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/handle-with-care-conference-tickets-632779860597>
- This July, The Plymouth County Drug & Alcohol Resistance Education Summer Program, aka: DARE Camp makes its triumphant return after a COVID hiatus. 23 out of our 27 Towns are participating. We anticipate over 750 students, Peer Leaders, Officers and

Staff to participate in this week-long program, which educates our 5th and 6th graders with ways to avoid peer pressure in an unstructured learning environment consisting of, educational entertainers, team lessons, team building activities, respect for oneself and others. Many community businesses donate lunches and snacks for the students enjoyment.

- Save the date for the upcoming Plymouth County HUB and South Shore Hub Convening in Plymouth on June 21st, from 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Mayor Robert Sullivan

- Covid now in the rearview mirror.
- Brockton remains the City of Champions.
- Our main goal as it pertains to the opioid epidemic is to save lives.
- All agencies collaborating and working together toward common goals.

Sheriff McDonald:

- Our MOUD unit offers sublocade, methadone and vivatrol. 37 men participating.
- Starting out, not all Sherriff's Departments had funding to have this program, inmates were still offered services and transferred to other counties (i.e., Plymouth to Norfolk).
- All Counties/ All Sherriff Departments now participating in MOUD and are working together to collaborate on the best practices.
- Pathways Program is for men awaiting trial who have SUD and would benefit from services.
- PCSD assists Drug Court with diversions. When the Judge sends a participant to PCCF we are collaborating on care, programs and external program placement.

- there is still a reluctance to take free Narcan when leaving the jail. For example out of 12 men only 2 took narcan kits.
- Reentry programs are continuing for all. Although it is easier to help those who are convicted due to a set amount of time to plan a course of action.
- The Sheriff's department also has a Comfort Dog, named Starr.
- Sherriff's Festival Day coming up- proceeds go into inmate fund to help fund programs.
- Attended Atlanta RX Summit, geared to learn what others are using for programs and practices in place. Rest of country is stunned by our progress and programs.

Legislative Report:

Representative Muratore:

- House Budget:
 - 210k for Bureau of Substance Abuse.
 - 1.5 million for diversion program – young adults with nonviolent drug offenses.
 - 3.5 million for recovery centers.
 - 1.5 million for deaf/ hard of hearing with SUDs, these individuals are found to have a higher addiction rate.

Subcommittee Reports:

Public Safety Subcommittee Report:

PCO/Vicky Butler:

- Six hardest hit Communities: Brockton, Plymouth, Middleboro, Wareham, Marshfield.
- Overdose Numbers: 1499 incidents, 125 fatal, 822 non-fatal.
- At risk referrals have gone up and we've been able to help people more proactively. We're able to use the at-risk referral option for anyone using any substances, not just opioids.

- Huge Shift in hardest hit age ranges: 30-39, 40-49, 50-59.
- A rise in overdoses due to people unknowingly using non-opioids laced with fentanyl.
- There is a 51% contact rate on follow-ups after an overdose.
- 71% of the time people are accepting resources for themselves or family members.
- Continue to encourage people to test their drugs for safety.
- “Naloxbox” Distribution has seen a rise in acceptance. 36 boxes have not been distributed to churches, apartment buildings, hotels, public buildings etc.
- Hot spot outreach being done (people at risk i.e., homeless community) and successful to offer services and backpacks with basic needs for the homeless.
- Two COSSUP grants for funding- October 2022 grant received. October 2023 pending. A part of the current funding will be used to further train officers with a four-hour curriculum on addiction and SUDs. Looking at opening an office space for community engagement and hiring a training facilitator and recovery coach.
- Looking at placing a recovery coach in the district courts if we get the October 2023 funding.
- Wound care kits have been made and can be distributed upon request.
- PCO is currently hiring, if you know anyone who is interested please share the links for our 2 open positions:
 - Training Facilitator: <https://www.indeed.com/job/training-facilitator-9ce504f88acf2538>
 - Recovery Coach: <https://www.indeed.com/job/recovery-coach-4076c6c02dc4b38f>
- A copy of the Power Point presentation is attached.
- Save the date for the next PCO Quarterly meeting on June 7th. The flyer with further information is also attached.

Medical Subcommittee Report:

Dr. Dan Muse-Signature Brockton Hospital:

- 6/14 Human Trafficking Conference taking place – open for anyone in healthcare>
- Human Trafficking has huge components: mental health, SUDS.
- Continue working with EMS on human trafficking to learn and better train.
- 911 is always used after “damages are done” we need to start encouraging use of 911 preventatively as well.
- Samsha Grant submitted through the DA’s office that would collaborate with Brockton Hospital and reach out to community groups regarding opioid education, naloxone training, and CPR.
- Bystander CPR is impetrative in bridging the time gap before medics get on scene to further help those in need.

Sarah Cloud-Beth Israel Deaconess Plymouth:

- Hospital awarded money from private donor to offer county wide training on suicide prevention.
- Columbia Suicide Screening questionnaire now available on a wallet card and an app. The app allows for the 6 questions to be answered, assessed, and a rating is given. Depending on the rating, it will instruct the user how to handle the situation if necessary.
- Community Behavior Health Centers went live.
- Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome becoming more prevalent see attached paper.

- We need to overcome the misperception that marijuana is natural and “healthy.”

Education Subcommittee Report:

Jen Cantwell:

- January 2022 awarded a 3 yr., 1.8 million COSSUP grant from the DOJ running through January 2024.
- This was an extension of the original DEC initiative, with the added goal of intercepting families ‘upstream’ before overdose.
- Goals include identifying at risk children, training for first responders, and raising awareness of DEC and ACEs.
- Partnered with United Way of Greater Plymouth County to do the direct work with families out of the Family Center in Brockton.
- Linda Teixeira Reyes was hired as Intervention Specialist.
- Partners on the grant include:
 - To The Moon and Back:
 - The annual NAS Conference was held on 3/10, this conference was partially funded by COSSUP grant.
 - Jerrica Harmon and Haffie Stevens presented on our DEC initiative.
 - TLPI – Trauma and Learning Policy Institute trainings:
 - Plymouth School Nurses in November 2022
 - Old Rochester Regional School District’s elementary teachers and specialists March 8, 2023
- Calmer Choice:

- The DEC grant is currently funding mindfulness instruction in Middleborough Schools classrooms.
- Balance Workshops:
 - Facilitator training scheduled for June 10th at Carver Elementary School
- These trainings are not meant to replace therapy or counseling. They are meant to promote positive activities that children can do to give them some coping skills until therapy.
- Plymouth County DEC Alliance meets virtually monthly.
- The DEC Resource guide has been updated.

Community Coalitions Subcommittee Report:

Amanda Sandoval- Brockton Area Prevention Collaborative

- Meadowbrook youth services now open, ages 3-21, offering behavioral and SUD treatment.
- 24/7 365 Psychiatrist in person/ telehealth visits also available for adults.
- “Shop Talk” presentations were made to all students within Bristol Plymouth Technical High School, South Shore Vocational Technical High School and Southeastern Regional Vocational High School throughout the school year. Shop talks are targeted educational presentation to students working in the trades as trade workers are disproportionately impacted by substance use and overdose.
- Youth Conference March 2023 huge success and largest attendance yet.
- Carver Cares Coalition looking for prevention coordinator.
 - <https://www.schoolspring.com/job.cfm?jid=4068641>
- Brockton Area Prevention Collaborative regional meeting will be held 5/11/2023 @ 6pm at South Shore Technical High School.

Jen Cantwell:

- The Community Coalitions Subcommittee meets quarterly, virtually.

- This creates an opportunity to network with other community coalitions for substance use prevention to share ideas, challenges, and successful strategies.
- Recent meetings focused on opioid settlement funds distribution to municipalities.
- An update for the Hingham Cares coalition. They hired a volunteer to be their part-time coordinator.
- Some upcoming events from our community coalitions:
 - Chris Herren Tuesday May 9th at Plymouth North High School 7:00 PM
 - Tall Cop Friday May 19th at Hingham Town Hall 8:30 – 11:00 AM

Faith Based Subcommittee Report:

Deacon Greer:

- There is a need for a Spiritual Recovery Coach.
- Catholicism and Recovery – based in scripture.
- Joining the twelve steps, which came from the Bible, with scripture to bring recovery into a Christian Worldview.
- Defining the twelve steps in conjunction with scripture helps those to better understand their meaning.
- Spirituality on trial population has been positive. Trainings and meetings are moving forward with those affected by SUDS while on trial. The biggest point to get across is they are not defined by this disease.

Rev. Paul Jehle:

- Teach how to take scripture and place it in every life.
- Needs to be more spirituality in recovery programs.
- Bloom Center takes 8-10 girls, Brockton Teen Challenge has 106 long term beds and 27 short term beds and during the summer months together they may have 25 open beds at any one time, and the Taunton Women's Teen Challenge has 8 beds – the spiritual component is huge in all of these centers, getting the focus

off of the trouble and addiction to God through Christ and the Scriptures. All three groups continue to go to churches in the area and present testimonies of recovery. One of my goals is to get more churches to voluntarily support these programs.

- Principles of recovery are imperative and not just the people that are addicted.
- Consider adding faith based to work together and we are working on doing more research as to other faith-based programs that exist in our County.