

FORSYTH COUNTY COMMUNITY OPIOID TASK FORCE

Chair: Capt. Tara Tucker, Forsyth County EMS

Forsyth County is not immune to the opioid epidemic running rampant across the nation. Due to the witnessed increase in use and deaths from opioids, Forsyth County EMS initiated a task force made up of local and state partners. Goals include working collectively to improve access to treatment, prevent silos and duplication of efforts, maximize resources, and to educate and keep the community abreast of activities in Forsyth County related to addiction. The group hopes to identify gaps and problem-solve ways to fill in those gaps.

- **Mission:** Through community collaboration, develop a comprehensive, systematic and balanced strategic plan focused on primary prevention and overdose prevention as well as promoting treatment and recovery and work to carry out this plan.
- **Target Group:** People and families in Forsyth County impacted by the opioid epidemic.

People may come into contact with the justice system, law enforcement, EMS, hospital EDs, harm reduction staff, department of social services, public health, faith community, primary care physicians, etc. and we want everyone to be aware of how to connect a person to treatment. The goal is to create a single portal of entry.

Due to the size of our task force, the large group is divided into smaller, operational groups to expedite the vast amount of work that needs to be completed. Those workgroups include:

- Community Response Team
 - Special Population - Justice involved persons
 - Special Population - Veterans
 - Special Population - Pregnant and actively using
 - Special Population - Infectious disease
- Children affected by SUDs in the family including the school system
- Education Group
- Families/Support System Group
- Recovery Support Services Including the Faith Community

The **Community Response Team**, a community-based service, will be available to respond to anyone in Forsyth County in need of services related to addiction. The team will respond to overdose calls at the 911 level, but referrals will also be accepted from a person struggling with addiction, their family or friends, hospital, physician offices, the jail or any other community agency. Team members that will go into the community to see patients include EMS's community paramedics, mobile crisis staff, and peers/harm reduction outreach staff from Twin City Harm Reduction and Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. Law enforcement and treatment providers will be key components of the team but will not go into the community. We understand the importance of community-based services and meeting people where they are as well as person-centered treatment meaning helping develop a recovery path specific to each person. We want to offer connections to a continuum of treatment services including both inpatient and outpatient services.

Having a person in need of detox or other substance use treatment wait for numerous hours in a local ED is not best for the patient and it bottle necks the EDs. Because we want to help people achieve recovery, **Hospital ED Diversion** is another component we are addressing through the the community response team and community partners. Forsyth County Emergency Services's Community Paramedic program has already been working on ED diversion for mental health and substance use issues. This allows staff to link a patient directly with an inpatient or outpatient substance use provider. We have worked to expand treatment options and linkage to treatment through a partnership between the community paramedics, Daymark's Mobile Crisis Team, and the treatment providers. This will offer patients a wider variety of treatment options to better meet their needs. Currently, we are working with the school system to refer patients to more appropriate alternative destinations other than the ED.

While the team will work with anyone, some groups need a specialty track due to higher risk factors and ancillary services that may be needed. Specialty populations we have chosen to focus on include: those involved with the justice system, our Veterans, those that are pregnant, and those with infectious diseases. Special workgroups have been created to formulate a workflow path for these groups so the team can link them with the appropriate resources.

Another missing component is the **family support, education, and recovery support systems (RSS)**. We know families/support systems lack understanding about addiction, resources, or may even need treatment themselves. We are working to address those issues also. There are also other groups that need education about addiction. Also, treatment must be followed with recovery supports to help a person maintain recovery.

The goal is for community partners to take on a whole person approach, looking at care across the continuum, and the ability to offer a "warm handoff" between providers. The task force strives to include a diverse group of agencies so that we offer person-centered treatment and tackle this epidemic on a variety of levels. We definitely welcome input from all aspects of the community. The task force meetings are open to the community and any agency wishing to become involved.

Community Partner Agencies

- Alliant Quality/CMS
- ARCA
- Cardinal Innovations
- CareNet
- Clinical and Translational Science Institute - Baptist
- Coalition for Drug Abuse and Prevention
- Correct Care Solutions/Jail Contract Agency
- Daymark
- DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency)
- Department of Corrections/Probation & Parole
- Empowerment Project
- Faith Health
- FCES - Communications
- Fire Depts - City and County
- Family Members
- FMC/Novant
- Forsyth County District Attorney's Office
- Forsyth County District Court Judges
- Forsyth County DSS
- Forsyth County Public Health
- Forsyth County Public Library
- Forsyth County Sheriff's Office
- FTCC Campus PD
- GAST Team
- Goodwill
- Green St. United Methodist Church
- Green Tree Peer Center
- Hawley House
- Health Integrity
- Homeless Caucus
- Hospice and Palliative Care
- Inmar
- Insight Human Services
- Kernersville PD
- Laugh Out Loud
- MapForsyth
- MH/SA Advisory Group
- Monarch
- Mt. Valley Hospice
- NC ATL/CAR HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area)
- NC Division of Public Health/HIDTA
- NC Harm Reduction Coalition
- NC Hospital Association
- Northwest Community Care
- Old Vineyard
- People with Lived Experiences
- Salem Academy and College
- Stepping Up Grant Initiative
- Triad Behavioral Resources
- Twin City Harm Reduction Coalition
- UNCSA Police Department
- VA Health Care Center - Kernersville

- VA Health Care Center - Salisbury
- Wake Forest University
- WFBMC - variety of departments
- Winston Salem Forsyth County Schools
- Winston Salem PD
- Winston Salem State University
- YWCA