



OPIOID **Task Force**

of Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region

JULY 1, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



A WORD from the CO-CHAIRS



Christopher J. Donelan



John F. Merrigan



David E. Sullivan

The impact of opioid misuse continues to be deeply felt across Franklin County and the North Quabbin region. We witnessed this first hand as we listened to an outpouring from our fellow residents as they shared their stories of hope and despair during our Community Listening Forums, held in May and June of 2017. Nearly 150 individuals came to Athol, Greenfield, Shelburne Falls, and South Deerfield and told us how opioid misuse was impacting them, their children, grandchildren, and communities. We heard that loved ones had died due to an opioid overdose or were so deep in the throes of addiction that they became homeless and their families did not know where they were. We had public officials as well as Opioid Task Force members share for the first time publically how opioids impacted them or their families, bravely revealing that no one can be immune from this complex brain disease.



For every painful story shared, we also heard from and celebrated with those in recovery. Whether it had been three months or thirty years, individuals offered hope and encouragement to others as they recounted how they were reclaiming their lives through ongoing treatment, meaningful work, and the presence of a caring community. We were honored to bear witness as these individuals shared their aspirations for their futures, made possible by their recovery.

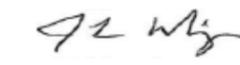
Our Community Listening Forums also coincided with the encouraging news that Franklin County saw a 26.3% decline in opioid overdose deaths in 2016; only one of two counties in Massachusetts that saw a decrease last year. While we find this news heartening, we must remain vigilant to save lives through our collective prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

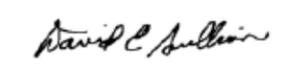
The Community Listening Forums closed out a busy fiscal year for the Task Force. Among the highlights, we:

- Hired a new Task Force Coordinator with historic roots in the region
- Convened all five of our working committees to address the impact of opioid misuse using evidence-based prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery strategies
- Awarded nearly \$73,000 in community grants to efforts working to address opioid addiction
- Hosted five NARCAN trainings and provided 236 doses of NARCAN to first responders
- Supported the development of the Intercept Zero Project
- Partnered with other organizations to bring \$2.25M of federal dollars into the Franklin County/North Quabbin region to increase services for individuals and their families impacted by substance use disorder

We thank you for your support of our efforts,


Christopher J. Donelan
Franklin County Sheriff


John F. Merrigan
Franklin County Register


David E. Sullivan
Northwestern District Attorney



**A WORD
from the
OPIOID TASK
FORCE
COORDINATOR**

Dear friends,

I had the privilege of joining the Opioid Task Force as its coordinator in February, 2017. It was a great homecoming as I began my social policy career in the Franklin County/North Quabbin region. I learned so much here about working collaboratively to improve services for others, lessons which I still use today.



Debra L. McLaughlin

Upon my return to the area, it became abundantly clear that the region's commitment to serve the needs of its residents not only remains unchanged, but seems stronger than ever. The Opioid Task Force is one of several shining examples in our rural community where visionary leadership inspires individuals to come together and make enduring changes to improve the quality of life here.

I am grateful for the support and deep commitment of the Opioid Task Force Co-Chairs, Sheriff **Christopher J. Donelan**, Register **John F. Merrigan**; and Northwestern District Attorney **David E. Sullivan**, to guide the work of this powerful public/private partnership. Their aims are fortified by a highly engaged Executive Council, whose members include: **Kat Allen** (Communities That Care/Franklin Regional Council of Governments); **Bette Babinski** (Franklin Probate and Family Court); **Rebecca Bialecki** (Heywood Hospital); **Heather Bialecki-Canning** (North Quabbin Community Coalition); **Dr. Mary Doherty** (The RECOVER Project); **Rose Evans** (Behavioral Health Network); Police Chief **Robert Haigh** (Town of Greenfield); **Marisa Hebble** (Executive Office of the Trial Court); **Martha Murphy-Kane** (Northwestern District Attorney's Office); **Dr. Ruth Potee** (Valley Medical Group); **Robert Pura** (Greenfield Community College); **Cindy Russo** (Baystate Franklin Medical Center); **Sandy Sayers** (United Way of Franklin County); **Dr. Julie Thompson** (Baystate Franklin Medical Center); **Phoebe Walker** (Franklin Regional Council of Governments) and **Liz Whynott** (Tapestry). Their collective involvement has been essential to the success of the Task Force last year.

Our work would be impossible without the tremendous support of our legislative delegation and their aides. In appreciation to **Senate President Stanley Rosenberg**, **Senator Adam Hinds**, **Senator Ann Gobi**, **Representative and Vice-Chair of House Ways and Means Committee Stephen Kulik**, **Representative and Chair of Redistricting Committee Paul Mark**, and **Representative Susannah Whipps** for their ongoing and enthusiastic commitment to our mission.

Our efforts could not move forward without the talents of our Opioid Task Force team – **Tess Jurgensen**, **Deb Neubauer**, and **Peggy Vezina**. With dedication, compassion and good humor, their contributions help ensure the activities and the projects of the Task Force flourish.

Finally, I am indebted to the many individuals who attend our committee meetings, community forums, trainings, and events. Without your voices and contributions, the Task Force would be unable to respond as it has to blunt the impact of the opioid epidemic.

I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report.

In gratitude,

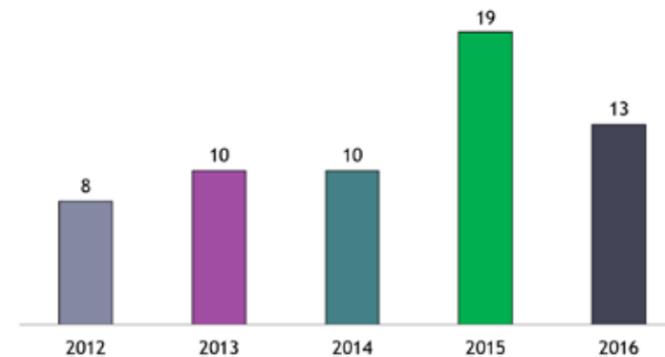
OPIOID MISUSE in the FRANKLIN COUNTY and NORTH QUABBIN REGION

According to data from the White House Special Commission Combating Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, approximately 142 individuals are dying each day of a drug overdose. The Centers for Disease and Prevention report more than 60,000 people died of drug overdoses in 2016, which exceeds the number of people who were killed by gun violence and automobile accidents. Last year, Massachusetts lost over 2,000 lives to opioid misuse, one of the highest rates in the United States.

Like many communities across the country and in the Commonwealth, Franklin County and the North Quabbin region has been hard hit by the opioid epidemic. Data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health revealed that fatal opioid doses increased by 50% between 2013–2015 in our region. There was a 300% increase in the administration of Narcan by EMTs between 2011 and 2014, and 46% of inmates at the Franklin County Jail were either opiate or heroin-involved in 2015. These troubling trends spurred community leaders to take action, leading to the formation of the Opioid Task Force.

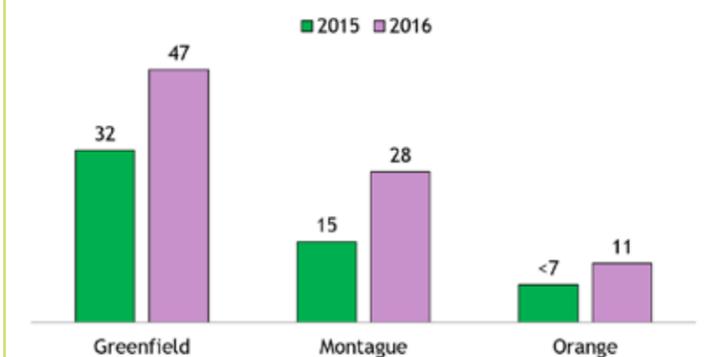
Since then, the Opioid Task Force has been hard at work to implement a series of prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery strategies to reduce opioid and heroin addiction, and prevent overdose deaths. Our collective work over the past four years appears to be making a difference. Franklin County saw a 26.3% reduction in deaths due to opioids for the first time in 2016; only one of two Massachusetts counties to do so. It is important to remain vigilant, though, as the number of non-fatal overdoses climbed in 2016 over 2015.

It is important to also note that opioid misuse is often closely correlated to other substance use (e.g. alcohol and other drugs) and mental health disorders. It is crucial then, for the Task Force to consider comprehensive and holistic strategies along the prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery continuum to foster individual, family and community health. Our work in the past year has attempted to do that and more information about our strategic activities can be found in the report on page five.



Number of Fatal Opioid-Related Overdoses in Franklin County

*For 2015-2016, additional cases are still being confirmed by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.
Source: Massachusetts Opioid Overdose Study, (2011 - 2015), August 2017*



Number of non-fatal Opioid-Related Overdoses in Large Franklin County Towns

*Not all ambulance services have reported their most recent data at the time this report was generated, and therefore the numbers cited here may be underestimates. Counts in this table reflect the town in which the incident occurred (not the city/town of residence as shown in the table of deaths by city/town).
Source: Massachusetts Opioid Overdose Study, (2011-2015), August 2017*

the OPIOID TASK FORCE'S MISSION, GOALS, STRUCTURE & SPECIAL PROJECTS

the TASK FORCE'S MISSION:

Founded in September 2013, the Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region has worked with over 300 public and private partners to ensure that our rural region works collectively to help reduce opioid and heroin addiction, prevent overdose deaths, and improve the quality of life in our community.

the TASK FORCE'S GOALS:

PREVENTION

- Decrease access to prescription medication
- Increase perception of harm of non-medical prescription drug use
- Increase trauma-informed practices in the community

INTERVENTION

- Increase access points in the community for substance use and mental health screenings and intervention
- Increase access to Narcan for people with current or history of use as well family and friends

TREATMENT

- Increase timely access to treatment
- Reduce the stigma associated with addiction

RECOVERY

- Increase access to support services
- Increase access to stable housing and stable employment

the TASK FORCE'S STRUCTURE:

Governed by a 20-member Executive Council, the Opioid Task Force implements and promotes an array of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery strategies through its five working committees and special projects, which focuses on:

EDUCATION AND PREVENTION - Identifying all the substance misuse prevention and education activities occurring in the county, cradle to grave, to focus on gaps and opportunities and increase trauma-informed practices in the community

HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS - Strengthening collaborative efforts among rural healthcare providers to curb opioid overprescribing and increasing trauma-informed training opportunities for behavioral health and medical professionals

HOUSING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - Expanding the supply of sober housing, and working in partnership with others to create educational and training opportunities for individuals in recovery

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE - Increasing relationships between criminal justice systems and behavioral health agencies to help support community members in transition and addressing NARCAN deserts in the region

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY - Sharing treatment and recovery resources and advocating for services that support individuals at all stages of their recovery journey, such as syringe access programs and peer-led recovery centers

The Opioid Task Force is also the administrative home to the **Intercept Zero Project**, jointly administered by Community Action's Franklin County Resource Network's Public Policy Task Force and the Opioid Task Force. Funded last year by the Massachusetts State Legislature, this pioneering effort is identifying all the various crisis points, where had support been provided; it would have interrupted an individual's trajectory into the criminal justice and/or mental health systems.

The Opioid Task Force had an operating budget of \$300,000 in FY17, funded by the Massachusetts State Legislature with a specific appropriation for our work in the Franklin County Sheriff's Department budget. The Franklin County Sheriff's Department also serves as the administrative home for the Task Force's staff and its operations with in-kind support from the Executive Office of the Trial Court's Franklin Probate and Family Court Department.

the OPIOID TASK FORCE'S PROGRESS: JULY 1, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2017

This year was a pivotal one for the Opioid Task Force as it:

- Hired a new coordinator
- Moved into new offices at the Franklin County Justice Center
- Convened all five of Task Force's committees to work on a range of strategic activities and projects to strengthen the region's prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery efforts
- Held four Community Listening Forums involving nearly 150 people to learn about the continued impact of opioids and other substances in our rural area
- Helped secure a \$2.1M, 5-year SAMHSA grant to implement the MISSION-Hope Program, which will expand the services of the Franklin Family Drug Court
- Collaborated with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority to secure a \$150,000 New Freedoms Grant
- Awarded nearly \$73,000 in community grants
- Helped administer the Intercept Zero Project, where over 250 individuals participated in focus groups, interviews, and a mapping event
- Donated over 200 Thanksgiving turkeys to organizations and families in need
- Helped develop a Franklin/Hampshire County Good Samaritan and Safe Storage Campaign
- Held five trainings across the county on how to administer NARCAN
- Provided 236 doses of NARCAN to first responders
- Provided trauma training to members of the Franklin County Family Drug Court
- Supported the introduction of Refuge Recovery into the region
- Disseminated nearly 2,000 of the Northwestern District Attorney's Substance Abuse Prevention Resource Directory
- Sponsored an Active Bystander Trainer, offered by Quabbin Mediation with The RECOVER Project
- Offered members of the community information about Task Force volunteer opportunities
- Launched educational and training initiative for individuals in recovery in partnership with Greenfield Community College
- Published 25 newsletters sent to approximately 700 members every two weeks to keep them informed of the Task Force's efforts
- Engaged 6,505 individuals through the Task Force's social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) about our work

COMMUNITY GRANTS and SPONSORSHIPS

The Task Force was able to provide \$72,415 in funding to support 18 community-based organizations in the form of grants or sponsorships to combat or address the impact of opioid misuse in our rural area.

Organizations that received funding from the Task Force between July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 were:

CENTER FOR NEW AMERICANS for facility improvements which allowed increased access for Franklin County residents to participate in services

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS on behalf of the Cooperative Public Health Service Health District to provide services and supplies for opioid treatment and referral services to residents of West County

FIREBIRD 5K RUN on behalf of Sage Housing to increase sober housing in the county

GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE for the Education and Training Initiative for Individuals in Recovery

HILLTOWN RECOVERY THEATRE for scholarships for teens to participate in theater workshops and productions

HOSPICE OF FRANKLIN COUNTY to provide 12-week bereavement support workshops

MONTAGUE CATHOLIC SOCIAL MINISTRIES for drop-in respite for young mothers and to support the Nurturing Families group

NORTHWESTERN DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE to promote leadership skills for middle school students at the You Lead Conference

SALVATION ARMY for their efforts to support individuals in recovery

SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY to provide support for the Seeds of Life Garden Youth Program to increase community resilience for teens

TAPESTRY to support their harm reduction efforts in the region

THE NORTH QUABBIN COMMUNITY COALITION on help establish the North Quabbin Recovery Center

THE PEOPLE'S MEDICINE PROJECT to help them provide free acupuncture, craniosacral therapy, herbal medicine, and massage services to individuals in recovery

THE RECOVER PROJECT to sponsor their annual events to support their initiatives for people in recovery and to provide scholarships for their Recovery Coach Academy

THE RECOVERY LEARNING COMMUNITY to help them find a new space in Greenfield

TOWN OF GREENFIELD'S POLICE DEPARTMENT on behalf of the Opioid Task Force to distribute NARCAN to underserved communities in Franklin County

QUABBIN MEDIATION to provide substance misuse prevention trainings

VOICES FROM INSIDE to provide operating support for their writing workshops for women who have been formerly incarcerated

KEY COMMUNITY LISTENING FORUM FINDINGS

The COMMUNITY LISTENING Forums

In May and June, 2017 members of the Task Force's Executive Council and staff participated in four Community Listening Forums held in **South Deerfield** (May 18), **Shelburne Falls** (May 23), **Athol** (June 1), and **Greenfield** (June 8). Nearly 150 members of the community came to share their powerful stories about how opioid misuse had impacted them or a member of their family. It was a profound and humbling experience. Key findings by forum can be found below. This incredible outpouring by the community, plus the work of the Task Force's five working committees, will inform the development of the Task Force's Priority Initiatives for 2017 – 2018.

KEY FINDINGS by COMMUNITY LISTENING Forum

SOUTH DEERFIELD – MAY 18, 2017

Deerfield Town Hall. Hosts: Wendy Foxmyn and Pat Kroll. Filmed by Chris Collins, Frontier Community Access TV. Members of the Task Force's Listening Panel were: Kat Allen (Communities That Care Coalition); Marisa Hebble (Executive Office of the Trial Court); John Merrigan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin Register of Probate); Martha Murphy-Kane (Northwestern District Attorney's Office); John Paciorek, Jr. (Deerfield Chief of Police); Robert Pura (Greenfield Community College); Cindy Russo (Baystate/Franklin Medical Center); and David Sullivan (OTF Co-Chair and Northwestern District Attorney).

- Alcohol use can be as damaging as opioids
- Effective use of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and/or medical marijuana can help individuals manage chronic pain so they can be productive members of society; can also avert illegal use of opioids
- Middle and high school students eager to learn mindfulness techniques; schools underfunded to provide services
- Delivery of trauma-informed services crucial to prevent cycle of addiction for children, youth, and adults
- Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered & Queer (LGBTQ) population lacking
- Transportation a large barrier to services, especially in smaller towns

SHELBURNE FALLS – MAY 23, 2017

Buckland/Shelburne Senior Center. Host: Cathy Buntin. Filmed by Otis Wheeler of Falls Cable. Members of the Task Force's Listening Panel were: Bette Babinski (Franklin Probate and Family Court); John Merrigan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin Register of Probate); Robert Pura (Greenfield Community College); Cindy Russo (Baystate/Franklin Medical Center); Sandy Sayers (United Way of Franklin County); David Sullivan (OTF Co-Chair and Northwestern District Attorney); and Phoebe Walker (Franklin Regional Council of Governments).

- Participation in the arts, especially theater, can be crucial for teens and adults as part of their recovery journey; also strengthens relationships, increases self-esteem and provides tools to manage anxiety or depression
- Lack of resources for teens experiencing gender dysphoria
- Lack of sober housing and meaningful workforce development opportunities remain barriers to individuals in recovery

ATHOL – JUNE 1, 2017

Athol Memorial Hospital. Host: Rebecca Bialecki. Filmed by Carol Courville, Joseph Williams, and Barbara Savoy of Athol/Orange Community Television.

Members of the Task Force's Listening Panel were: Rebecca Bialecki (Heywood Hospital); Christopher Donelan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin County Sheriff); John Merrigan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin Register of Probate); Eladia Romero (Congressman McGovern's Office); David Sullivan (OTF Co-Chair and Northwestern District Attorney); and Rep. Susannah Whipps.

- Public safety officials and first responders severely impacted by ongoing opioid crisis, need increased training and support
- Services for grandparents raising their grandchildren lacking in region
- Investment in prevention strategies is key, prevent/delay first use; start in elementary schools
- Transportation a large barrier to services in the region
- Lack of insurance as well as confusing insurance rules prevent access to treatment and recovery services
- Information about available treatment and recovery services confusing or lacking
- Acknowledge the many paths to recovery; AA is not the only way
- Increase opportunities for individuals to feel connected to others and their community
- Addiction affects many sectors of the community (e.g. small business owners, landlords)
- Alcohol use can be as damaging as opioids
- Faith-based organizations have a role to play to support people/families in recovery
- Gaining access to detox services is grueling
- Acknowledge and address three primary causes of addiction - 1) delay first use; 2) reduce number of adverse childhood experiences; and 3) acknowledge role genetics can play

GREENFIELD – JUNE 8, 2017

Greenfield Community College. Host: Robert Pura. Filmed by Scott MacPherson of Greenfield Community Television with support from Gary Longe at Greenfield Community College.

Members of the Task Force's Listening Panel were: Judge Beth Crawford (Franklin County Probate Court/Family Drug Court); Christopher Donelan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin County Sheriff); Ruth Jacobson-Hardy (Massachusetts Department of Public Health); Robert Haigh, Jr. (Greenfield Chief of Police); Catherine McKeown-Kindahl (Rep. Paul Mark's office); Michael Knapik (Governor Baker's Western MA Office); Michael Lewis (The RECOVER Project); John Merrigan (OTF Co-Chair and Franklin Register of Probate); Cindy Russo (Baystate Franklin Medical Center); and Liz Whynott (Tapestry)

- Drugs more potent/deadly
- More NARCAN doses needed to revive individuals; can be up to seven doses where it used to take one or two
- Services for parents and grandparents raising their grandchildren lacking in region
- Lack of coordinated prevention and intervention services between schools and other community partners
- Mental health services for adolescents in region severely lacking

GREENFIELD – JUNE 8, 2017 (continued)

- Transportation a barrier, especially for individuals in small towns
- Individuals experiencing challenges in coordinating their own care; system complicated and confusing
- Severe lack of sober housing, especially for women with or without children
- People need supports navigating the treatment and recovery system
- Lack of universal NARCAN availability and training
- Lack of trauma-informed services
- Lack of robust treatment and recovery services for women compared to men
- Ensure services for individuals who are dually diagnosed are robust as possible
- Better acknowledge that recovery services/supports do exist (e.g. Firebird 5K, Father's Group, GCC's Education Initiative for Individuals in Recovery)
- Acknowledge that resources at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office are important for men who are in recovery and coming back to community

UTILIZING the TASK FORCE'S COMMITTEES to TAKE ACTION

Many reoccurring themes emerged throughout the Community Listening Forums, which referenced the infrastructure necessary to support long-term recovery such as sober housing, meaningful work opportunities and transportation. For items such as these and more, they will be routed to the Task Force's five working committees to take further action.

Based in part on these findings, the Task Force will also seek partnerships as well as funding opportunities with other community-based organizations to determine how to address gaps in services and to increase resources in the coming year.

*Together,
we can tackle the serious problem of heroin
and prescription drug addiction in
Franklin County and the
North Quabbin Region of Massachusetts.*

Christopher J. Donelan
Franklin County Sheriff and Opioid Task Force Co-Chair

John F. Merrigan
Franklin County Register of Probate and Opioid Task Force Co-Chair

David E. Sullivan
Northwestern District Attorney and Opioid Task Force Co-Chair

Kat Allen
Coalition Coordinator, Communities that Care Coalition, Partnership for Youth, Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Bette Babinski
Chief Probation Officer, Franklin Probate and Family Court

Dr. Rebecca Bialecki
Vice President, Community Health & Chief Change Agent, Heywood Hospital

Heather Bialecki-Canning
Executive Director, North Quabbin Community Coalition

Dr. Mary Doherty
Director, The RECOVER Project

Rose Evans
Vice-President of Operations, Behavioral Health Network

Robert Haigh, Jr.
Police Chief, Town of Greenfield

Marisa Hebble
Coordinator, Massachusetts Community Justice Project, Executive Office of the Trial Court

Debra McLaughlin
Coordinator, Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region (non-voting member as staff)

Martha Murphy-Kane
Director of Operations, Northwestern District Attorney's Office

Dr. Ruth Potee
Valley Medical Group, and Medical Director, Franklin County House of Corrections

Robert Pura
President, Greenfield Community College

Cindy Russo
President and Chief Administrative Officer, Baystate Franklin Medical Center

Sandy Sayers
Executive Director, United Way of Franklin County

Dr. Julie Thompson
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, Baystate Franklin Medical Center

Phoebe Walker
Director of Community Services, Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Liz Whynott
Director of HIV Health and Prevention, Tapestry

OPIOID TASK FORCE STAFF

Debra McLaughlin, Coordinator • **Tess Jurgensen**, Program Associate, Marketing and Operations

Deborah Neubauer, Program Associate, Treatment and Recovery • **Peggy Vezina**, Coordinator, Intercept Zero Project



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opioidtaskforce.org



Offering *hope & help* to those impacted by opioid misuse

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