



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

Forum Planning Guide

This planning guide outlines the enclosed resources and materials you will need to hold your forum. It also provides suggested roles and responsibilities that can be tailored to fit your local approach to the forum.

This leadership forum project is the result of a collaborative effort between the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and the following organizations:

- NC Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services
- NC Association of Local Health Directors
- NC Council of Community Programs
- NC State University Consumer and Family Services Department/NC Cooperative Extension Services
- NC League of Municipalities

Through these organizations, local partners have been engaged and are ready to help you with this effort. The NCACC sincerely thanks these organizations for their contributions to the Leadership Forum project.

Forum Packet Contents:

Tab 1

- **Letter of Invitation from NCACC President Fred McClure:** A letter from NCACC President Fred McClure to the Board of Commissioners Chair inviting the county to participate in the County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse project:
- **Project Description:** An overview of the purpose of the forum and the target participant groups.
- **Forum Planning Guide:** An outline of materials needed to plan the forum and suggested roles and responsibilities for target participants.

Tab 2

- **Letter of Invitation from Board of County Commissioners Chair:** A sample letter from Board of County Commissioners Chair to target participants. It should be customized to fit the county's unique circumstances and approach to the forum and be sent four-five weeks before the date of the forum. Be sure to include the date, time and location of your forum.
- **County Statistics on Opioid Use:** Charts that provide statistics on opioid use in your county. It should be attached to the letter of invitation sent to target participants and provided as a handout the day of the forum. The data used to create these graphs is updated regularly at the source. If you wish to have more current data by the time your forum is held, please contact Julie Totten at the NCACC, Julie.Totten@ncacc.org.
- **List of County and City Officials and Others to Invite:** A spreadsheet of contact information for local elected officials to facilitate letter mailing. The intent is to provide contacts for all county and city officials but in some cases, contacts may be missing. Please coordinate with your County Clerk to ensure it is complete and accurate. The list can be expanded to suit the nature of your local forum.



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

Tab 3

- **Forum Sample Agenda:** An outline of suggested format for forum meeting. It should be customized as needed to fit local circumstances and speakers. The amount of time each county should set aside for this forum will range, possibly as widely as two to six hours. Estimate your forum time based on the number of participants and allow sufficient time for discussion throughout the event.
- **Facilitator Guide & Overview:** A guide to help the facilitator effectively run the meeting and consider logistics to be handled in preparation for the meeting.
- **Idea Generation Worksheet:** A template for discussion leaders and scribes at each table to write their group's priority ideas down on paper and share during the forum.
- **Nametag Template:** An Avery label nametag template that can be formatted with names and printed. It is Avery label 5462 and the template is available on www.ncacc.org/opioidforum.
- **Follow-up Report Template:** A template to provide a follow-up report that outlines outcomes and next steps to share with the participants, the NCACC and other organizations.

Tab 4

- **NC Injury & Violence Prevention Branch Overview on Prescription & Drug Overdoses:** A supplementary overview of prescription and drug overdose information to provide context regarding the extent of the opioid epidemic. It can be provided as a handout the day of your forum.
- **Facts and Figures on the Opioid Crisis:** A targeted overview of the opioid crisis and how far-reaching the issue is, as published in a joint report from the National League of Cities and National Association of Counties. It can be provided as a handout the day of your forum.
- **Summary of Additional Resources:** A summary of resources counties can utilize in planning the forum.

Tab 5

- **A Prescription for Action: Local Leadership in Ending the Opioid Crisis:** A joint report from the National League of Cities and National Association of Counties.

All enclosed materials are available online at www.ncacc.org/opioidforum.



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

Suggested Roles & Responsibilities

1. COMMISSION CHAIR

The role of the Chair is to provide public leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Talk with your county manager about the Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse concept, review the enclosed materials in the box and discuss the list of forum invitees.
- Include a discussion about this request on the agenda of your next Board of Commissioners' meeting. If possible at that time, set a proposed date for the Forum in your county;
- Send letters of invitation to municipal elected officials, school board members, judges, and your sheriff, and any other participants you want to include, being sure to include a physician (sample letter and addresses provided);
- Host the Forum, present a welcome and set the stage for the purpose of the meeting and desired outcomes.

2. COUNTY MANAGER

The role of the County Manager is to help the county commissioners execute their Leadership Forum. The Manager's responsibilities include:

- Review the box materials, talk with your Chair, put it on your board's agenda for discussion;
- Call your public health director to let him/her know you have received the forum materials and decide next steps;
- Contact city/town managers in the county, the school superintendent(s), and sheriff, to enlist their support and assistance; find out whether any of these agencies have existing task forces or committees that could be valued partners in your forum;
- Coordinate the forum date with as many of these interested parties as possible to allow for maximum elected official participation, and inform the NCACC of the date so it can be added to the website (email: communications@ncacc.org);
- Coordinate with your county clerk to ensure your invitation list is complete and accurate. The list can be expanded to suit the nature of your local forum;
- You may find it helpful to appoint a small planning group to help the public health director and LME representative with logistics and program development; agencies you might include could be law enforcement and a court official. (Sample program agenda provided);
- Designate a person to be the forum recorder. This person will be responsible for documenting the small group discussion reports. A follow-up report template is provided for this purpose.
- Coordinate with County Clerk if public notice is required, depending on expected number of commissioners in attendance.



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

3. LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR

The role of the Health Director is to connect all the key county partners (County Manager, LME Director or designee, Cooperative Extension Director or designee, County DSS Director) and take the lead in program planning. The leadership forum materials include facilitator instructions that detail the role and responsibilities of the facilitator. Your County Cooperative Extension Director will share the instructions with the facilitator once identified. The local Public Health Director's responsibilities include:

- Call the County Manager to let him/her know you are willing to provide lead support for the forum by working with the designated LME representative to develop the program content, materials, presentations, etc.
- Call your LME/MCO Chief Executive Officer to inform him/her that you are ready to begin the forum planning and to find out who the LME designee is to participate in your program. In most cases this will be the LME Medical Director or substance use specialist. If for any reason you have difficulty connecting with your LME Chief Executive Officer, reach out to your regional LME liaison. The liaisons are knowledgeable about the forums and have helped with the planning. A list of regional LME liaisons is included on the "Summary of Additional Resources" page enclosed in this packet.
- Connect with the LME designee to plan the program, schedule speakers, including the county DSS director, and contact the County Cooperative Extension Service Director who will help you to identify a facilitator, coordinate all presentations, technology needs, etc.
- Attend the commissioners' meeting(s) at which the forum concept is being discussed to speak about the importance of the forum and reiterate your support in making it a success.
- After invitation letters have been sent out from the Board of Commissioners, ask your Board of Health to send a follow-up letter encouraging the invitees to participate. It is especially important to have a few medical doctors involved, so if your Board of Health can encourage participation from the medical community it would be extremely helpful.
- Along with the LME designee, serve as the discussion leader in the room, including providing opening comments to set the stage for the discussion and handling participant introductions, consider consulting with your facilitator on how to handle introductions from a time management standpoint;
- In multi-county public health agencies, assign delegates to help you as needed;
- Work with the LME representative to collect all notes and worksheets generated during the forum and review and finalize the summary provided by the forum recorder and give a final report to the County Manager and NCACC (email: communications@ncacc.org).
- Send final report to all program participants with a "thank you" note.



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

4. LOCAL MANAGEMENT ENTITY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The role of the Local Management Entity CEO is to lend his/her leadership and active support to this project by doing the following:

- Designate an appropriate staff person who is a subject matter expert to partner with the Local Public Health Directors and County Managers in the catchment area to help plan and execute the forum program;
- Inform the LME/MCO Medical Director and encourage his/her involvement in the program;
- Represent the LME/MCO in as many county forums as your schedule permits.

5. LOCAL MANAGEMENT ENTITY REPRESENTATIVES

The role of the LME designated staff representative is to collaborate with the Local Public Health Director to design the forum and speak as a part of the agenda presentations. Your responsibilities in this role include:

- Reach out to the public health directors in your assigned area to introduce yourself and offer your assistance;
- Along with your Local Public Health Directors, attend and speak at as many of the county commissioners' meetings as possible when the forum project will be presented;
- Help the public health director design agenda presentations that inform the elected officials in laymen's terms about addiction disorders and particularly, opioid addiction; be sure to include prevention methods as well as treatment and recovery options; use as much county-specific data as possible, referring to the county data sheet provided in the leadership forum materials;
- Prepare rosters of the substance use disorder prevention and treatment providers and agencies by county that can be used as handouts at the forums with which you are involved;
- Lend expert knowledge, advice and guidance to the forum discussions, including giving opening comments with the Health Director to set the stage for the discussion.
- Work with the Local Public Health Director to finalize the follow-up report and send to the County Manager.

6. COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The role of the County Director of Social Services is to participate in the program, and do the following:

- Provide as much information as possible about the effect of the opioid epidemic on families and children in the county;
- Help lead the group discussions in which ideas will be generated to help with prevention, education, and treatment.
- After the Board of Commissioners sends out the letters of invitation, ask your Board of Social Services to follow-up with a simple card or letter to the invitees reiterating the



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

importance of dealing with the opioid issue to the families in your county and encouraging them to participate.

7. FACILITATOR

The role of the facilitator is to help process the group decision-making that takes place as a part of the table-top exercise. A detailed facilitator guide is enclosed in this packet.

- Sticky notes and Idea Generation Worksheets should be available on each table;
- Participate in the opening comments by describing how the materials will be used in the small group discussions.
- Oversee the group discussions and reports, call on groups to report their ideas, engage the assistance of the Public Health Director and LME representative in helping point out any common themes or recommended approaches, summarize actions and collect the idea worksheets.

Identifying a Facilitator:

This process does not require or demand that the facilitator have any knowledge about this topic, but rather that they have the skills to help the group process their ideas into an action plan.

You may already have someone on your County staff or someone else involved in the project who is ideal for facilitating this discussion.

Many, but not all, of the County Cooperative Extension Offices have trained facilitators on local staff or can help identify a CES-trained person to help facilitate group discussions reflected on the sample agenda. Contact your County Cooperative Extension Director to connect the Local Public Health Director to the closest CES trained facilitator.

In addition, the NC Office of State Human Resources – Talent Management division offers facilitation to public employment divisions. Contact (919) 733-2601.



County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse

Logistical Considerations

Venue: The ideal location is one that is easy to get to and has ample parking. If at all possible, use a room with ample natural light, which helps participants maintain focus and energy.

Timing: The suggested model is a morning meeting, simply because people are fresher and have fewer distractions early in the day. HOWEVER, whatever time of day gets the most attendees present is the right way to go.

Room Set: There will be small group discussions during the agenda, so it will be important for attendees to be able to hear and converse with each other. Use crescent rounds for the room set if possible. If rounds are not available, consider placing rectangular tables back-to-back to form a small square.

Participant Table Assignments: Participants should be assigned to sit with individuals they do not routinely work with or interact with. The objective is for each table to have a good mix of viewpoints and interests. This enriches the learning for the attendees and helps create a greater diversity of ideas.

- One way to do this is to use colored tent cards to number the tables, and put coordinating sticky dots on name badges alternating commissioners, municipal officials, school board members, law enforcement officers, judicial officials, hospital officials, doctors, etc.

Technology: Laptop, screen, and projector are the basic technology needs. Depending on the size of the room and number of attendees, microphones may be useful.

Basic Materials: At each chair, place small yellow sticky pads with pens or pencils; on each table place 3-5 Idea Generation Worksheets.

Optional Materials: Confer with Facilitator and Health Director on selected group process before deciding whether these are needed:

- Sticky-backed flip charts on easels (2)
- Wide-tipped Markers

Food/Beverage: The agenda is designed in a way that allows the program to be held without a hot meal. Remember though that food equals energy, so you might want to consider providing coffee, sodas, water, and some sweet and savory snacks upon arrival and at a break.