



Martin-Tyrrell-Washington County Leadership Opioid Forum

The planning committee for this forum decided that due to existing partnerships as well as the three counties being served by the same health department and local management entity/managed care organization, that a combined forum would be held. The committee consisted of the three county managers, a representative from Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department as well as from Trillium Health Resources and NC Cooperative Extension.

On Thursday, October 26, 2017 approximately 115 individuals from Martin, Tyrrell and Washington Counties met at the Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center in Williamston, North Carolina to learn more about the opioid epidemic and brainstorm solutions to the crisis. Participants were from all disciplines to include: law enforcement (local and state), schools, local and state government, social services, first responders, public health, mental health service providers, faith community, television media, emergency management, judicial services, hospitals, primary care providers, pharmacies, probation/parole among others.

The attendees were welcomed by the chairs of the three county commissioners: Mr. Elmo "Butch" Lilley (Martin), Mr. Leroy Spivey (Tyrrell), and Mr. Julius Walker (Washington). Rebecca Liverman and Natalie Wayne, representatives from NC Cooperative Extension, encouraged participants to use a documentation tools, which could be found on each table to jot down ideas during speaker presentations.

Steve Mange, Senior Policy and Strategy Counsel for the North Carolina Attorney General's office shared what the state is doing to impact the opioid epidemic and the importance of local forums such as this to begin grass roots efforts to intervene. Participants then heard from Dr. Michael Smith, Associate Medical Director with Trillium Health Resources (LME/MCO) who provided "Opioid 101", giving basic information on opioids.

Jennifer O'Neal, an EMT-Paramedic and Medical Examiner for Washington and Tyrrell County then presented an informational power point on the toxic trends of opioids and what first responders are witnessing on a daily basis. Brandy Mann, Interim Director for Tyrrell County Department of Social Services then shared some heart wrenching examples of how opioid use/abuse has negatively impacted our children and families.

Tim Manning, Sheriff of Martin County, informed the forum participants of steps that the Safe Kids Riverbend Coalition (made up of individuals from Martin, Tyrrell

Martin County

210 W. Liberty St.
Williamston, NC 27892
252.793.1619

Tyrrell County

408 Bridge St.
Columbia, NC 27925
252.793.1750

Washington County

198 Hwy. 45 North
Plymouth, NC 27962
252.793.3023

and Washington counties) has taken to assist in the opioid epidemic. Awareness campaigns as well as the acquisition and placement of medication drop boxes are two ways that this group has tried to impact the opioid epidemic in our three communities. He also shared what law enforcement recognizes as a need, at least in these three counties.

Rebecca Liverman and Natalie Wayne then returned to the podium and asked that participants discuss amongst their table and come up with **Ideas, Partners, Assets, Obstacles** and **Lead Agencies** for the individual program or concepts. Participants were asked to document their thoughts for these five topics and then be prepared to report to the entire group at the conclusion of the break out time.

IDEAS- From the group discussions, there were two needs or ideas that continued to be brought up: the need for additional education/awareness and a local treatment facility (specifically east of Interstate 95). Other ideas that were generated included: a database to be created with resources for those that struggle with opioid addiction; stricter enforcement /sentencing of dealers; alternative pain management practices; expand DARE/GREAT programs; community health coaching/peer support programs; focus on prevention programs; using social media to get the word out about the epidemic; more advertisement about medication drop boxes; creation of a task force/coalition to address these issues; a needle exchange program; a stand-alone unit within DSS that would handle all drug related issues; increase doctor/provider education related to the opioid epidemic; research LEAD and HOPE community models; and development of support groups for family members.

PARTNERS- When asked to list the key partners for these efforts, participants documented the various agencies and entities that were represented at the forum.

ASSETS- Documentation of local assets included: STOP Act, medication drop boxes; law enforcement and first responders access to naloxone/narcan; “buy-in” from community leadership; Controlled Substance Registry System (CSRS); vacant buildings within the three counties which could possibly be used for a treatment facility; on-going programs such as DARE/GREAT, AA etc.; and most importantly, concerned citizens that recognize that this is a community issue.

OBSTACLES- In reviewing what the participants felt were obstacles; the following were some of the things noted: rural areas, no treatment facilities in the east; silos between various agencies and disciplines; stigma or embarrassment for those in need of treatment; lack of infrastructure; a cycle of family addiction; the power of addiction; awareness of resources; insurance coverage (none or insufficient); and

the fact that this is a public health emergency but there is no funding to address the issue.

LEAD AGENCY- Forum participants seemed to agree that a collaboration of all the disciplines gathered were needed to serve as lead agencies in the various ideas and concepts. It appeared that the majority of the participants felt that a coalition should be developed (or an appropriate existing coalition could be expanded) to address the identified need of awareness and education of the opioid epidemic.

Wes Gray, Health Director for Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department then presented statistics depicting the staggering increase of cases involving opioid use over the past few years. He also issued a challenge to forum participants to keep the momentum and passion about this emergency going and work collaboratively to identify ways to intervene.

David Bone, David Clegg and Curtis Potter, County Managers from Martin, Tyrrell and Washington counties (respectively) gave final comments and thanked the participants for their attendance and concern about this growing problem. They stated that the information that was shared during the breakout sessions would be compiled and a report developed and circulated. Once that is accomplished, next steps would be determined.

Two local television stations sent representatives to cover the event and the local print media also provided coverage before and after the event.

At the conclusion of the forum, Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department was asked to research and develop a position for a public health educator. It is hoped that this individual will work with county leadership and forum participants on the development (or expansion of existing) of a substance abuse coalition for the three county area and continue to identify ways that education and awareness of the epidemic can be shared with the community as well as other opportunities to impact the opioid epidemic in Martin, Tyrrell and Washington counties.