



Office of the Sheriff

Berrien County

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November 28, 2017

The Berrien County Sheriff's Department has within its mission statement "...to safeguard life..." Thus, we support community, county, state and federal initiatives aligned with the prevention of drug addiction. Our staff is trained in the use of Naloxone, which reverses an opioid overdose, allowing a person another chance at life. As a part of the Voice. Change. Hope. Alliance, it is our goal to eliminate the opioid epidemic through collaboration, education and the connection of resources. This societal epidemic affects all county residents and it is through their Voices that Change can occur and give us Hope!

As Sheriff of Berrien County, I am responsible for enforcing our laws however, there are too many people abusing drugs and endangering their lives. I believe our community needs to focus more of our efforts on prevention to identify, connect and provide support with people who are affected by this epidemic. Managing the county jail gives me and my staff opportunities to assist inmates with drug addiction both during and after incarceration. We have added a counselor to screen inmates to help connect them with the appropriate drug support resources.

A brief background of Voice. Change. Hope. Alliance:

In December 2014 a grandmother who had lost her grandson to a heroin overdose called the Berrien County Sheriff to ask for his help to educate our community about opiate addiction. She was interested in not only creating awareness of the ever increasing problem of heroin addiction, but also in bringing more resources to this community and reducing the stigma families experience when a loved one becomes addicted.

In May 2015 a collaboration of individuals concerned about drug addiction had formed. They include parents of addicts, youth, minister, the clinical director of a local substance abuse treatment facility; The Berrien County Health Department, The Berrien County Sheriff Department, Michigan State Police, Lakeland Health and the Southwest Michigan Chapter of Families Against Narcotics. The diversity of this group is reflected in the name they chose for this alliance: "Voice. Change. Hope."

Through The Voice.Change.Hope. Alliance, we envision individuals will receive support to achieve a healthy recovery and no longer suffer the stigma of addiction.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE VOICE. CHANGE. HOPE. ALLIANCE – Berrien County:

Goal 1: To Reduce the occurrence of prescription drug abuse among Southwest Michigan families.

Goal 2: Reduce the occurrence of fatal opioid overdoses in Southwest Michigan.

Goal 3: Increase resources in our community that support an individual's recovery from substance addiction.

Goal 4: Remove the stigma that individuals face when dealing with addiction issues.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS AFFECTING BERRIEN COUNTY COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

*** Reinforcing the Naloxone Program with Law Enforcement and Community.**

- The combination of law enforcement and community efforts together are saving lives with administration of naloxone. (see numbers Nancy sent)

*** Understanding and following the 911 Good Samaritan Law that was passed into law January 2017**

- There has been discrepancy with some law enforcement agencies and individual about who the overdose 911 Good Samaritan Law covers.
- This law protects both the individuals overdosing and the person calling.
 - There have been some who believe this only protects the person calling

*** Stop charging Felonies to someone with an illness:**

- It is now affecting Medicaid; recently there has been a push to stop reimbursements for services if a person has a misdemeanor, felony or manufacturing charge. Many of our recovery coach programs reimburse their coaches through Medicaid.
- A felony charge can cause a person in sobriety more problems and hinders continued sobriety. Causes job issues, housing issues, insurance and driving. Even people in recovery believe consequences should be incurred, but the “felony” has a major hindrance on their future and continues to add stigma to the illness.

*** Someone willing to get help or seeking out treatment.**

- There is NO facility or quick resource to help those using opioids and the withdrawals are so severe that they go right back to the opioids to prevent from being dope sick.
- Recently in Berrien a young man was homeless and was seeking rehab but had to wait several days. He was not from the area, was going through withdrawal, it was pouring rain. Several agencies were trying to find help and safe shelter until he could be admitted. Unfortunately there was no temporary housing, shelter or safe place for him to go.