

Suburban Middlesex County Drug Task Force

Pathway to Recovery and Safety

The Problem

The heroin epidemic has spared no community, family, or law enforcement agency. The wide availability of heroin combined with the ever decreasing cost of the drug has resulted in addiction and death of epic proportions in every community, regardless of socio-economic status. Overdose deaths are the number one cause of injury-related death in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and deaths from both prescription painkillers and heroin quadrupled between 1999-2000 and 2013.

As law enforcement agencies continue to strive to reduce the availability of the drug on the supply side, we have also forged partnerships with social service agencies and health care providers to work collaboratively on treatment and education initiatives. The widely publicized “Angel” program in Gloucester, Massachusetts is a perfect example of such creative collaborations.

The Suburban Middlesex County Drug Task Force (SMCDTF) covers a diverse 8 community region in Massachusetts including:

- Arlington
- Belmont
- Lexington
- Lincoln
- Newton
- Waltham
- Watertown
- Weston

These communities include densely populated communities such as Arlington (12th most densely populated community in Massachusetts) as well as more rural suburban communities such as Lincoln and Weston. Further, member communities include very diverse communities such as Waltham with 6% of its population being black or African American and almost 14% Hispanic.

The SMCDTF has had wide success at identifying, investigating, and successfully prosecuting persons responsible for dealing heroin in the region and beyond. At the conclusion of such investigations we are often left with a list of **known heroin users** who have purchased their heroin from the target of the investigation. **Historically law enforcement has done nothing with the identity of the known users** and the users subsequently move onto other suppliers and in some instances, they become victims of a fatal or near fatal overdose. **This practice by law enforcement should be seriously reconsidered** and as such, the SMCDTF seeks to implement a program called Pathway to Recovery and Safety (PARS).

The Response

The identified population served (heroin users) will likely need to be persuaded to seek out recovery services. The PARS program will bring together law enforcement, health & human services, mental

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health professionals, substance abuse health care professionals, social services, treatment centers, and others to bring resources and support to the users and their families. For example, following the arrest of a dealer the case investigator(s) will turn over the identities of the dealer's customers to the Arlington Police Department Mental Health Clinician who will act as the PARS coordinator. The PARS Coordinator will then schedule a PARS resource meeting of which each identified heroin user will be encouraged to attend along with a family member. If the user refuses to participate in the PARS resource meeting that particular case will be referred back to law enforcement for consideration for a criminal complaint(s) for their role in the drug distribution operation and for unlawfully possessing drugs. By doing so, it is highly likely that users will feel persuaded to attend the PARS resource meeting to avoid criminal prosecution.

At the PARS resource meeting drug users and their families will be provided with a wide variety of services and/or resources including, but not limited to, the following:

- Direct access to outpatient recovery programs such as "Right Turn" (<http://www.right-turn.org/>), "Wickedsober" (<http://wickedsober.com/>) and others.
- Direct access to inpatient recovery programs such as Lahey Clinic, McLean Hospital and others.
- The presence of and access to mental health professionals.
- The presence of and access to health care providers (Mt. Auburn Hospital).
- On-site training of family members on the proper use of Naloxone.
- Issuance of Naloxone to family members.
- The presence of veterans services personnel.

Measures of Success

Law enforcement, social service providers, and communities can no longer stand by silently as known drug abusers risk their lives daily, cause dysfunction in their homes, and panic in their neighborhoods.

Not all identified drug users will attend the structured PARS resource meeting and of those that do, some will continue to use unlawful controlled substances. However, there is no doubt that some will seize the opportunity of having loved ones, law enforcement, and social service agencies, and the community as a whole investing in their safety and recovery.

All pertinent data will be tracked.

- Raw numbers of persons served by the program without identifying person.
- Number of persons trained in the delivery of Naloxone.
- Number of doses of Naloxone issued.
- Number of persons who enroll in outpatient programming.
- Number of persons admitted to inpatient programs.
- Number of referrals to veterans' services.