

BREAKING THE CYCLE



Clermont County's
2015 Response to the
Opiate Epidemic



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**Clermont County
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Understanding the Opiate Epidemic

WHAT ARE OPIATES ?

An **opiate** is a narcotic analgesic that depresses the central nervous system. Natural opiates are derived from the poppy plant. Synthetic opiates are manufactured drugs designed to mimic the effects of naturally derived opiates. Together, natural and synthetic opiates are known as "opioids." Today, the most common prescribed opioids include morphine, codeine, Vicodin, Percocet and OxyContin.

Opioids work by attaching to proteins called opioid receptors which are found in the brain, spinal cord, and other parts of the body. Due to how opiates impact the body, however, they are highly addictive. Taken in large quantities, opioids can cause slow breathing and death.

Prescription opioid misuse and heroin use is of particular concern in Clermont County. Heroin is known by a variety of nicknames such as Big H, Black Tar, Horse and Dog.

Heroin, which is derived from morphine, can be injected via a needle, smoked in a water pipe, mixed into marijuana or a tobacco cigarette, or snorted nasally. Heroin often comes in small packages, and sometimes in small balloons. Since it is frequently cut with other drugs, such as fentanyl, users do not know exactly what they are buying, which can result in overdose and possibly death.

HOW DID THE EPIDEMIC HAPPEN?

Research shows that the largest cause of the current opiate epidemic is the increased focus on treating pain, and the increased prescribing of pain medications. While healthcare providers were encouraged to treat pain, they were not provided sufficient education on the addictive nature of opiates and/or a focus on the potential of addiction. As use of prescription pain pills increased, "pill mills" (clinics where painkillers were routinely prescribed inappropriately or for

non-medical reasons) began to emerge in Ohio. Numerous people from all walks of life became addicted to prescription pain medication. For some, addiction came from legitimate prescribing of the medication while others became addicted due to pill mills. Beginning in 2010, the Ohio Legislature passed laws to address the overprescribing of prescription pain medication, including closing the pill mills which made access to opiate prescription drugs more difficult to obtain.

However, this did not stop the misuse of prescription drugs. Prescription pain medications started being sold on the street. When the cost became so high, people switched to heroin, which was readily available and cheaper. Addiction to heroin grew rapidly; approximately 80% of recent heroin addicts originally used legitimately prescribed pain medication before turning to heroin.

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

Addiction knows no boundaries. Opiate addiction can happen to people of every race, ethnicity, income level, and religious background.

Addiction is a complex disease that has nothing to do with lack of willpower. Quitting drug use is very difficult, even if someone desperately wants to quit. Substance abuse changes the

functioning and structure of the brain, affecting the person's behavior and judgment, and continues long after the person stops using drugs.

Drug addiction can be successfully treated to help people stop using drugs and lead productive lives.

"Addicts cannot recover from addiction alone; there must be a 'we' in this community. The availability of treatment provides this for them, as they need to be able to interact with others who understand their feelings and experiences. They have been isolated for so long because of their addiction, the stigma, and unavailability of treatment they need to be rehabilitated. It is necessary for people suffering from addiction to establish a support system and obtain long-term treatment to be able to recover and remain sober."

Clermont County woman in recovery

Clermont County's Response to the Opiate Epidemic

What is the Clermont County Opiate Task Force (OTF) ?

Clermont County has been named as one of the "hot spots" in Ohio for opiate abuse. The Clermont County Opiate Task Force was started in 2013 to identify and implement solutions to the opiate epidemic that has shattered families and frayed the fabric of Clermont County communities on an unprecedented scale. The impact of the opiate epidemic in Clermont County has been overwhelming.

Opiate Abuse in Clermont County WHAT WE KNOW:

Over the past several years, the following has happened:

- Clermont County averages at least one opiate overdose death a week. Unintentional overdose deaths have increased by 2,350% from 2000 to 2010. The percentage change in deaths was approximately 30 times higher than in Cuyahoga County, Ohio's largest county.
- From 2008 to 2012, Clermont County had Ohio's 4th highest rate of county residents diagnosed with opiate abuse, dependence, or poisoning at the time of discharge from the emergency room, almost two times higher than the state average.
- In 2013, opiate abuse in Clermont County accounted for a 43% increase in treatment admissions, 48% of arrests made by Clermont County Narcotics Unit, and an 83% increase in removals of children from their homes.
- Hepatitis C reports in Clermont County rose 140% from 2009 to 2012. The rise is suspected to be in part due to a rise in IV drug use.
- The number of clients in treatment at Clermont Recovery Center for heroin addiction has risen 400% since 2010.
- The number of babies born dependent on opiates has risen from 11 per 1,000 births in the Tri-State area to 36 per 1,000 births since 2010.

THE MISSION:

The mission of the OTF is to minimize opiate misuse, distribution, addiction, overdose, and deaths in Clermont County.

"The opiate epidemic is one of the top health concerns currently impacting Clermont County residents. Addiction is a disease that needs to be addressed through prevention and treatment, just like any other chronic disease. The community and the task force rallying around this issue and working together toward common goals, as outlined in this plan, can start to address this urgent concern."

Julianne Nesbit, RS, MPH
Clermont County Public Health,
Health Commissioner

Increasing the Availability of Treatment

TREATMENT STRATEGIES:

Establish a residential detoxification program in Clermont County for indigent, uninsured, and underinsured residents

Increase the availability of intensive outpatient treatment and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) provided in conjunction with services

Establish 150 units of recovery housing in Clermont County

Strengthen treatment providers' collaborations with mutual help groups such as Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and SMART Recovery

Increase the availability of vocational services for people in treatment

GOALS:

Fewer Clermont County residents will overdose on opioids

More Clermont County residents will achieve long-term recovery as a result of addiction treatment and related services

"Medication Assisted Treatment has provided the court with a more effective way to deal with non-violent offenders. With these defendants, I stress the importance of getting counseling too. But, Medication Assisted Treatment has increased the amount of time we have to work with someone, and I have seen a fair number of people respond well who were having a hard time before."

The Honorable Jerry R. McBride
Judge, Clermont County Common Pleas Court

Preventing Opiate Misuse

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

Educate the community about opiate abuse, including the symptoms of opiate abuse

Create awareness of the existing prevention resources in the community

Educate prescribers about the dangers of opioid prescriptions

Increase knowledge and availability of prescription drug boxes

Advocate for more school-based prevention funding

Increase understanding of addiction to lessen stigma and dispel myths about addiction and those who are addicted

GOALS:

Prevent the misuse of opiates

Prevent new cases of addiction

"Clermont County, in many ways, was not prepared for the opiate epidemic that has impacted many systems and our entire community. However, the increase in awareness about addiction and the willingness of so many agencies and citizens to help develop a plan to address the epidemic that includes providing information on the issue, preventing more people from starting use, and assisting those already addicted, has been the catalyst of a belief that together we can successfully fight to diminish this epidemic."

Karen J. Scherra, Executive Director
Clermont County Mental Health and Recovery Board

Reducing the Harm Caused by the Opiate Epidemic

HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES:

Increase community - based Naloxone (Narcan) distribution

Increase community support and education

Increase awareness and reduce infectious disease risks of HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C through education, testing, vaccination, and referral for care

Increase the availability of support services for children whose parents are addicted to opiates and for families impacted by opiate addiction

GOALS:

Decrease the number of unintentional overdoses due to opioid use

Decrease the number of new hepatitis C, HIV, and other infections caused by intravenous drug use

Decrease the transmission of hepatitis C, HIV, and other infections through accidental needle sticks

"As a County Commissioner, it concerns me to hear that counties across the U.S. spend around 9% of their budgets cleaning up the effects of addiction. As a parent, it frightens me to hear that from 2010 to 2013 there has been an 83% increase in foster care cases in Ohio where heroin was a factor. As responsible citizens of the county, we must all find a way to reduce the supply and the demand of illegal opiates while providing better treatment for those who have substance abuse and addiction problems."

David Uible, Clermont County Commissioner

Cutting the Supply of Opiates

SUPPLY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Support the work of street-level officers in Clermont County

Support the work of organized law enforcement units

Educate the public regarding use of the County Narcotics Tipline to report suspected drug activity

GOALS:

Reduce the supply in Clermont County



"The Clermont County Sheriff's Office is committed to making a difference in the fight against opiate abuse, in particular, the eradication of heroin from our county by decreasing access and supply. We also support increasing treatment options, education, and other prevention efforts to assist the victims of the epidemic."

Chief Deputy Steve Leahy
Clermont County Sheriff's Office

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FIGHT THE OPIATE EPIDEMIC IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Join the Clermont County Opiate Task Force and/or the Coalition for a Drug Free Clermont County (For more information call the Clermont County Mental Health and Recovery Board at 732-5400)
- Host a drug diversion presentation (For more information call Clermont County Public Health 735-8408)
- Distribute Opiate Task Force Fact Sheets to doctor and dentist offices, and pharmacists
- Distribute “Monitor, Secure, and Dispose” materials to doctor and dentist offices
- Distribute Opiate OD Prevention cards in your community
- Participate in a Prescription Drug Drop Off event to properly dispose of medications
- Support a permanent drug drop box at your police department or local pharmacy
- Familiarize yourself with the signs of abuse
- Familiarize yourself with the local resources
- Start a neighborhood watch in coordination with your local police department
- Support prevention programming in schools
- Join a support group or advocacy organization such as SOLACE (516-7608)

To get a Naloxone (Narcan) kit, call Clermont Recovery Center at 735-8100

**If you or a loved one needs help, call the
Clermont County Crisis Hotline at 528-SAVE**

**For more information or to obtain a full copy of the plan, call the
Clermont County Mental Health and Recovery Board at 732-5400.**

OPIATE
TASK FORCE
of Clermont County

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