

With the frequent news reports, we should all know about the opioids and heroin crisis, but a couple of statistics may help. In 2000, less than 20,000 Americans died from drug overdose. In 2016, over 64,000 died, mostly from opioid family drugs.

In 2016, 4,642 drug-related overdose deaths were reported by Pennsylvania coroners and medical examiners, an increase of 37 percent from 2015. The presence of an opioid, illicit or prescribed by a doctor, was identified in 85 percent of drug-related overdose deaths in Pennsylvania in 2016.

In Chester County, a total of 153 people died of a drug overdose in 2017, compared with 106 in 2016 and 81 in 2015. And, in case you believe this to be problem only of young people, 47% of those who died in 2017 were under the age of 35 while 53% were 35 or older, including 6% over 65. And, these numbers do NOT reflect the number of overdoses where lives were saved with Naloxone nor where a coroner was not involved in determining cause of death.

While this is a US and Pennsylvania crisis, I want you and us to focus on what can be done in our local community.

My challenge to all local entities (school districts, townships, churches, libraries, etc.) is for you to examine what you can do to help and to act. I believe that all these entities have 3 specific resources that can help. One is a list of people in our area (e-mail, address, etc). Two is social media sites like websites and Facebook. And Three is physical buildings for possible meetings for communication and recovery.

I have worked with some dedicated leaders in the opioid area to put together a communication package. I ask the Franklin Township Board of Supervisor, as well as the other entities in our community to issue this package (or one of their choosing) on a periodic basis that makes sense for their audience. As example, perhaps Franklin Township might communicate with all residents once a year. And this communication is not focused just on residents; aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents should all know this information. I also ask Franklin Township as well as the other entities to understand and reach out to the various support organizations with the purpose of offering meeting space where it might be needed.

Please let me repeat; you already have many resources that can help to confront the opioid crisis. Please use them.

Opioid Crisis: Information that everyone at every age should have in our area.

Help cut the supply of Opioids by dropping off un-used prescriptions at one of 4 drop boxes in our community:

- State Police Barracks – Avondale. 2 Moxley Lane. Open 24 hours/7 days a week.
- Kennett Square Police. 155 North Broad Street. Open M-F 8:30 to 4:30
- Oxford Police – Oxford. 57 North Fourth Street. Open M-F 8 to 4:30
- Southern Chester County Regional Police Force – Landenberg (temporary). 385 Starr Rd. Open M-F 8 to 4

Help save lives:

Naloxone is the generic name of a drug that can reverse the impact of an opioid overdose and save lives. The drug has no abuse potential and counteracts the life-threatening effects of an overdose. It is also known by the brand name Narcan. This is administered as a nasal spray. The Surgeon General of the United States just recently recommended more people carry Naloxone. Naloxone is available without a prescription in Pennsylvania at CVS and Walgreens stores. The cost of a Naloxone dosage can be about \$130, although many insurance plans cover some of the costs. Additionally, the local support groups, Live4RJ and Kacie's Cause will help to obtain low-cost Naloxone (see more below).

On December 1, 2014 a new law went into effect in Pennsylvania which changes the state's drug laws to provide immunity for people who suffer a drug overdose and for people who report a drug overdose, as long as certain criteria are met. The law is titled Drug Overdose Response Immunity. The law states that a *person who assists a person experiencing a drug overdose* cannot be criminally charged and is immune from prosecution in either of the following instances:

1. The person transported a person experiencing a drug overdose to a law enforcement agency, campus security office or health care facility AND law

enforcement only became aware of the incident and of certain criminal offenses because of that person's assistance;

2. The person reported the drug overdose in good faith to law enforcement AND the person provided their name and location to law enforcement AND the person remained with the person needing medical attention until law enforcement arrived. The law also provides that a *person experiencing a drug overdose* cannot be criminally charged and shall be immune from prosecution if the person who assisted them qualifies for immunity in one of the two instances listed above.

Learn more about the Opioid Crisis:

A great source of statistics and information is <https://www.overdosefreepa.pitt.edu>

The "View Overdose Death Data" shows information about Chester County and even down to zip codes.

Another source of information is Chester County's Department of Drug and Alcohol Services site, <https://www.chesco.org/216/Drug-and-Alcohol>

Also learn more at the site for the Chester County chapter of the Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Education (NOPE) group, <http://www.nopetaskforce.org/chapter-chester.php>

Support and Information:

There are at least three local support/action organizations in our area as well as chapters of national organizations.

Live4RJ provides Addiction Crisis Response where anyone can call to find access to treatment, regardless of insurance by calling 484-247-4911. They also provide peer mentoring to help those on the road to recovering. Live4RJ just opened a Recovery Clubhouse called Miracles Off Main at 406 W. First Avenue in Parkesburg. They are also actively working on opening an additional Recovery Clubhouse in the Avon Grove area. Live4RJ also provides addiction and recovery

presentations and information as well as hosting overdose awareness vigils. And Live4RJ also can help obtain lower-cost Naloxone. Their website is <https://www.live4rj.com>

Kacie's Cause, as their website states, has a vested interest in providing educational information to a sometimes unsuspecting or unaware community. They accomplish this in various ways, collaborating with the local school districts and Chester County drug programs to presenting drug awareness information during townhall meetings, community events, parents support groups, art programs for at-risk elementary students, educational activities for intermediate and middle school students, addiction awareness and education assemblies for high school students, and Narcan training and distribution. Their website is <https://www.kaciescause.com>

If Love Was Enough is a new group in the area focused on helping parents who have lost a child (at any age) to an overdose. If Love Was Enough can be reached by contacting Annalie Korengel at 610-952-2992, Jacki Smiro at 484-639-7990 or through their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/events/388442971615123/>

The list of local Narcotics Anonymous meetings can be found at <https://www.na.org/meetingsearch/>

The list of local Alcoholics Anonymous meetings (and yes, those in recovery have said AA meetings help) can be found at <https://www.aasepia.org/meetings/?tsml-day=3&tsml-region=5009>

Special information for Senior Citizens:

The Opioid Crisis does not just impact younger people. In 2015, 2.7 million Americans over the age of 50 abused painkillers, taking them for reasons or amounts beyond what their doctors prescribed, and the hospitalization rate due to opioid abuse has quintupled for those 65 and older in the past two decades. AARP published a great series of articles with opioid information specific for Senior Citizens which can be found at <https://www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-2017/opioid-drug-addiction-pain-pills.html>