

SPOTLIGHT: Jackson County Anti-Drug Coalition (JCADC)



Background

In 2009, twelve community organizations partnered with the local health department to form the Jackson County (WV) Anti-Drug Coalition (JCADC) in reaction to a series of drug and alcohol-related deaths among local youth. The coalition has since grown into a county-wide effort to reduce experimenting, drug use, and underage drinking among youth in communities throughout Jackson County and surrounding areas in West Virginia and, over time, to reduce substance misuse among adults. Members include law enforcement, youth coalitions, treatment providers, medical professionals, civic and religious groups, community members, business owners, the board of education, and local media.

How it Works

JCADC implements a wide array of programs in order to engage the entire community around the issue of prescription medication misuse. Strategies include media campaigns and awareness events, medication disposal and monitoring, education and training programs, building and mobilizing community resources, reducing barriers to treatment access, and advocacy.

As prescription drug misuse spiked in the community, so too did reports of individuals knocking on strangers doors and asking to use the restroom, where they would pilfer medicine cabinets in search of prescription opioids. Senior citizens were common targets, so the coalition partnered with a local pharmacy school to build an education program for senior citizens about the dangers of sharing prescription medications and how to avoid such encounters.

In an effort to remove unused prescription medications from homes, JCADC began holding quarterly "Take Back" events during which community members were encouraged to turn in any unused prescription medications which were logged by the local police

"There is no age barrier to substance use issues, so for us it was making sure that we educate on a routine basis. We engage everybody from the pre-school kids all the way up to the seniors."

– Amy Haskins, MA, SIT,
Coalition Director

department on a manifest before being destroyed in a newly purchased incinerator. Permanent drop boxes were installed throughout the community where unused prescription medications could be dropped off at any hour. Today, nine drug incinerators are operating across the state.

The coalition began mapping the locations of overdose deaths in the community and focused their efforts on areas identified as "hot spots." The coalition also works with the coroner and local EMS to identify and track which drugs are involved in overdose deaths so that coalition tactics and messaging can be adjusted.

The coalition holds education presentations tailored to targeted audiences, including students, teachers, parents and community members, senior citizens, and law enforcement officials. A program for small business owners teaches them how to recognize the signs of addiction among employees and help connect individuals who are struggling with local treatment resources.

The coalition crafts multifaceted, culturally adept media campaigns. Because hunting is a popular sport in the region, the coalition designed hunters orange t-shirts with JCADC motto, "Above the Influence," emblazoned

Spotlight Series: highlighting innovative programs across the nation enacting a comprehensive strategy to address substance use disorders and addiction.

How it is Innovative

JCDAC leverages the unique capabilities of its diverse membership in order to tackle issues associated with addiction from all vantage points. Unlike many prevention and education efforts that focus solely on youth, the coalition considers addiction a community-wide issue and engages with all age groups in pursuit of a community-based solution. The coalition has gained critical insights through important methods of data collection (such as coroner data and overdose site-mapping). Media campaigns take into consideration not only the immediate needs but also the cultural context of any targeted audience. A real emphasis on cultural specificity is reflected in each of the coalition's programs.

Demonstrating Success

The issue of addiction has by no means disappeared. The issue of addiction has by no means disappeared in Jackson County, but JCADC's tactical navigation of the shifting addiction landscape has succeeded in saving countless lives and curbing the epidemic. Prescription disposal boxes, regular "Take Back" days, and drug incinerators have resulted in the removal of 99 pounds of unused medications every three months. In 2011, 106 people overdosed and died due to prescription drug misuse, and in 2012, that number jumped to 122. Ever

since then, and aligned with the coalition's work and outreach, that number has been steadily decreasing. In

2016, 43 overdose deaths were linked to the misuse of prescription medication. In a community once among the hardest hit in the US, rates of prescription medication misuse in Jackson County have dropped below the national average.

Stakeholders & Partners

Collaboration among a diverse membership and throughout the community is key to JCADC's continued success. Community partners include county schools, city police, sheriff's department, drug court, emergency services, nurses, and social workers. The coalition also works with non-profits, religious organizations, county forensics, and the Magistrate. Meetings are open to the public.

The Future of JCADC

Despite the coalition's successes in reducing overdose rates, high-risk prescription medications continue to be overprescribed. The coalition plans to use data collected from prescription disposal boxes and events to advocate for statewide policy reform regarding unsafe prescribing practices.

References & Resources:

Website: <http://www.jacksoncountyhealthdepartment.com/page15.php>

Presentation - The Friends of NIDA: <http://www.thefriendsofnida.org/Haskins-Presentation-7-10-13.pdf>