



Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon
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MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 31st Is International Overdose Awareness Day

Hunterdon County Recognizes The Opioid Crisis With Development Of A Task Force

Initiated in 2001, in St. Kilda, Melbourne, 'International Overdose Awareness Day' (IOAD) has since become the world's largest annual campaign to raise awareness about drug overdose and to remember without stigma, those who have died. IOAD is recognized annually on August 31st, to remind people about one of the world's worst public health crises and to stimulate action and discussion about evidence-based overdose prevention and drug policy.

Hunterdon County recently formed the Hunterdon County Opioid Settlement Task Force (HCOSTF) as required by each participating County in the National Opioid Litigation. The role of the HCOSTF is to provide input, advice and make recommendations on the disbursement of Opioid Settlement Funds to the Hunterdon County Board of Commissioners.

Deputy Director and liaison for the Human Services Department, Jeff Kuhl shared, "Hunterdon County is proud to be a Stigma-Free community, a goal that was reached in May when all municipalities joined the "Stigma Free in '23" campaign. The intent of having all 26 municipalities approve Stigma Free resolutions is to provide educational resources, and outreach to individuals and families who may have difficulty in accessing mental health services, including drug rehabilitation access and counseling for individuals in need of support.

The Hunterdon County Department of Human Services is responsible for managing the Task Force, and partners with the Health Department to manage an Opioid Fatality Review Team (OFRT) program, funded by the New Jersey Department of Health. Most recently, a community survey was released by the HCOSTF, along with an agency survey and a virtual listening session to gather feedback from participants. The data collected will be analyzed by the Task Force and a report listing recommendations for priorities put forth.

In 2020, the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services (HDHS) partnered with the Hunterdon County Sheriff's Office, with the idea to bring resources, education, and services to the community to address the opioid epidemic. HDHS was awarded an Innovation Grant from the State of New Jersey to outfit a 'Hope One' vehicle.



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The total number of individuals interacting with Hope One for 2023, is 881. Since the beginning of the project, 225 individuals have been trained and received free naloxone kits, a lifesaving medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Commissioner Director Zach Rich added, "I would like to thank our Health Department, along with the Human Services Department, the Sheriff's Office, Prosecutor's Office, and various other substance prevention agencies that have partnered up to work collaboratively, to best meet the needs of the community effected by the growing opioid crisis.

The ultimate goal for Hunterdon County's recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day is to save lives. Utilizing data to develop policies and prevent fatal drug overdoses, is the best way to protect individuals and provide resources to those affected by the opioid epidemic."