McCall Center for Behavioral Health
At the Heart of Wellness

February 2018
Message from Maria

Maria Coutant Skinner, Executive Director

Dear friends;

This month we’re focusing on the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force, a group comprised of dedicated volunteers that represent every aspect of our community. I’m so pleased to be able to share the story of how our group came to be and a bit about the work that we’ve accomplished. However, I must tell you that we often struggle with the seemingly endless heartache that accompanies a group with such a

Community
Litchfield County Opioid Task Force

Early in the morning of the third Thursday of every month, you will find a group of individuals gathered together in front of a formidable fireplace trying to combat an equally powerful epidemic that is tearing our families and communities apart. The Litchfield County Opiate Task Force, formed in December of 2013, is working to reduce the harm caused by the opiate epidemic in the region. Led by Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, Executive Director of the McCall Center for Behavioral Health and Thomas Narducci, LCSW, Administrative Director of Behavioral Health Services at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and with more than 100 members including private practice therapists, medical professionals, people with lived experience, probation and parole representatives, human service and housing representatives, behavioral health organizations, law enforcement, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Department of Children and Families, lawmakers, health care professionals, philanthropic organizations and recovery house managers to strategize solutions to the opioid crisis.

Successes

The Task Force is now four years into our call to action. Due to the efforts of the Task Force, funding from DMHAS and CHH, a full-time community case manager is now embedded in the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital Emergency Department to more readily connect people in crisis with treatment. Our data demonstrates that people more readily access treatment as a result of the connection formed with this person. People with this connection were more than three times more likely to be access treatment (antagonist, long term, residential etc.). Another major success
challenging call to action. We wrestle with the enormity of the issue and the paucity of resources to address it.

About a year ago I listened to an episode of the NPR series the Hidden Brain entitled “Don’t Panic”. One section of the podcast was part of an interview with Tim Harford. He talked about a transformative jazz concert that was performed by Jazz legend Keith Jarrett on a (more or less) unplayable piano. The recorded concert turned into the bestselling solo jazz album of all times. In the interview, Tim Harford talks about the state of the piano that Keith Jarrett had to use: a harsh upper register, sticky keys, pedals that didn’t work. Against all odds, Keith was able to produce a piece of music that made history. Leaning on his experience, passion and will power, he overcame the obstacles and delivered the proof that unfavorable conditions do not prevent success.

Just like that piano, our Task Force is an imperfect instrument. I am eternally grateful to this passionate group of virtuosos for the history making efforts that they are delivering on behalf our community.

All my best,
Maria

Make a difference in someone's life and support McCall today.

Our mission is to provide comprehensive integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment to help people lead healthier and more productive lives.

Your donation will directly support our prevention, recovery and community programs and help us

has been the compilation and distribution of the Northwest Connecticut Substance Abuse and Mental Health Resource Guide. This guide provides up to date information on treatment centers, therapists, crisis lines, detox centers, Medically Assisted Treatment providers and other providers in the area.

The Task Force has been a major influence in increasing communication across disciplines, which has led to increased access to care and heightened accountability. The Task Force and the innovative solutions designed by the group members have served as a model for the state and have been recognized by the National Organization of Rural Health and Connecticut’s congressional delegation.

On August 31, 2017 The Litchfield County Opiate Task Force hosted the first annual Northwest Connecticut Opiate Overdose Awareness Day which included a community resource fair and a candlelight vigil. This free event was open to all members of the community and allowed community members an opportunity to come together and honor the memory and commemorate the lives of those lost to opioid overdose and addiction. Attendees also learned about available local resources, offered and shared support to help those affected, and heard inspiring music and messages of hope and encouragement from those in recovery. More than two dozen Narcan kits were distributed on this night alone.

When the Task Force began, there was a dearth of options for medication assisted therapies, now every local non-profit as well as several for profit and private practitioners offer either Suboxone, Vivitrol or both. Most also work collaboratively with our local methadone provider so that those in residential treatment can have access to this critical component of recovery.

Task Force members have been instrumental in the training and distribution of the lifesaving medication Narcan as well lobbying for increased access. The additional step of having a person who survives a non-fatal overdose being connected to care has been a multifaceted effort of the group.

Challenges

The total number of opioid related deaths in Connecticut in 2016 was 917. In the first six months of 2017 there were 539 fatal overdoses reported to State officials, more than half the total for all of 2016. Although the final numbers for 2017 have not been released as of this writing it is expected that in Connecticut alone the number of opioid related deaths will exceed 1,000. That is approximately THREE of our community members dying each day. Opioids are responsible for more deaths in 2016 than motor vehicle accidents, homicides and suicides COMBINED and the numbers continue to rise.

“We can’t afford to sit around and wring our hands, we know what needs to be done and have willing and capable partners to help in these efforts. The opioid epidemic and our communities need our attention, our commitment and our dollars now.”

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, Executive Director,
McCall Center for Behavioral Health.

In order to combat this epidemic, members of the Litchfield County Opioid Task Force are educating and working with state and federal officials including U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty and state and local officials to create, shape and advocate for progressive policies that will bring resources and relief to our communities.
provide clients with the support they need-regardless of their ability to pay.  Click here to donate today!

What’s New at McCall

Prevention

Signaling positive strides towards tackling the impacts of substance use within Torrington, the Torrington Coalition to Reduce Youth Substance Use was recently revitalized after being awarded the Drug Free Communities (DFC) grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Anyone interested in finding out more, or becoming involved with the Torrington Coalition to Reduce Youth Substance Use is encouraged to reach out to Andrew Lyon, Coalition Coordinator, at (860)496-2139 or andrew.lyon@mccallcenterct.org.

Recovery

More than half of all those struggling with a substance use disorder are also battling a mental illness such as depression or anxiety. In our quest to meet our clients where they are at we have formed a support group created especially for our clients who are living with a co-occurring disorder. Our Dual Recovery Group is adapted from the Twelve Step Model and is led by an individual who is in recovery from a co-occurring disorder. The group is held on Wednesday's from 6:00 - 7:00 pm in the Wellness Center on the McCall main campus and provides a safe place where people who have had similar experiences can understand and offer support to each other.

Community

We are pleased to announce that the McCall Center has been awarded the senior outreach and engagement grant by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This grant will enable us to expand our current Senior Outreach Program and reach more individuals. Our program has served hundreds of our over 55 adult population in Torrington and Winsted for over 15 years and we are excited to be able to expand our reach to the Danbury and Waterbury communities. Look for more information in the coming weeks.