

October 3, 2019

Good Afternoon, My name is Allison Dubois, I am the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Hudson River Health Care. I am so pleased to have this opportunity to address the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction

As a federally qualified health center in over 40 rural and urban communities throughout New York, HRHCare has been uniquely positioned to see the impact of this crisis on underserved communities and to be engaged directly and with partners in identifying strategies that are making a difference. Significant among these strategies, but often overlooked, is the purposeful engagement of communities, community leaders, and providers in a multi faceted approach that increases access to care, links patients to treatment models that work for them, and reduces barriers to care.

Today I wanted to share information on a federal program that I believe offers a promising and cost-effective approach for New York State to consider. HRHCare received a grant from the Health and Services Resource Administration to establish a Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORPS). Through this funding, HRHCare played a leading role in establishing a community-based consortium in Sullivan County, which posts one of New York State's highest rates of opioid mortality. Specifically, among the outcomes of this effort were:

- a county wide "all provider" meeting where the hospital, substance use disorder providers, OASAS providers, peers, HRHCare as the federally qualified health center, behavioral health, pharmacies, and private practitioners came together to understand current capacity and admission criteria, among others to better support transitions of care for patients and to reduce gaps. We are appreciative of Assemblywoman Gunther for her ongoing support of this work.
- This collaboration also supported a workforce assessment and exploration of a new curriculum to be offered at the Sullivan Community College and a peer training curriculum to build the skills of local residents.
- This coalition is also supporting the implementation of the County's new bus loop that will reduce transportation barriers for patients throughout the County
- and expanding partnerships with law enforcement and pharmacies

We encourage the Taskforce to explore investing in local communities and supporting their efforts to identify and build local solutions that will work for them and will build upon the treatment options that also need critical support. These coalitions are also key to addressing stigma in a comprehensive, public fashion (stigma towards OUD, opioid overdose, MAT) in all settings (within mental health facilities, sober homes, ED, law enforcement, pharmacies, everywhere.)

Increasing access to MAT remains a critical priority. NYS recently supported the collaboration between federally qualified health centers and OASAS providers with dedicated grant resources. These investments are making a difference and allowing health centers to increase the number of prescribers and engage more patients. We