



NEW YORK STATE
PROBATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, INC.
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We have learned that many Probation Officers and other law-enforcement agencies have become innovative and proactive in responding to addiction. Some probation departments have developed specific opioid supervision caseloads and have staffed them with Officers highly educated and well-trained in addiction, drug recognition, prevention, and drug enforcement. We recently became aware of a harm reduction approach implemented by the Nassau County Probation Department as a response to assist their community and promote public and health safety.

Nassau County Probation Department, in response to increasing opiate overdoses developed an innovative program based on Harm Reduction Opiate Overdose Prevention Seminar (O.O.P.S), A Harm Reduction Approach. Probationers with a history of opiate use are required to participate in the program with their guest. The goal is to reduce harm associated with opioid abuse including the prevention of non-fatal and fatal overdose deaths, the reduction of disease transmission such as HIV and Hepatitis and training in the opiate overdose reversal drug Narcan. Probationers should not suffer from disease or die from preventable causes on the road to abstinence. Clean needle exchange, condoms, medically assisted treatments, opioid substitution, naloxone, testing for deadly fentanyl in heroin and more traditional treatments are explained and offered. Participants ask candid questions about how to stay alive and healthy while creating an individualized treatment program towards abstinence. Mobile treatment units are available for immediate treatment. A representative from the New York Health Insurance Marketplace is on site to provide medical insurance to those seeking treatment. Upon testing positive for an opiate, trained officers will immediately search the probationer's car and home. Probationers are reminded they will either enter treatment, die or violate probation. When there is an opiate overdose, the supervising officer is counseled regarding cumulative post-traumatic stress.

Furthermore, many of our police departments have begun to adopt and implement programs such as Hope not Handcuffs, the H.E.A.R.T Initiative, and LEAD.

HOPE NOT HANDCUFFS

"Hope Not Handcuffs is an initiative started by Families Against Narcotics (FAN), aimed at bringing law enforcement and community organizations together in an effort to find viable treatment options for individuals seeking help to reduce dependency with heroin, prescription drugs, and alcohol. It is a solution."

H.E.A.R.T

"The Heart Initiative is the Yonkers Police Departments new approach to combating the growing epidemic of heroin addiction. It consists of a three-prong approach: Prevention, Assistance and Enforcement. The primary focus of this initiative is on treatment of the disease of heroin/ opioid addiction as opposed to the strict enforcement for heroin/ opioid use."

LEAD Program

"In early 2016, Albany police launched its law-enforcement-assisted diversion (LEAD) program, providing for discretionary prebooking diversion for low-level offenders whose offending was driven by drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, or poverty" (Wordon & McLean 2018).



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Effective treatment and availability of this treatment is paramount in responding to addiction. However, we spend more of our efforts navigating treatment agencies and insurance companies when attempting to facilitate treatment for the individuals we supervise. Often times, there is limited availability and if the individual does not have insurance or a specific insurance it becomes problem some despite the legislation efforts that have been passed to make treatment for addiction available. Also, rethinking the scheduling of treatment programs and accessibility to these programs to meet the needs of the individuals may aid in success as well and assist with monitoring sobriety, especially during high risk times. It is important to remember that support and recovery varies for each individual and having a comprehensive understanding of the individual need may also facilitate an individual's successful recovery, which is a lifelong task.

Additionally, in order to truly respond and intervene both supervision officers and treatment providers should be notified if one of the individuals that they are working with had been hospitalized or administered NARCAN, so an appropriate individual treatment response can be initiated. Often times, individuals keep this information from those trying to assist them in maintaining sobriety.

Although we respond to individuals battling addiction with a treatment and holistic approach first, we must also continue to investigate and respond appropriately those promote the illegal use through distribution and protect our officers from dangerous exposure. We also need to ensure individuals prescribed medication for treatment or their addiction are actually abiding by the treatment plan and prescribed use. It has also been observed that those battling opioid addiction at time are enticed to seek out the most lethal distribution when they hear about a peer fatality overdosing and this may also be an attempt of seeking options for suicide.

The NYSPOA encourages that community and treatment resources and Probation Services be enhanced, specifically with regard to addiction to respond in a more holistic approach as we have all been affected professionally and personally in some capacity.

Respectfully Submitted,

Veronica Glueck
NYSPOA Legislation Committee



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November 15, 2019

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO
THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE JOINT SENATE TASK FORCE ON
OPIOIDS, ADDICTION, & OVERDOSE PREVENTION**

**Legislative Office Building
Van Buren Hearing Room A, 11:00am
198 State Street
Albany, New York 12210**

The following written testimony is submitted by the New York State Probation Officers Association (NYSPOA). On behalf of the Association's Executive Board and our membership we are gracious to have this opportunity to be a part of this important hearing to discuss opioids, addiction, and overdose prevention. Unfortunately, addressing the "opioid epidemic" is one of the many tasks we perform daily within our communities.

The New York State Probation Officers Association is a professional organization that promotes public safety through the effective use of community supervision, which allows justice-involved individuals to remain within their community and family environment while addressing their criminogenic risks and needs. Being at the front-end of both the State's Family, Juvenile and Criminal Courts and Correctional System, Probation Services are generally the first involvement these individuals have with Criminal Justice System wither as a victim, diversion services, or during pre/post sentencing.

Probation Officers are at the front lines in battling the heroin epidemic. Most Probation Officers are equipped with Narcan. Since the reform of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, many offenders who would have been previously incarcerated under those sentencing guidelines are now placed under probation supervision, rather than sent to state prison. Although many individuals may be on probation for seemingly unrelated offenses/convictions, we discover during the course of supervision a root cause of their illegal behavior is frequently opioid addiction. What we have observed and learned is that most individuals did not seek out heroin on the street in a criminal manor. Many of the individuals we supervise became addicted to pharmaceutical medication wither is was legally obtained by a medical professional or introduced to them as a legal substance for recreational use at various ages, including minors. The allure to take a legal drug for various external reasons appeals to more individuals than illegal street drugs do. However, once someone becomes addicted their life now begins to become unmanageable and their ability to make choices are compromised and their behaviors change, often exposing them to the family court and criminal justice system.

Probation is a key component of many Drug Courts across the State. However, insufficient community resources frequently leave these individuals on the streets or in jails. With realistic workloads, Probation Officers would be able to prevent, respond, and intervene effectively, which may ideally save lives and further assist individuals navigating a lifestyle of recovery.