

**LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE ACT 88:**  
**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HEROIN AND OPIOID PREVENTION AND EDUCATION**  
**(HOPE)**

Date: March 9, 2023  
Time: 9:00 am– 11:00 am  
Bienville Building: Room 118  
628 N. 4<sup>th</sup> St, Baton Rouge, LA

**MINUTES**

1. Call to Order at 9:00am
2. Roll Call

***Present:***

Chair Dr. James Hussey  
Lori Miller  
Shelley Edgerton  
Ronald Callegari  
Crystal Lewis

***Absent:***

Dr. Allison Smith  
Tavares Walker  
Sen. Regina Barrow  
Elsie Joanne Brown  
Monica Taylor  
Judge Timothy Marcel  
Captain Heath Guillotte  
Michael Comeaux

\*A quorum was not reached.

3. Introduction/Welcome New Members  
Ronald Callegari was introduced as a new member.
4. Review and Approval of March 9, 2023 Agenda- No vote due to lack of quorum.
5. Approval of January 2023 Meeting Minutes- No vote due to lack of quorum.
6. Presentations:
  - a. Harm Reduction and Syringe Service Programs in Louisiana  
Presenters included:  
Dr. Melissa Stainback, Region 5 Opioid Coordinator  
Peyton Boozer, SWLAHEC/SW LA Do No Harm  
Mary Beth Campbell, Harm Reduction Supervisor (SHHP)  
Foster Noone, Statewide Syringe Program Monitor (SHHP)  
Sarah Jane Robertson, Harm Reduction Supply Distribution Hub Monitor (SHHP)

Mary Beth Campbell gave an overview of harm reduction services, specifically syringe services.

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She explained harm reduction as a set of practical strategies to reduce negative consequences of drug use. It's also part of a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs. She also noted the following:

Principles of harm reduction:

- Non-judgmental approach that meets people where they are at
- Treating all individuals with dignity, compassion, and respect
- Focus on de-stigmatization of substance use disorder
- Accepting behavior change as an incremental process. People are much more likely to take multiple tiny steps, rather than one or two huge steps
- Include voice of individuals in active addiction, in recovery, and within the community
- Focus on quality life improvements over abstinence
- Individual as the primary agent responsible for reducing the harms related to their substance use.

Dr. Melissa Stainback, the Opioid Coordinator from Region 5 presented. She discussed her harm reduction program in conjunction with OPH and ran through data.

Peyton Boozer, Program Coordinator for SWLA DO NO Harm presented the following:

- Serves LDH Region V of Louisiana including Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis Parishes
- Offers in-person outreach events, mobile unit for distribution and testing, peer-to-peer distribution, and free mail service of supplies
- Makes programmatic changes according to specific community needs as determined by community partners & PWUD
- Housed under Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center and partly funded by Imperial Calcasieu Human Services Authority
- Flow of resources and funding: LaSOR to ImCal to LAHEC to SWLA Do No Harm to people who use drugs.
- Almost 1000 new participants in the program and they were able to link 224 people to resources/services; 156 lives were saved.
- Availability of narcan and policy changes have helped save lives.
- Injection kits are not permitted to include syringes at this time due to policies.

Mary Beth Campbell spoke again regarding SSPs in Louisiana and in general.

She stated that there is a misconception that SSPs only give out syringes. They do so much more:

SSPs began 30 years ago. They offer community health resources; also offer injection equipment; OD prevention, education, testing for Hep C and HIV; safe syringe disposal- onsite disposal; medical services;

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public health intervention. 50% reduction of HIV and HEP C; Over 30 years' of research and data on effectiveness of SSPs.

Discussion ensued on statewide authorization- starting conversations with law enforcement, safe disposal units, introducing the idea and finding champions. Dr. Hussey mentioned the hypocrisy in providing resources and medication to those with other medical ailments but not to those with SUD.

It was recommended that with the expertise in this room, take this knowledge and share with colleagues.

- b. An Opioid Surveillance Data Update was shared by Tranettea Williams & Nell Wilson of OPH Bureau of Health Informatics. Some items discussed included:
  - Provisional counts of drug overdose- in 2022, drug overdose deaths began to decline.
  - Drug type deaths- synthetic opioids has the highest number of deaths- about 60k
  - Other data including Drug involved deaths, Opioid involved deaths, Synthetic Opioid deaths, Emergency Department overdose visits, Total Opioid Prescriptions were discussed.
  - Top 5 prescription drug types are Gabapentin, Hydrocodone, Dextroamphetamine, Alprazolam, and Tramadol
  - Discussion of Comprehensive Forensic Toxicology Project took place. There are 54 parishes participating in the program. From 2019 to 2022, the program has received 7,664 completed toxicology panels on suspected overdose deaths in Louisiana.
  - Drugs of concern- Xylazine and Kratom. Positive drug results for these drugs have increased drastically from 2019 to 2022.

Question from an attendee- They asked if there is a notice going out about Xylazine. Region 4 is having problems with it. More information to come from Nell/Teresa to share information regarding it.

7. General Updates

- a. Community Impact Group- Dr. Smith was absent.
- b. Healthcare Impact Group- Dr. Hussey will get a meeting scheduled.
- c. Public Safety Impact Group- no updates from Shelley, but upcoming meeting will be March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- d. Other Updates  
Dr. Hussey stated the HOPE report was finalized and hopefully ready in a week or so.

Dr. Hussey mentioned that he was added to an Opioid taskforce for the opioid settlement agreement to disburse money correctly to 64 parishes. A formula is used to disburse and 20% to go to Sheriffs offices. There is no requirement to have input from local clinicians, coroners, etc. on how to spend money, which is unfortunate, as Dr. Hussey really pushed for that to be a requirement. Public awareness should be considered and therefore, Catherine will send the link (LAOATF.org) to stakeholders, as

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requested by Nell and Dr. Hussey. It was also requested to share the website with others and Parish contacts. Louisiana is only state that sent directly to parishes/counties.

8. Public Comments

- Kristy Miller with Gov. Office spoke about legislation surrounding opioids/ other drugs:
  - A bill to increase penalties for those distributing fentanyl.
  - bills that would decriminalize cannabis.
  - Kratom to move to schedule 1.
- Mary Beth Campbell- spoke about upcoming events.
- Crystal Lewis- Announced the annual Insurance Conference coming March 25 and 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Region 4 began with a soft launch in the fall of a program for schools consisting of presentations for teachers, admin, students and parents. It's been very successful, as in the last 9 weeks they've reached 5,000 to 7,000.

9. Discussion and Next Steps

- a. Future presentations- Requests? Feel free to email with any ideas.
- b. Impact Workgroups: HOPE@LA.GOV
- c. Future HOPE Council Meetings:

Th. June 8, 2023, 9-11 am

Th. Sep. 7th, 2023, 9-11 am

Th. Dec. 7th, 2023, 9-11 am

10. Adjourned at 10:44am