
BARRY GLASSMAN
HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE



BILLY BONIFACE
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 19, 2016

For more information, contact:

Cindy Mumby

410-340-5376

camumby@harfordcountymd.gov

Harford's Glassman Administration Wins 2016 Achievement Award from National Association of Counties for Anti-Heroin Efforts

BEL AIR, Md., (July 19, 2016) - The administration of County Executive Barry Glassman has been recognized by NACo, the National Association of Counties, for Harford County's extensive efforts to reduce heroin use and overdose. This is the Glassman administration's second NACo Achievement Award for 2016 after winning in the Planning category for Track-it: The Planning & Zoning Activity Tracker.

Heroin abuse is a national epidemic and a major public health problem; the drug's impact in Harford County is both alarming and widespread. In 2015, the county had 201 opiate overdoses, 44 of which were fatal. In 2014, the number of local babies born drug exposed rose by 45%; and a 2013 survey found that children as young as 11 were experimenting with heroin. Despite false perceptions, Harford County's heroin overdose victims are predominately white males in their 20s and 30s. Many of these addictions began after injury or surgery when prescription painkillers ran out and heroin was used as a low cost substitute. Lastly, more than half of overdoses have occurred in the county's affluent suburbs, and abuse is on the rise in rural communities.

In response, the Glassman administration began its fiscal year 2016 "Initiative to Reduce Heroin Use and Overdose" with three basic goals: to significantly increase awareness about heroin use and overdose; to overcome geographic and demographic stereotypes, and to develop partnerships among key stakeholders including the Harford County Sheriff's Office, Harford County Public Schools, the Harford County Health Department, the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center, and treatment providers.

Start the Conversation: Increase Awareness and Overcome False Perceptions

The Glassman administration's Office of Drug Control Policy, along with community partners, undertook a variety of efforts to alert students, their parents, and others about heroin's local impact.

A speaking tour of Harford County middle schools reached more than 2,500 parents with the message that heroin is cheap, available in many forms, and being introduced to middle school youth in every zip code. A locally produced play entitled "Addicted" demonstrated in stark terms the impact of drug and alcohol abuse and was seen by more than 1,800 students and other citizens. In all, over 266 presentations and trainings were provided reaching over 28,000 individuals including health teachers and nurses, bus drivers, faith-based organizations, and businesses.

Drug take-back events were held to encourage the safe disposal of unwanted prescription medications, with over 8,000 pounds of medications collected. In addition, 1,000 "Ready for Help" cards with resource information were distributed to overdose victims; and an annual drug symposium drew 278 citizens and professionals in the field of drug prevention and treatment.

A highly visible awareness campaign was launched countywide with billboards, bus advertising and public service announcements that intentionally excluded visual scare tactics, which have proven ineffective. Instead, the campaign featured a clean-cut 11-year-old boy with the message: "Harford County kids are trying drugs at age 11. Talk to your kids before heroin does." The campaign included videos, a powerful Father's Day radio spot, and attracted additional TV and print media coverage. Altogether, the campaign's reach exceeded 4.3 million impressions.

Filling the Treatment Gaps

Tracking of overdose victims in Harford County revealed that many had received treatment but later relapsed. To fill gaps in the post recovery system, the Glassman administration and partnering organizations launched a series of initiatives.

Through its Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP), the administration funded a peer recovery coach coordinator position for the nonprofit Addiction Connections Resource, and funded training for 14 peer recovery coaches connecting individuals post-treatment with services and employment opportunities. ODCP is also working with the Harford County Bar Foundation to help individuals in recovery address issues involving child custody and record expungement, and with Susquehanna Workforce Network to provide employment and resume assistance. A

“Second Chance Job Fair” is planned for later this year. Project Healthy Delivery was developed with the medical center, treatment provider Ashley Addiction Treatment, and the nonprofit Birthrite to create a one-stop-shop for pregnant women suffering from addiction. Wrap-around services include intensive outpatient treatment, prenatal service, transportation assistance; help with insurance, parenting, health and wellbeing programs, and incentives to remain in the program.

Funding for these efforts by the Glassman administration totaled \$100,000 in fiscal year 2016, representing the first county funding for treatment in Harford County history.

“I would like to thank NACo for recognizing our efforts, and my Director of Community Services Amber Shrodes, ODCP Manager Joe Ryan, and their team for their outstanding work,” said County Executive Barry Glassman. “Together with our community partners, we are fighting this scourge with treatment and support to free those who are in heroin’s deadly grasp. We are also shining a spotlight in every zip code because we are committed to prevention and raising awareness especially among our youth. Heroin tries to hide in the shadows, but we will not let that happen in Harford County.”



###