THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024

COBB & DOUGLAS PUBLIC HEALTH

Healthier lives. Healthier community.

Thank you to the following partners for participating in this annual update:

Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH)

Cobb Collaborative

Cobb County Sheriff's Office (CCSO)

Cobb County Superior Court/Accountability Courts

Community Assistance Referral and Education Services, Cobb County Fire and Emergency (Cobb CARES)

Davis Direction/The Zone

Georgia Prevention Project (GPP)

Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

In Search of Wellness

Kennesaw State University (KSU)

Kennesaw State University Center for Young Adult Addiction and Recovery (KSU CYAAR)

Marietta Police Department

Ridgeview

The Extension

Wellstar Health System

GOAL #1 Conduct general awareness activities and provide targeted education to students, patients, families, and the health care industry on substance misuse, prevention, the opioid epidemic, and available resources in Cobb County

1.1 Provide age-appropriate, evidence-based, culturally competent education and prevention initiatives for students, families, school nurses, and the community

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Increased number of education and prevention programs effectively educating thousands of individuals. ***- Kennesaw State University CYAAR***

Taught 50 students about substance misuse prevention efforts as part of their training to work with youth.
- KSU

Expanded youth programming in Cobb County. In 2024 we established a new partnership with YELLS (Youth Empowerment through Learning, Leading, and Serving, Inc.), a community organization in Marietta, GA who works to empower youth voice. We've partnered with them through our TAC (Teen Action Council) Program to provide general substance use prevention and educational programming for their middle and high school youth.
- Georgia Prevention Project

1.2 Increase awareness about community resources, including for safe storage, treatment, and recovery

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Conducted 36 Community Resiliency Model trainings, engaging 547 individuals. ***- Cobb Collaborative***

Provided two targeted education seminars to the community on substance use and opioid use prevention in 2024. ***- In Search of Wellness***

Engaged with community members (especially homeless individuals) affected by opioid misuse to provide education on the risks of opioid addiction, discuss available treatment options, and connect them with supportive resources for recovery. ***- Marietta Police Department***

Continued the Behavioral Health Opioid Pathway Initiative which includes education for patients on identified supports on Fentanyl and Naloxone. ***- Wellstar Health System***

Held Serial Opioid Survival (SOS) meetings, printed seasonal Recovery Zone Magazines with educational articles, facilitated learning in the COPE House trailer which illustrates a teenage bedroom and bathroom by training parents in specific addict behaviors, promoted safe storage and safe disposal of prescribed medications, and spoke publicly in a variety of settings regarding awareness of the opioid problem and the solutions to address it. ***- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone***

Conducted speakers series designed to increase community engagement on critical behavioral health issues. ***- The Extension***

Conducted several opioid awareness and safe storage/disposal seminars for Senior Services. Participated in several community outreach events to talk about the overdose crisis and safe medication storage and disposal. ***- CDPH***

1.3 Provide training and support to area physicians on prescribing alternatives to opioids for pain management

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Consulted with area physicians and other medical professionals on the healthcare needs of their clients, including the need to prescribe alternatives to opioids for pain management. ***- The Extension***

Worked with the Opioid Response Network and Wellstar to produce a training on safer prescribing practices for prescribers. ***- CDPH***

GOAL #2 Utilize an integrated collaborative means to address opioid misuse

2.1 Ensure community partners work together to increase synergy and maximize resources

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Partnered with Whole and Health You and Dr. Shonali Saha to provide physician services for medication for addiction treatment to eligible participants in the programs. Also partnered with Genoa Healthcare to provide vouchers for prescriptions for Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT), and mental health medications.
- Cobb County Superior Court /Accountability Courts

Provided over 50 participants with MAT services and prescriptions for opioid use disorders. Worked with partners to receive housing options and long-term treatment for many patients. ***- Ridgeview***

Facilitated the Recovery Roundtable Leadership Council (RRLC) which ensures that community leaders work together to eliminate the duplication of services. We have created a partnership of affiliates who provide referral services and have placed all of them in a resource packet.
- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

Shares medical staff with Ridgeview Institute and WellStar Health System, the two other leading healthcare providers in the area. ***- The Extension***

Collaborated with The Center for Young Adult Addiction and Recovery at Kennesaw State University to provide medicine safes for students on campus.
- Georgia Prevention Project

Have hospital and court navigators who complete assessments in the jail and hospital working to assist and identify those who require mental health services, MAT services as well as other services, including 12-step and community connectiveness.
-Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

Facilitated the Cobb Opioid Strategic coalition, which encourages county partners to leverage each other in their activities. ***- CDPH***

GOAL #3 Increase access to treatment and recovery support services

3.1 Facilitate seamless transition between treatment facilities

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Intensive case management services connect participants with recovery support services in the community.
- Cobb County Superior Court/Accountability Courts

All ED staff are educated to refer patients experiencing overdose to the Zone and other appropriate community-based resources when discharging home.
- Wellstar Health System

Works with jails, detoxification facilities, and homeless shelters to ensure access to treatment is available to individuals from those organizations including offering transportation when necessary. ***- The Extension***

Employed discharge planner to help link those leaving incareration with resources upon release.
- Cobb County Sheriff's Office & Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

Coordinated care with other clinics, community coordination has been successful with varying referral sources including courts, probation, DFCS, hospitals, medical and housing. ***- Highland Rivers Behavioral Health***

3.2 Increase number of overdose victims who access treatment after an overdose or encounter with EMS or law enforcement

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Worked with EMS, law enforcement and those in the criminal justice system to ensure treatment is provided as an alternative to traditional punitive measures that do not address the needs of the individuals after an overdose.
- The Extension

Provided leave behind kits including naloxone and resources to community members who had recently experienced an overdose.
- Cobb CARES Team (Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services) and Davis Direction/The Zone

3.3 Increase the ability of low-income individuals to access treatment, particularly Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Promote Findhelp Georgia, Findhelp Cobb and Findhelp Wellstar which includes some treatment and recovery support services. ***- Cobb Collaborative***

Offered virtual treatment to reach people with transportation barriers.
- In Search of Wellness

Covered the costs of substance use disorder/mental health treatment for participants in Vet Court, Mental Health Court and Drug Treatment Court.
- Cobb County Superior Court - Accountability Courts

Increased the number of residents receiving help for addiction/mental illness through the use of Cobb ARPA funds. Have recommended more opioid use disorder patients receive the Sublocade shot. ***- Ridgeview***

Provides Uber to essential services and also provides bus passes for Cobb Link. Was able to get a donor for prescribed medication that was unaffordable to some for MAT. Working alongside a local pharmacy, we have been able to help our participants with this.
- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

Continued programs for three types of American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Level Groups. Continued Women's and Men's residential facilities, Crisis Stabilization Units (CSUs) and Behavioral Health Crisis Unit for stabilization for mental health and substance use detox, and peer programs.
- Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

3.4 Expand screening and referral programming in a variety of settings.

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

The Zone Recovery Coach continued his position as a part of the CARES Team. He rides with the team every week to make connections and offer resources to those who have recently overdosed. This year, the team had 101 screening referrals, made 47 contacts, and 37 leave behind kits were handed out to clients or family members of clients which is a 79% acceptance of information. Continued to gain partners offering services such as obtaining vital documents, food pantries, sober living, treatment facilities, detox facilities, and mental health treatment.
- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

Through various outreach initiatives, including health fairs and working with organizations providing essential services to those experiencing homelessness, provides initial screening and referrals as appropriate to individuals seeking help in a variety of settings. ***- The Extension***

Additional Actions-

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Increased number of students served through recovery support services and refined services to meet student needs on campus.

- Kennesaw State University CYAAR

Purchased a shower and laundry truck. We also offer these services as part of the CARES Team and through street outreach. Trained 143 Nationally Designated Recovery Coaches, and 57 Mental Health Coaches. We have made our community better by putting these coaches out into different areas and in different fields of opportunity. We also had a total of 55,289 visits to The Zone in 2024. We also served 44,121 meals to our participants.

- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

GOAL #4 Reduce fatal overdoses and other harms related to opioid use

4.1 Increase public access to safe prescription medication disposal

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Worked with local pharmacies to automatically give Dispose RX with any opioid prescription. ***- CDPH***

Distributed Dispose RX at local high schools and at community events/presentations and upon request. Promoted National Take Back Days in our community through our Social Media outlets.
- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

4.2 Increase access to naloxone and fentanyl test strips

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Provided specialized naloxone trainings to community members and special organizations. ***- Kennesaw State University CYAAR***

All uniformed patrol officers have been fully trained in the use of Narcan and carry it while on duty. ***- Marietta Police Department***

Provided information on how and where to access naloxone for patients presenting to the ED with a confirmed or suspected opioid overdose.
- Wellstar Health System

Trained 241 in administration of Narcan at The Zone and 282 Narcan units have been handed out at The Zone in 2024. Two Hundred people have received resources from The Zone Street Outreach Team in 2024.
- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone

Distributes backpacks that include Narcan, fentanyl test strips, and a list of community resources. These kits are made available to individuals served by the organization, their families, and others in the community. ***- The Extension***

Provided re-entry kits including naloxone to some leaving incarceration.
- Cobb County Sheriff's Office

Provided leave behind kits including naloxone and resources to community members who had recently experienced an overdose.
- Cobb Cares Team (Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services) and Davis Direction/The Zone

Provided naloxone to clients. ***- Highland Rivers Behavioral Health***

Provided naloxone and naloxone training to community members through various community outreach events. ***- CDPH***

4.3 Reduce rates of SUD-related infectious diseases via syringe access program

Actions/Responsible Organizations:
No progress

GOAL #5 Increase partner access to data for decision-making.

5.1 Enhance surveillance program and data collection efforts to better characterize the scope of the opioid crisis in Cobb County

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Use Biospatial to find overdose clusters for informing harm reduction agencies. ***- CDPH***

Collect extensive and valuable data in the Case Management System. Connexis Cloud(R) which includes multiple data elements used to provide accurate reporting on population served and outcomes.
- Cobb County Superior Court /Accountability Courts

Analyze Cobb Partnership for Assistance Treatment and Health (PATH) (Cobb County Police Department) and Cobb CARES Team data to assess the nature and type of cases they respond to. Assist them with better resource utilization decisions.
- KSU

Explored more effective ways to track success of clients that completed the program. ***- The Extension***

5.2 Enhance surveillance program and data collection efforts to determine and characterize the status of the regional supply of illegal drugs

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Officers in the field are reporting back to the RRLC, keeping the leaders abreast of our regional supply. ***- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone***

GOAL #6 Support diversion programs for nonviolent drug offenders.

6.1 Expand diversion of people with SUD who are nonviolent from the criminal justice system to substance use treatment

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Continued their diversion program which provides treatment, rehabilitation, and supervision to criminal-justice involved individuals in need of SUD/MH treatment in lieu of incarceration. ***- Cobb County Superior Court/Accountability Courts***

Graduated nineteen (19) people through the Zoned for ReEntry Internship class in 2024. ***- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone***

Provided community service opportunities through the Pardons and Parole Board for non violent drug offenders. ***- Davis Direction Foundation/The Zone***

6.2 Ensure that therapeutic courts and detention centers promote evidence-based treatment including MOUD

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Analyzed first responder data to identify these cases and make recommendations for types of follow-up care that can be used.
- KSU

Continued on a small scale, a program called The Extension Inside (TEI) to provide assessments and psychoeducation to adults in the Cobb County Adult Detention Center who seek help with substance use disorder and who will likely experience homelessness upon their release.
- The Extension

Has fully licensed diversion navigators in the courts who are assessing for substance use disorder, mental health and case manager in the jail working full-time to address substance use/mental health needs of those in the legal system.
- Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

GOAL #7 Reduce the presence and availability of illicit opioids in Cobb County

7.1 Reduce presence and availability of illicit opioids in Cobb County

Actions/Responsible Organizations:

Assigns officers to local and federal drug task forces dedicated to detecting and disrupting large-scale drug manufacturing, transportation, and distribution networks. Additionally, MPD operates an internal Crime Interdiction Unit (CIU) that actively investigates and works to eliminate street-level drug operations. The department's active involvement in these operations has led to the successful disruption of numerous drug manufacturing, trafficking, distribution, and sales networks across the metro Atlanta area, significantly impacting the safety and well-being of residents in the City of Marietta and Cobb County.

- Marietta Police Department