



Connections to Heal

FINAL REPORT

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Background

During the summer of 2018—the Milwaukee City-County Heroin, Opioid Cocaine (CCHOC) Task Force hosted multiple community engagement sessions throughout Milwaukee County to gain insight from all stakeholders to inform the direction of its work. A key aspect highlighted from the community was the need to enhance collaboration between community-based initiatives and government agencies. It is essential that government entities like the CCHOC Task Force support various local initiatives by leveraging its political influence and resources.

Residents also provided insight on strategies to support long-term recovery of those experiencing addiction. The community indicated that more components to recovery programs and efforts should include; housing support, employment, food and nutrition, financial management, legal assistance, peer support, among others.

Event Overview

To act on the community's request—the CCHOC Task Force supported a community opioid awareness event hosted by the City of Milwaukee Health Department. On June 24, 2019, “Connections to Heal” occurred at Bradley Tech High School located at 700 S 4th St, Milwaukee, WI 53204. The design of the event was for those experiencing addiction and those affected by substance abuse. Various aspects of the event included: storytelling over a meal, naloxone training and distribution, prevention and harm reduction, medication drop-off, and access to counselors, peer support, and treatment providers.

Many factors influence one's ability to maintain sobriety. Connections to Heal provided an opportunity and safe space to those impacted by substance abuse to connect with resources and people to address various aspects of themselves that need healing. The event goes beyond connecting people to resources—Connections to Heal links various resources to one another, resulting in a comprehensive approach. Beyond the traditional prevention and treatment resources/enrollment; this event connected housing, parenting, employment, harm reduction, and food resources together for individuals. All of which fall into the social determinants of health.

Planning

The event is modeled after a project based in Dayton, Ohio known as “Conversations for Change.” City of Milwaukee staff connected with those Project Leads to gain insight on their efforts and solidify promising practices. The location of the event occurred in an area of the City of Milwaukee with the high concentration of overdose death. The location accounted for accessible transportation and was somewhat central within the county boundaries. Beyond the geographical location—the event took place in a school, which was a welcoming environment for the audience.

Outreach

Community Partners: Agency and community initiatives were engaged based on organizations which provide direct services to those seeking treatment or are in recovery and involved in local substance abuse prevention coalition efforts. Most of these agencies have been engaged in the CCHOC Task Force effort or have collaborated with the Milwaukee Health Department to some extent. Other agencies contacted were based on other individuals' needs to maintain sobriety and were typically done through a referral or existing partnership.

Participants

Agencies who serve those experiencing addiction or seeking relevant resources promoted the event to their clients and networks. Flyering was implemented in the nearby community including; churches, convenience stores, gas stations and relevant community organizations.

Activities

These are activities we did, with suggestions on how to make the event run smoothly:

Storytelling Meal: It is important to ensure there is a quality meal provided to account the audience. The meal was an opportunity for participants to share their story of addiction or the impact of substance abuse. Identifying 2-3 individuals in advance ensures this component flows smoothly.

Naloxone Training: Those conducting this training will need an estimated count of participants to account for the quantity of Narcan. Ideally, trainers should be prepared with presentation and any technology needed.

Counseling/Treatment Enrollment: This aspect of the event should occur in an intimate setting so participants can share personal information. Ideally, agencies should be prepared with Wi-Fi or hot spot capabilities.

Wake Up Room: It is important to include this activity in a separate space as it is aimed at parents and guardians. "For ages, 21+" was used on promotion materials.

Resource Fair: Vendors were required to confirm participation to account for appropriate space. This confirmation included all logistics including table and chair count, and access to building details. In addition, vendors were organized based on the type of the resources provided to accommodate the audience.

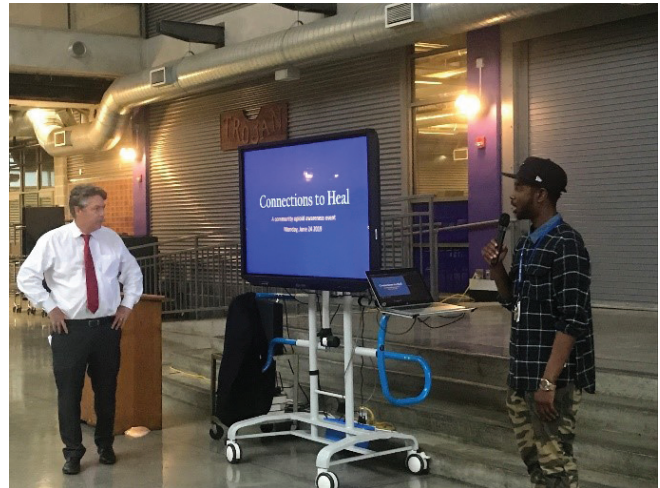
Layout

Due to the many components of the event, a multiple purpose space was ideal. Participants received an event flow document [Appendix B] for guidance. Specific room layouts were needed for each aspect:

Storytelling Meal → Cafeteria
Naloxone Training → Library
Counseling/Treatment Enrollment → Classroom
Wake Up Room → Classroom
Resource → Foyer/Hallway

Implementation

The event began at 5:00 p.m. when participants signed in at the registration table. Participants were welcomed with brief remarks from event organizers and sponsors while they enjoyed dinner provided by Lisa Kaye catering. The meal consisted of three types of pastas including a vegetarian option. During the meal, participants were given the opportunity to share personal stories of addiction. Next, the two 45-minute breakout sessions began, which included Narcan training and distribution, the Wake Up Room, and private sessions with counselors and providers. Participants were able to rotate through all sessions. Each training occurred in separate areas with a presentation room layout.



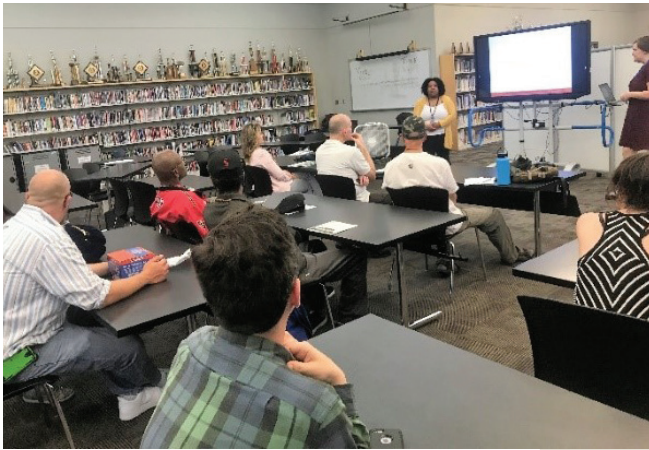
Naloxone Training

A major harm reduction strategy to reduce the number of overdose deaths involves naloxone. The City of Milwaukee Health Department conducted the Narcan training. Participants learned about the impact of opioid death on the community. The training also included signs to identify an overdose and steps needed to respond to an overdose. These instructions included dialing 911 and how to administer nasal spray Narcan. Participants were able to ask questions and receive a free Narcan kit.



Wake Up Room

As the Narcan training occurred, a “Wake Up” room session was conducted by the South Milwaukee Health Department (SMHD) to learn how drugs are being hidden in adolescent rooms and what to look for. Parents and guardians learn drug trends and various ways to identify substance abuse amongst teens. Participants were exposed to a variety of drug paraphernalia disguised as miscellaneous items. SMHD provided participants with informational materials for any follow-up resources needed.



Treatment and Benefit Enrollment

In a private setting, resources from United Community Center (UCC), Milwaukee Health Department (MHD), and Community Medical Services (CMS) were available. Attendees were able to sign up for benefits or receive referral information. UCC provided Spanish and English substance use treatment services. MHD offered healthcare enrollment services through its Community Healthcare Access Program (CHAP). CMS offered resources for an outpatient service for addiction treatment.

Resource Fair

Throughout the event, a resource fair occurred. This component consisted of various vendors [Appendix A] and provided an array of materials and information the community identified as a need. Resources varied from prevention education to employment to skill training resources. The fair also included sober living, addiction support and parenting resources.



Results/Outcomes

Thirty-five community members participated in the Connections to Heal event. A follow-up survey was emailed for event feedback. Participants gave feedback through an online survey and phone interviews. Ten participants provided event feedback. Based on observations, more women participated than men did, and there were also very few participants that attended as families. Respondents identified the most valuable event promotion technique as email and word of mouth. The majority of respondents rated the event an overall five (Figure 1). All respondents indicated “yes” when asked if they would attend the event again. Other respondents indicated the following as additional resources to be included in future events: “Housing,” “Support groups of addicts,” and “More resources for women who suffer from substance abuse or women with children.” The naloxone training had the highest praise with participants indicating it as their favorite aspect. However, other participants indicated that more resources were needed, for example, one participant mentioned “more vendors, more variety of vendors”.

Of the twenty vendors that participated—eight provided event feedback. This feedback was collected with an online survey and phone interviews. The overall rating on the quality of the event was rated four (Figure 2). All vendors who responded indicated being very likely to participate in future events. Feedback from vendors indicated that logistics of space was an issue, for example, four people indicated the temperature was too hot. Some additional feedback includes:

- “The event was well organized and allowed ample time for participants to engage with vendors while still attending sessions. The food was delicious.”
- “Please continue to give members of the recovering community the opportunity to spread hope by sharing their inspiring story of recovery!”

The majority of respondents rated Connections to Heal with an overall score of 5.

Figure 1: Audience overall rating of Connections to Heal event: 1=lowest 5=highest



Figure 2: Vendor overall rating of Connections to Heal event: 1=lowest 5=highest



Lessons Learned

Connections to Heal is embedded in a model that is sustainable and replicable; with this approach, various entities can implement this event in diverse communities.

As a pilot event—there were many lessons learned and identified areas of improvement. Having access or the linkage to appropriate resources is essential. This aspect provides more value to participants. For example, organizations should be willing to receive participant’s resumes to assist in effective connections to employment opportunities. Housing is a major factor in maintaining sobriety, and a strong presence of these resources is needed.

Other models occur 4-6 times a year and have been well attended and well received. Connections to Heal should be held frequently—as often as bi-monthly to quarterly. It is important to maintain this event and give participants multiple opportunities to attend when possible. Having multiple events throughout the year allows for more individuals to participate as needed within their journey to recovery.

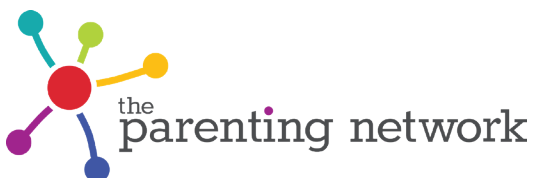
To sustain this event, scaling down to essential components will accommodate the length of event and ensure quality of the resources. Aspects to maintain include benefit enrollment, storytelling meal, incentives, structured feedback, and intentional counseling and treatment services.

Having ample time to promote the event is a necessary component for effective use of community member and organization time.

Furthermore, effective promotion is another factor of event success. Various outreach methods should include social media, mass email, flyering, phone calls and engaging all community partners who provide direct service to the targeted audience.

Lastly, for quality improvement a structured feedback session should occur as a closing aspect. This approach allows for useful feedback from participants; this insight can be collected using a survey [Appendix C].

Appendix A: Vendors/Organizations



Appendix B: Event Flow

Connections to Heal

Monday, June 24th, 2019 | 700 S. 4th Street | 5-7pm
Event Flow

5:00pm | Registration | Common Space



After registering, enjoy the food. This is an opportunity for you to connect and share personal stories. During the meal, you will be welcomed and hear from others experiencing addiction and those impacted by substance abuse.

5:30pm & 6:15pm | Trainings |

Library & Classroom #1



Learn how to save a life from an opioid overdose

Naloxone training & distribution is being conducted in the library by the **City of Milwaukee Health Department**.

Do you know if your child is experiencing substance abuse?

This session is designed for parents and guardians to gain an understanding of the signs and trends of drug abuse amongst adolescents. A simulation and training of a replica bedroom as known as the “wake up room” is being led by the **City of South Milwaukee Health Department** in Classroom #1. *Only ages 21+ are allow to participate in replica room training.*

Two 45 minute sessions are occurring to give participants an opportunity to rotate between both trainings.

5:30pm | Treatment, Support & Benefits | Classroom #2



For those seeking treatment, peer support, counseling or access to benefits stop by Classroom #2 to understand where you are in your addiction and learn about treatment options with **Community Medical Services, and United Community Center**. Sign up for healthcare with the City of Milwaukee Health Department.

5:30pm | Resources Fair | Foyer



A variety of resources related to prevention, treatment, housing, and employment are available throughout the event in the foyer. Vendors will include; **Milwaukee County Behavioral Health, AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, Take Back My Meds, Safe & Sound, Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, 4th Dimension Sobriety, Froedtert Health, The Parenting Network, Beyond Addiction, Hunger Task Force, Clean Slate, Nar-Anon, Roots MKE, Housing Authority, Employ MKE, Kids Matter Inc., United Community Center, Progressive Community Health Center, and others.**

Appendix C: Sample Survey

Age: _____

Gender (circle one): Male Female Other: _____

1.) Why did you decide to come to Conversation for Change today? (Check only one, the most important)

- For Narcan information/training/kit.
- To help a family member or friend.
- For my own recovery.
- A provider encouraged me to come (VA, FOA, support group, etc.).
- I wanted to learn about addiction.
- For religious purposes (God, the church, etc.).
- I wanted the gift card.
- My probation officer told me to come.
- I saw an ad/flyer/mailer about the event.
- Other: _____

2.) Are you in recovery? (Circle one) Yes No

If YES, how long have you been in recovery? _____

3.) Have you ever attended a Conversation for Change event before? (Circle one) Yes No

If YES, how many times?

4.) Which of these best describes you? (Check only one)

- I am seeking resources and information for myself.
- I am here to support someone else.

5.) What type of health insurance do you have? (Circle all that apply)

Medicaid/Caresource Private None Other: _____

6.) Which of the following activities did you participate in while you were here? (Check all that apply)

- Talked to the Mediation Center
- Talked to a Trained Peer Support
- Talked to the Chemical Dependency Nurse
- Talked to a Treatment Provider
- Narcan training (Project DAWN)
- Other: _____

7.) Were these activities helpful? (Circle one) Yes No

If YES, how?

- I received Narcan training.
- I received information from different providers.
- I was able to learn more about my recovery.
- I learned about addictions and what I can do to help others.
- Other: _____

If NO, why? Please explain: _____

8.) If you would like to be contacted and connected to someone for further help in your recovery:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please check the services below that you need help with & leave your information if you'd like us to link you to the available resources.

Check all that apply

- Services
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Connect with a Peer Support Specialist
- Housing Services
- Clothing voucher referrals
- Food Access
- Employment
- Other (please explain)

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Appendix D: Pictures of Event



*Picture 1
Community members eating Lisa
Kaye Catering while Alderman
Murphy welcomes everyone to
Connections to Heal*



*Picture 2
MPD Officer, John, Alderman Perez and MPD Officer
at the Take Back My Meds table*



*Picture 3
Resource Fair*

Suggested Citation

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