

# CITY-COUNTY HEROIN, OPIOID, AND COCAINE TASK FORCE MEETING

February 9, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

In attendance:	Michael Murphy	Michael Lappen
	Karen Loebel	CoryAnn St. Marie-Carls
	Christine Westrich	E. Brooke Lerner
	Marisol Cervera	Michael Macias

The previous meeting's minutes were reviewed and approved.

An update was provided by John Richards, Executive Director for the medication take-back program. The key to prevention is getting opioid medication out of circulation. His coalition is made up of 14 community organizations working to collect unused medication. They continue to work toward expanding drop box location. There are currently mail-back envelopes at all 30 fire stations in Milwaukee. There is still more work to do. The goal is to have a drop box at every pharmacy. The coalition wants to make it as easy as possible for people to safely dispose of unused medicine. The group is also working on its communication plan. It has some preliminary funding from MMSD and needs approximately \$150,000 per year to get out the message regarding safe disposal. The communication plan is focused on empowering people and protecting Lake Michigan. Flushed medication cannot be treated out of the water, and it ends up in the lake.

United HealthCare responded to the Task Force's invitation with a letter, which Ald. Murphy received at 5:00 p.m., February 8.

Dr. Selahatten Kurter of Westbrook Clinic spoke regarding United HealthCare's policies and the effect on his patients. Robert Miranda of Advocate expressed his displeasure with the letter from United HealthCare. Dr. Kurter stated that it is his mission to make sure addicted people have access to treatment. Insurance companies appear to not recognize the severity of rising heroin and fentanyl use. United HealthCare has limited access to intensive outpatient treatment, which has proven more successful than detox programs. Outpatient treatment is more successful because of the continuum of care. United HealthCare discontinued Medicaid coverage of this type of treatment with no notice or reason. Dr. Kurter had patients crying in his office because they could not afford treatment. One of those patients overdosed. United HealthCare did reinstate coverage, but only after the effects were felt for many patients. United HealthCare claimed there was confusion about billing codes, but Dr. Kurter states this is not true. Medicaid discontinued coverage of suboxone treatment of one of his patients, a mother of two small children, who had been clean for one year and was at risk of relapse. The restrictive drug treatment policy only allows drug-testing 18 times per year, yet it is

malpractice for doctors not to test their patients. If the insurer does not pay for these tests, providers are hamstrung. These arbitrary limits hinder providers. United HealthCare has different contracts and will have restrictive contracts that hinder certain types of providers. It is the only insurance company that restricts types of providers from administering care. This is both for commercial and Medicaid coverage.

Ald. Murphy asked why there has not been a law suit against United HealthCare for this. Dr. Kurter stated these restrictions are for outpatient clinics. These services are still paid for in the hospital setting, so there has not been as large of an outcry. Ald. Murphy invited Dr. Kurter to submit his written response to United HealthCare's letter to the Task Force. Dr. Kurter sent a letter to United HealthCare's Wisconsin CEO and did not receive a response. Advocate needs the Task Force for leveraging pressure on the insurance companies to listen. Marisol Cervera stated that United HealthCare is not allowing community providers to enter their network.

Ald. Murphy stated today was going to be the last Task Force meeting, but based on this concern, concerns raised by Paul Mosina, and other concerns, the Task Force will be extended to the end of the year.

Ald. Murphy envisions the Fire Department playing a larger role in addressing the epidemic. If Fire Departments had not administered Narcan to people, he wonders what the death toll would have been. Last year, just one fire station administered Narcan for 204 response calls. Contrast that to just one fire being serviced in that same year.

Ald. Murphy stated the Task Force is adding a law enforcement member.

Michael Lappen updated the Task Force with efforts at the County. The Behavioral Health Division is working on securing funds from the State and has an application in for supplemental funds. There is an opportunity for an additional \$250,000. Within one month, the Behavioral Health Division spent the money that was allocated for the whole year. Dr. Lerner stated that she is working to develop a formalized system to link people coming in for services with the Behavioral Health Division. Narcan administration is the perfect opportunity to link people to Behavioral Health services. The County applied for a grant for an opioid death investigator position. A Ph.D. student from University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee is exploring death investigation for a dissertation. This study will inform future treatments.

Mayor St. Marie-Carls stated the Intergovernmental Cooperative Council is looking to schedule an information and awareness kickoff event in the spring. This should coincide with the City's information program. There are plans to provide training on the wake-up call room, which is a portable trailer that shows signs to look out for when a person has an addiction. West Allis has a wake-up call room in its high school. Oak Creek has one

for the Eagle Scout program. Mayor St. Marie-Carls wants Hartland's trailer for the events. If anyone is interested in the training, he or she should contact Mayor St. Marie-Carls.

Tiffinie Cobb of the City's Health Department presented a review of the work plan draft. She seeks feedback from Task Force members on the draft. A final draft should be ready for the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 27 at 9:00 a.m.

Members are encouraged to forward agenda items to Staff Assistant Chris Lee or Chair Ald. Michael Murphy.

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