

# Addiction Services Council



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Hamilton County Mental Health  
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**Lighting the Way to Recovery**

## Testimony

Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee

March 14, 2017

Presented by: Nan Franks

Addiction Services Council  
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Thank you for the opportunity to address you all today. It is an honor to share my perspective and experience with our community's opioid epidemic. I will keep my comments brief.

My name is Nan Franks. I am the CEO of the Addiction Services Council, an agency that has served the Greater Cincinnati area since 1949. I was born and raised in Cincinnati and have chosen to raise my children here as well.

As I know you are all painfully aware of Ohio's struggle with heroin and other opiates. Sadly, on November 29, the Columbus Dispatch reported that Ohio now leads the nation in opioid overdose deaths. Melanie Amato, Ohio Department of Health, reported that Ohio is committed to an aggressive and comprehensive approach to combating opiate overdoses. In order to prevent opiate overdoses, we have to reduce the number of Ohioans who use opiates inappropriately by reducing inappropriate medication of pain, stopping the flow of illegal opioids to our neighborhoods, reducing the number of new users and providing treatment and recovery to those already struggling.

In Hamilton County, we have created a response that is more like a web than a network. Partnered on the Hamilton County Heroin Coalition are representatives from local government, public health, law enforcement, and prevention and treatment providers. We receive daily updates on overdose activity and have dramatically increased access to treatment. Data sharing and a commitment to transparency from all allow our response to be increasingly effective and powerful.

At the center of our community response is our 24/7 addiction helpline, hosted by the Addiction Services Council. The Council has always been committed to providing accurate and objective information to the community, but expanded the service in 2000 to provide assessment and linkage to care when needed. The helpline is the door to treatment for those who are not connected to any system of care. It is the portal to care for families, first responders and healthcare providers.



The helpline does much more than provide simple information or phone numbers. Staffed by trained professionals, callers can expect a competent and compassionate ear, ready to assist in analyzing current concerns and assist in finding solutions. Although focused primarily on Hamilton County, calls from across the state are on the rise as our citizens reach out for help. We pride ourselves on "no voicemail". We are determined that when someone reaches out for help, we will be there.

Many times the path to help is complicated. We provide coaching and support to families worried about a loved one and help navigate the "system" for those who need treatment and recovery and are struggling to find it on their own. Our team has built strong relationships with area providers and has "real time" information on treatment availability. We know which providers take what insurance and who can provide subsidized care for those without resources. We stay with the person until they are successfully placed, removing obstacles to treatment along the way. (flow chart attached)

The number of calls requiring significant help and intervention has grown. Our calls average 1500 per month. Our number is given out by law enforcement and EMS at the time of an OD and by area emergency departments. We have worked to increase public awareness that help is available. Last quarter we successfully placed 275 people who could not access care on their own, into treatment.

We are thrilled with the response to our service. We are deeply concerned that without additional funding for the increased demand for care, we will be unable to reach those who need us. So far we have managed the strain on the helpline with no additional resources. The Addiction Services Council is also honored to have partnered with law enforcement and EMS in launching two Quick Response Teams in Colerain Township and the City of Norwood. We began our work with Colerain Township in 2015.

Approached by Dan Meloy, Colerain Township public safety Director, we "hit the streets" mid July 2015. The Colerain Quick Response Team is a partnership between law enforcement, EMS and the Addiction Service Council. The goal is to try to intervene on the disease of addiction following an OD. Every individual who survives OD in Colerain is given a "treatment and recovery" resource packet and informed that they will be visited in the next few days by the QRT.

Home visits, with the goal of engaging individuals and families into treatment and recovery, are made to each. Using an approach that values relationship and respect, we work with the individual and family toward the goal of addiction recovery. A highly active engagement process, we see our role as assisting the individual in recognizing that recovery is possible, there is hope and we will walk with you as you get treatment and begin the journey to a healthy life.

In our first 18 months in Colerain, 80% of those people we met with face to face entered treatment. For Colerain Township, this resulted in fewer crimes related to drug use and a 35% decrease in the overall OD rate. I believe it has improved the community's view of law enforcement, evidenced by the number of people who come to the police voluntarily and expressed gratitude for police involvement. Officers, who felt hopeless before, now call and link us to people wanting help.

This past July, we began a "QRT" program in the city of Norwood. Our success in Norwood has been

similar. As news of our work has spread through the media and word of mouth, we have been asked to share the model and provide training in many counties in Ohio, Virginia, Michigan and Kentucky.

Our success is based on relationships. Relationships with individuals and families, community treatment providers, law enforcement, EMS and public health officials. Every community is unique. We have the basic formula for change, but integration and implementation happens at the local level. Funding allocated to our local communities can build this opiate epidemic response infrastructure. Your return of investment will be counted not only in lives saved but in our ability to be prepared for our next epidemic.

In order to meet the growing demand, we need to hire more qualified employees. Specifically, we are requesting \$118,000 to expand our helpline and placement program. In addition, we are requesting an additional \$107,000 to implement another Quick Response Team in another Cincinnati area community.

We are, of course, highly concerned about the loss of revenue related to the Ohio Behavioral Health Redesign and further reductions after the implementation of managed Medicaid in January 2018. Our success and the success of our community response to the crisis of addiction is predicated on a flexible, responsive and efficient response to the needs of our citizens.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you today.