



Senator Chris Murphy and
Senator Richard Blumenthal's

OPIOID EPIDEMIC SUMMIT

*Monday, July 10, 2017
Housatonic Community College
Bridgeport, Connecticut*

A Message From The Senators

Dear Stakeholder,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us and hundreds of others from all over the state to discuss Connecticut's opioid epidemic. As leaders in your community, you are on the front lines of this battle and we were so glad to review the results of your group discussions and now to turn them over to the President's Opioid Task Force for consideration. Moreover, these ideas will help guide our own efforts to address this epidemic here in Connecticut and at the national level.

We know that a few hours on one day is nowhere near enough time to discuss this massive problem and that's why we hope you will continue sharing your ideas and suggestions with us. With the help of your expertise, we believe we can make progress on what has become the greatest public health crisis of our time.

Below is the summary of each group's recommendations. We hope you will review these and share them with stakeholders in your own community who were not able to make the meeting.

While there is no one solution to solving the opioid epidemic, these are certainly a great start and we thank you again for joining us and sharing your knowledge and experience with us.

Thank you,

Senator Chris Murphy & Senator Richard Blumenthal

Question 1

The opioid crisis has had an impact on various agencies and organizations in Connecticut. These include local law enforcement, hospitals, emergency medical personnel, treatment providers, corrections and child protective services. How can these various stakeholders work more collaboratively and efficiently in Connecticut and across the country? What are the barriers to working more collaboratively?

Responses:

- Different databases and electronic medical records not synced statewide/nationwide
- EMS/ER data not shared with primary care physicians
- No universally-accepted best practice standard for treatment
- Incarceration interrupts treatment
- Insurance cost and bureaucracy
- Transportation for clients to and from treatment
- Transitional Programs between detoxed and residential treatment and post-residential treatment
- Communication amongst providers - no central case management system or “one-stop shop” for all services
- Agencies and organizations competing for same pool of funding
- Need for consistency amongst law enforcement between old model of arrest/prosecution vs. referral for treatment

Question 2

Assuming funding was not a barrier, what programs or concepts would you like to see implemented to combat the opioid epidemic?

Responses:

- Increase treatment programs and number of beds in the state
- School-based intervention for those struggling with substance use disorders
- Creation of recovery schools in Connecticut
- Mandate insurance coverage for treatment
- Prevention programs
- Recovery coaching
- Agency collaboration to share best practices
- Expansion of safe disposal boxes in communities
- Allow drop-off boxes at pharmacies
- Expand Narcan training within communities

- Regulate and promote sober houses
- Increase education & awareness campaign
- Parent & family engagement prevention programs
- Crack down on overprescribing by auditing and monitoring state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)
- Increase number of Suboxone prescribers
- Statewide Resource Directory updated in real time

Question 3

What do you think is the best way to stop the opioid crisis – treatment, prevention, education, law enforcement or better prescribing habits from medical professionals? Or is a combination of all these elements?

Responses:

- Treatment most important in short-term, prevention most important in long-term to end the crisis
- Change doctor prescribing practices through legislation of better education
- Enhance re-entry programs
- Increase parent education
- Implement recovery coaching
- Assign caseworkers to overdose patients before they are discharged from hospital
- Create recovery schools
- Name an “Connecticut Opioid Czar” who would be in charge of coordinating stakeholders and initiatives in the state
- Exploring alternatives to opioids for pain management (i.e. medical marijuana)
- Requiring insurers to cover short-term and long-term treatment

Question 4

Opioid addiction can be devastating on an individual and their family, as well as costly to the healthcare and criminal justice systems. As a result, prevention takes on an even greater level of importance. What program or kinds of prevention programs work most effectively?

Responses:

- School-based Programs (starting earlier)
- Safe storage and disposal of prescription drugs
- comprehensive mental health screenings to address co-occurring disorders

- Community Programming for visibility and education
- Combat stigma around mental health and substance use disorders
- Organize “Take Back” days around returning unused and expired prescription drugs
- Institute peer-based (and reimburse for) recovery programs
- Community policing that targets opioid crisis and goes beyond “Just Say No” campaign