

OCTF The Franklin County OPIATE CRISIS TASK FORCE

FOR A COMPLETE GUIDE OF VERIFIED RESOURCES FOR PREGNANT MOMS ADDICTED TO OPIATES, VISIT: coroner.franklincountyoohio.gov

As Franklin County Coroner, Dr. Anahi Ortiz has seen firsthand the ravages of the ongoing opiate epidemic. As the number of overdose deaths skyrocketed, she turned to the community to organize the Franklin County Opiate Crises Task Force with the goal of treating addictions and saving lives through collaboration. The task force is best known for its annual summits that bring groups throughout the county to the same table. It also hosts free workshops, directs pregnant addicts to doctors best able to provide treatment, and distributes the overdose-reversing drug naloxone. Dr. Ortiz explains how the task force came to be and how it's working to raise awareness and reduce overdoses.

WHY DID YOU START THE TASK FORCE?

In 2015, we started seeing more and more people dying of overdoses and there really wasn't any awareness out there that this was occurring. So, I started with a set of meetings with different organizations like law enforcement and Maryhaven; going over the cases of people who have overdosed to see if this is something that we can look at and kind of bring people together and work on this issue.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

The goal is to work on the issue of the opiate crisis, but my personal point is to get more collaboration between the agencies and organizations here that work with addiction so that everyone collaborates and knows what each other is doing and not duplicating efforts. You're more powerful that way.

HOW HAS THE TASK FORCE MADE A DIFFERENCE SO FAR?

I think we've brought a lot of awareness to the community. We've done two major workshops for people who work in addiction or who are just interested and one was on motivational interviewing, which is really about change. It's very important working with people with addiction that you understand what level of change they're ready for, so motivational interviewing is about understanding what level the folks you're working with are

at so they can reach them at that level. If you try to reach them at that level they're not ready for, you're not going to get success that way.

Everything we try to do is free because some of these small agencies don't have money to send their employees and their staff members to training and something like this would have been over \$100 or \$200 to attend per person. The second workshop we had was trauma informed care, which was eye opening for a lot of the 400 people that attended. It was all about understanding how a background of trauma brings addiction and how you have to work with that background of trauma if you want to help someone in addiction.

HOW IS THE TASK FORCE WORKING TO ADDRESS THE PREVALENCE OF PRESCRIPTION OPIATES?

We try to push a lot of awareness and understanding. We as a task force looked into education opportunities for physicians so they understand prescribing habits. We found one that's online that's free or physicians that has all sorts of education opportunities online and also has free mentorship.

Many heroin addicts say their addiction began with prescription pain pills they felt were safe. What are their own chances of becoming addicted?

About 40% of folks in addiction have a genetic predisposition. It doesn't necessarily have to be opiates. It can be alcoholism, any form of tobacco, gambling. They have that genetic predisposition and it just depends on where their life is or leads them whether that's going to form them into addiction. It's about their mentors, their parents, where they go to school, their friends as to whether that genetic predisposition takes a hold of them or not. It's very complicated. It isn't just one thing.



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Dr. Anahi Ortiz,
Franklin County Coroner

