

Garrett County continues developing opioid response

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OAKLAND — The Garrett County Health Department is the lead agency in a partnership to continue planning for the local response to the opioid crisis gripping the country.

The county received a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration which is designed to assist with local planning.

In addition to Garrett County Health Department, the partnership includes Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc., Garrett Regional Medical Center, Mountain Laurel Medical Center and the Area Health Educations Center West.

Money from this one year grant, called the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Planning Grant, will be used to strategically plan the next steps for the county. Focus groups and key informant interviews will be conducted to

address the gaps in the opioid use disorder prevention, treatment and/or recovery services and access to care.

The groundwork was laid for the grant when the Stand Together Garrett County Consortium formed last year. This group is a grassroots effort comprised of concerned citizens and organizations dedicated to addressing drug use and abuse through prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery and education.

The group sponsored town hall meetings in Oakland, Grantsville, Friendsville and Bloomington over the last several months. The members also promoted the screenings of the film "Recovery Boys" as well as the Garrett County Commission for Women's showing of "Heroin(e)."

They used the Overdose Awareness Day in August as a way to announce a "Call to Action," asking community members to get involved by taking a stand against drugs in Garrett County.

The faith and business communities were also engaged and asked what kind of tools they needed to allow them to better help combat the opioid problem. Work within these communities is ongoing.

The consortium developed a speaker's bureau of potential presenters who have life experiences related to or affected by substance abuse and addiction, or who are particularly educated or knowledgeable about substance abuse and addiction in the community. Then they had a training to make sure everyone was conveying the same message about local statistics and overdose information.

This speaker's bureau is available for presentations at community groups on the topics of prevention, treatment, recovery and law enforcement. For more information about the Stand Together Consortium or the speaker's bureau, contact Sadie Liller at 301-334-7730 or 301-895-3111.