

Opiod treatment plans receive \$75,000 grant

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Center for Care Innovations has announced its partners for “Addiction Treatment Starts Here: Community Partnerships” program.

The four participating coalitions are Rx Safe Del Norte, San Diego Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force, SafeRx Santa Cruz County, and San Benito County Opioid Task Force.

According to a statement from Rx Safe Del Norte, the program aims to strengthen coalitions to effectively prevent and treat opioid use disorders.

Each coalition will receive \$75,000 in grant funding, training and coaching to use differing methods to make change, plus peer-support resources.

The program is supported by a grant from the California Department of Health Care Services.

“This is the first cohort under this funding, and our team is excited to be a part of this program,” said Jermaine Brubaker, the facilitator for Rx Safe Del Norte.

“This is an opportunity for the coalition to do a deep dive into our local issues, and come up with local solutions and strategies.”

The facilitator team consists of Brubaker, Barbara Pfeifer with UIHS, and Manuel Saavedra with College of the Redwoods.

The team has attended the first training in Oakland to learn new tools and techniques to bring back to the community.

The Rx Safe Del Norte team said it will be bringing on additional co-facilitators from the recovery community to help with this project. “It is important to involve those with lived experience at many levels in the process,” Brubaker said.

“We also hope to increase the skills in all our facilitation team on how to create system-level changes around complex issues.”

The project will begin with community input over the next couple of months, and will be wrapping up with some strategies by September 2020.

Rx Safe Del Norte began distributing doses of the anti-overdose medication Naloxone in March and conducting training in its use.

Backed by a California Department of Public Health grant, Rx Safe Del Norte obtained nearly 300 doses of Naloxone, sold under the brand name Narcan, and created 140 two-dose kits to distribute during training sessions in Crescent City, Klamath and Smith River.

In a previous interview, Brubaker said private grant dollars through Aegis paid for a trainer to visit Del Norte County to instruct people on administering Naloxone.

An offshoot of a similar coalition focusing on opioid abuse in Humboldt County, the Del Norte group was created through Open Door Community Health Centers, Partnership HealthPlan of California, which administers Medi-Cal benefits locally, and Aegis Treatment Centers, a statewide outfit that operates an opioid addiction treatment clinic in Eureka.

Naloxone is used to help the victim of an opioid overdose long enough to get treatment. Brubaker said the kits the coalition will distribute include two Naloxone doses, because sometimes it takes more than one dose to revive someone experiencing an overdose.

According to the California Department of Public Health, which operates the California Opioid Overdose Surveillance Dashboard, Del Norte County reported four deaths due to opioid-related overdoses in 2017.

The crude mortality rate during 2017 for Del Norte County was 10.9 per 100,000 residents, according to the dashboard. This is a 50-percent increase from 2015, according to the department.

Statewide, California experienced 2,196 deaths due to opioid-related overdoses in 2017, according to the California Opioid Overdose Surveillance Dashboard.

The annual crude mortality rate for the state was 5.6 per 100,000 residents, a 12-percent increase from 2015.

Rx Safe Del Norte is a local coalition whose stated mission is to engage the community in the prevention of opioid use disorders; the reduction of stigma; and the promotion of treatment, recovery and wellness.

Monthly meetings on the third Monday are held from 1-3 p.m. at Open Door Community Health Center.