

LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE ACT 88:
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HEROIN AND OPIOID PREVENTION AND EDUCATION
(HOPE)

Date: December 7, 2023
Time: 9:00 am– 11:00 am
Bienville Building: Room 118
628 N. 4th St, Baton Rouge, LA

Minutes

1. Call to Order at 9:04 am
2. Roll Call

Present:

Chair Dr. James Hussey
Michael Comeaux
Ronald Callegari
Crystal Lewis
Lori Miller
Shelley Edgerton- via zoom
Judge Timothy Marcel- proxy: Johanna Braud
Monica Taylor

Absent:

Dr. Allison Smith
Tavares Walker
Sen. Regina Barrow
Elsie Joanne Brown
Lt. William Bosworth

A quorum was reached.

3. Introduction/Welcome New Members
4. Review and Approval of December 7, 2023 Agenda. Michael Comeaux moved to approve and Crystal Lewis seconded. Agenda approved.
5. Approval of June and September 2023 Minutes. Crystal Lewis moved for both to be approved and Michael Comeaux seconded. Both set of minutes approved.
6. Presentations:
 - a. Draft of HOPE 2023 End of Year Report- Some highlights by Dr. James Hussey include:
 - While nationally, the number and percent change of drug overdose deaths increased, when compared to the previous year, as noted, Louisiana overdose deaths actually declined in calendar year 2022. The total number of opioid pain medication prescriptions also declined in calendar year 2022, as did the number of emergency department and hospital days.

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- Data presents an increase from 107,573 deaths reported for the same period in 2021, an increase of 2,132 deaths, or a **1.9% increase** of deaths nationally during this time, while Louisiana shows a decrease by 2.74%.
- LA Medicaid opioid prescriptions filled in SFY 22 Total Prescriptions Filled: 489,619 (Decreased by 23,833 compared with 2022)
- 46,960 kits distributed through LaSOR 2.0 and 3.0 grants (increased by 18,559)
27,262 individuals educated on use of naloxone through the LaSOR 2.0 and 3.0 grants (Increased by 10,497)

b. OPH LOSI/LODSS Presentation- Nell Wilson provided updated data. Some highlights include:

- Provisional counts of overdose deaths is on a downward trend of 2.6% in first 3 months of 2023.
- From 2021 to 2022, number of drug overdose deaths increased by 5%, but in the first 3 months of 2023, we are trending down at 1% already
- Opioid involved deaths 2021-2022 there is an increase but at a much smaller growth compared to the prior 2 years.
- Number of deaths by specific Opioid Drugs used data shows: Fentanyl is a 25% increase and Heroin is 67% increase from 2021.
- All drug involved deaths trending down for years 2021 and 2022, while trending up for 2019 and 2020
- Rates of prescriptions are 70 per 100 people in 2022, so we are down considering 2021 data show 72 prescription per 100 people. Discussion surrounding this determined this data is reflecting the doctor's address (where prescribed). Another discussion resulted in information that Hospice deaths such as Cancer are not counted. They are screened out and considered terminal/ natural cause of death.
- Number of Toxicology Panels Positive for Mitragynine (Kratom) and Xylazine have decreased in 2022.
- Working on 1st quarter 2023 data for LODSS.

7. General Updates

a. Office of Behavioral Health –

Suboxone Access Issues

Dr. James Hussey presented on barriers:

- Suboxone is a Schedule III controlled substance by the DEA

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- Pharmacies and pharmacists have a responsibility and legal duty to ensure the validity of prescriptions for all controlled substances before dispensing.
- DEA guidelines indicate that a pharmacist who deliberately ignores a questionable prescription when there is reason to believe it was not issued for a legitimate medical purpose (i.e., diversion) may be prosecuted for knowingly and intentionally distributing controlled substances.
- Buprenorphine dispensing is also governed by more restrictive state laws that regulate pharmacy practice and pharmacist dispensing of controlled substances, particularly opioids. These regulations vary by state and are enforced by the state board of pharmacy for each state
- Federal regulations do not impose specific limits on the quantity of buprenorphine a pharmacy can order, the DEA requires all suppliers to monitor pharmacy orders of controlled substances through the Suspicious Orders Report System (SORS) centralized database
- Pharmacies ordering large quantities of buprenorphine to meet the growing prescription demand may be flagged by wholesalers and distributors as suspicious when aggregated pharmacy orders of opioid products, including buprenorphine, are above a pre-specified, but largely unknown, threshold or opioid quota. To avoid triggering suspicious activity and a DEA investigation, there are reports that pharmacies limit their orders for buprenorphine or decide not to stock it in their inventory at all.
- Discussed Policy Solutions to address Suboxone dispensing barriers:
 - To strengthen the implementation of existing federal and state policies aimed at expanding access to MOUD in primary care, JAMA proposes several policy solutions that may address dispensing barriers to buprenorphine access at retail pharmacies in the US.
 - The rationale for these proposed policy changes is that buprenorphine is subject to existing pharmacy regulations initially designed to prevent the diversion, misuse, and abuse of controlled substances, including opioids, which were not intended for scheduled MOUD.

Dr. Hussey also mentioned how SAMHSA is collaborating with Federal Partners to understand buprenorphine availability.

Dawn Diez stated the following:

An order for BOR is being placed this week to replenish Narcan to two institutions of higher education, one in Region 1 and one in Region 7.

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200 fentanyl test strips and 204 Narcan kits were purchased and distributed during the Bayou Classic held in New Orleans this past weekend. All purchases made using ARPA prevention funds.

A needs assessment was completed with the institutions of higher education through the BOR in September 2023 and an order of 696 kits placed and distributed to the institutions requesting Narcan

Marisa Beard stated the following:

The LaSOR 4.0 grant will be available next year. Finalizing plans for outreach on party drugs which includes Fentanyl.

SOR 2 and 3 combined, 32k fentanyl test strips distributed, 32k naloxone kits distributed, and 6k+ overdoses reversals (lives saved).

- b. Community Impact Group- Dr. Allison Smith not in attendance to report out.
 - c. Healthcare Impact Group- Dr. James Hussey reports that recommendation topics he will report on later in meeting are a result of the impact group.
 - d. Public Safety Impact Group- no update from Shelley Edgerton. Scheduling a meeting in the next couple weeks.
 - e. Other Updates- Bridge Program will be reflected in ongoing recommendations.
8. Proposed HOPE 2023 End of Year Recommendation Topics

As the HOPE Advisory Council transitions into 2024, with a new administration, new leadership on the Drug Advisory Board, as well as additional changes in the participating membership of the HOPE Council, this year's recommendations focus on priorities that build on prior years' recommendations and advance some already-established policies, programs, and strategies.

The 2023 HOPE Council report highlights progress and improvements in several areas, including decreases in opioid Louisiana overdose deaths, decreases in emergency department utilization and decreased use of inpatient acute hospitalization, as well as decreased utilization of both residential and inpatient opioid use treatment settings. Louisiana also saw continued progress in terms of use of Medication Assisted Treatment, increased utilization of outpatient ASAM substance use services, and increased Naloxone utilization. Several strategies likely contributed to these improvements, and some show particular promise moving forward, including, but not limited to the following:

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- Addressing outpatient pharmacy Suboxone access and dispensing barriers (*Reflect JAMA?*)
- Louisiana Bridge Program, Naloxone access and increased availability of Peers and Substance Use Navigators in Emergency Department settings –funding for LA Bridge Program implementation. Medicaid reimbursement for Peer Navigators.
- Continued and enhanced support for Harm Reduction Efforts, including Opioid abatement funds- advocate for fund allocation to harm reduction strategies, and establishing a Harm Reduction Review Panel to collaborate on harm reduction strategies and future recommendations. Support from Mary Campbell of HAR< Reduction team.
- Expanded Access to OTP/Methadone Clinics through expanded hours and Mobile Dosing Units. While it's already in progress, it's an opportunity for HOPE Council to express support and identify as progress.
- Adoption of new ASAM Criteria in 2024
- Continued support for use of telehealth/remote options for SUD service delivery. Martin stated his support for this for IOP.
- In addition, troubling trends in terms of use of isotinazene, brophine, xylazine and Kratom seem to be increasingly associated with opioid misuse, causing more deaths, and posing potential new risks to Louisianans. Therefore, it is also recommended that these substances included in future HOPE End of Year Reports to allow for discussion of strategies to address these concerns.

Kristy Miller from the Governor's Office discussed adding a recommendation on the composition of HOPE Council, roles, and scope of council.

Dr. Jose Calderon will send some language to Dr. Hussey on another recommendation from LMMA enhanced MAT in Emergency settings.

Traci Perry suggested HOPE have some oversight over the opioid abatement settlement taskforce. Dr. Hussey explained that we are unable to because it's spelled out who is on the board in the settlement. It would have to go back to court. Monica Taylor suggested reaching out to those locally in control. She explained accountability measures are in place by Legislative Auditor. Johanna Braud said with little guidance, the people in charge are going to others like herself asking for guidance. Next step is decide how to monitor and connect with those with expertise.

9. Public Comments- no comments.

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10. Discussion and Next Steps
 - a. HOPE EoY 2023 next steps report due March 15, 2024
 - b. Impact Workgroups: HOPE@LA.GOV
 - c. Future HOPE Council Meetings: Thursday February 1, 2024 from 9-11am.
11. Meeting adjourned at 11:05am.