

Allegany County Health Planning Coalition

CHRC Narrative

Allegany County provided a variety of initiatives through the CHRC base grant funding that address our County Health Action Plan priorities for tobacco, substance abuse, access to care and screenings.

The County's number one priority is **tobacco**, with objectives to reduce tobacco use by pregnant women, adults and youth (SHIP #32, #33). There has been an increase in the number of participants in the Health Department's Cessation Program due to the community intensifying its efforts in this area. CHRC grant funding created an opportunity for the Cessation Program to purchase nicotine replacement therapy products to meet the program's demand. To date the program has provided NRT patches and/or lozenges to 47 individuals.

The Federal Qualified Health Center (Tri-State Women's Health Center) identified a 44% smoking rate among pregnant women through the utilization of the 4 P's Plus SBIRT assessment tool in its first year of implementation. All women identified were referred to the Health Department Cessation Program. This population has been exceedingly hard to engage in cessation services, averaging 1-2 pregnant women per year. The Cessation Counselor went on site to the Health Center to **increase access** (LHIP #3) to the services. Four pregnant women received cessation services during this grant period.

Four CHRC strategies address the County's Health Action Plan for **substance abuse** (LHIP #5, SHIP #29). The incidence for prescription drug misuse/abuse was a specific health concern identified in the community health assessment. To address this concern, a training was held for prescribers in September by Dr. Andrew Kolodny entitled, "The Prescribing of Opioids: Achieving the Right Balance." Dr. Kolodny is Chair of Psychiatry at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, N.Y, and treats patients addicted to opioid analgesics. He is the President for the National Physicians for Responsible Prescribing. The CHRC funds helped pay for dinner at the evening three hour program, of which 88 individuals attended. Objectives for the program include the following:

- Describe how cautious, evidence-based prescribing practices can lower opioid-related overdose deaths and addiction rates
- Review factors that helped fuel the opioid analgesic epidemic
- Provide prescribers and pharmacists with an understanding of opioid addiction and opioid addiction treatment.

Evaluation outcomes from the training showed that 98% of the participants felt the training was either "excellent" or "good". As a follow-up to the training, participants received information on how to reduce drug misuse and protect your patients, and a community drug & alcohol treatment resource directory.

Another strategy to address prescription drug use/misuse was to provide permanent medication/drug drop off sites throughout the community. Through CHRC funds, four Medreturn units were purchased and placed in local law enforcement agencies, including the County Sheriff's Office, the Maryland State Police Barracks, and the Frostburg and Cumberland Police Departments. Over 163 medicine containers were collected in October, which has exceeded our expectation in such a short period of time. Advertising in the local newspaper for this project was also purchased by this grant to inform community of the importance of disposing of medications properly and the availability of the Medreturn units. Posters were printed to send to all area pharmacies (16) and physician practices, as well as cards to be placed in prescription bags at pharmacies. The County Sheriff currently is planning to take his Medreturn unit around to local pharmacies to **increase access**, especially in outlying areas.

The third and fourth strategies under **substance abuse** addressed DWI/DUI concerns in community. CHRC funds were used to contract with the Maryland State Police to educate participants at events where alcohol was available (either purchased or served) on the effects of alcohol and risks of driving under the influence. The Western Maryland Health System provided two breathalyzers for this project. The Police provided voluntary breathalyzers to participants to heighten their awareness on the events their alcohol consumption had on their Blood Alcohol Content (BAC). A Health Department staff person educated individuals on the effects of alcohol on the body, including how alcohol can impair one's ability to drive safely. The goal was to attend up to ten events, most of which were planned for summer. Due to getting the CHRC funds later than expected, four events were attended.

The following include events that were attended:

- "Friday After 5", which is a weekly occurrence in the summer months in the city of Cumberland. These highly attended events offer an outdoor experience with a variety of music bands along with the ability to purchase beer and/or wine. Nineteen individuals participated in this event, and six were over the legal limit (.08).
- Frostburg Block Party, an outdoor event for college students and community. Nine individuals took the breathalyzer test and six were over the legal limit
- F Bar, a local establishment invested in reducing high risk drinking.. The owner incorporated questions about alcohol in it Trivia game that night. Thirty-three individuals were tested and 16 were over the legal limit
- Frostburg State Homecoming Football game, which permits two hours of tailgating prior to the game and is a popular event for students, alumni, and community. Thirty-three individuals were tested and 17 were over the legal limit

This strategy was very effective in that most participants didn't really understand how much the quantity of alcohol they consumed affected their blood alcohol content (BAC), how different things, such as gender, can affect your BAC, and how it doesn't take much alcohol to be over the legal limit to

drive safely. It was decided not to hire a part-time person for this strategy because the short turn-around time of the grant wouldn't allow enough time to go through the hiring process and train someone efficiently for the project. Instead, an experienced Substance Abuse Prevention Health Department staff person was used.

CHRC funds were also utilized to purchase four much needed breathalyzers for the County Sheriff's Office to use during patrols. During this grant period (Aug-Oct) 18 DWI's were cited in the County. This allowed more officers with the ability to monitor impaired driving in our area.

The last strategy addressed our local priority for health screening (LHIP #6, SHIP #27 & #28). CHRC funds were used to purchase educational materials, displays and incentives for health screening outreach events to minority populations (including those living in poverty). Four events were held by Health Department Nursing, CTG, and Behavioral Health Staff. A total of 104 (11 African American) individuals received blood pressure checks, with 49 (47%) of them having an elevated blood pressure. These individuals were referred to follow-up services as appropriate.