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Wolf Administration Visits Veterans Substance Use Disorder Recovery Organization to Highlight Innovative Programs Coordinated Through the Opioid Command Center

Lemoyne, PA – Today the departments of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) and Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) visited Recovery Community Organization Just for Today Recovery and Veterans Support Services (JFT) to highlight innovative programs through state agency collaborations and federal funding.

“The state and local partnerships brought together by the command center have never been more important,” said DDAP Secretary Jen Smith. “As we navigate the coming months and impacts of COVID-19 on individuals with substance use disorder and those in recovery, the Wolf Administration is committed to providing funding and resources to help organizations, like JFT, provide crucial services to individuals in need.”

JFT is a non-profit organization devoted to offering safe, structured, and compassionate housing, fellowship, and recovery resources to anyone in need. They also provide certified recovery specialist training, continuing education credits, and advocacy for the entire Central Pennsylvania recovery community. The organization’s warm hand-off program has successfully connected 81 percent of overdose survivors directly to treatment services and they have reached 285 veterans through their Veterans Support Program.

“JFT has worked closely with the state and county entities to deliver a plethora of services through State Opioid Response (SOR) grant funding,” said Steve Barndt, Executive Director of JFT. “We have been able to create robust Veteran’s Services, including a military food share, the creation of a Veteran’s Coalition, and an active recovery reentry program that is community-based and provides recovery coaching, basic needs, life skills and recovery skills. We have become the place that fills the cracks, so no one falls through in their recovery journey.”

Command center collaboration has helped DDAP, DMVA, Department of Human Services, Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and Department of Health collectively distribute more than \$70 million in SOR Grant funds since 2018. Organizations that serve individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) or individuals in recovery have used this funding to expand or implement innovative ways to provide supports and resources.

“Organizations like Just For Today Recovery and Veterans Support Services are prime examples of how the Opioid Command Center is helping to build strong community collaborations and strengthen the statewide effort to reduce the number of veterans with substance use disorder to zero,” said Brig. Gen. (ret.) Maureen Weigl, DMVA deputy adjutant general for Veterans Affairs. “None of us can do this alone. That is why the Veteran Centered Opioid Response Grants are important in bringing us all together to identify resources and educate service members, veterans and their families about what is available to help them overcome substance abuse and other social challenges.”

The Opioid Command Center, established in January 2018 when Gov. Wolf signed the first opioid disaster declaration, has promoted coordination and collaboration within the Wolf Administration, with federal and local government entities, and community partners.

Through the command center and Opioid Disaster Declaration, the Wolf Administration has been able to break down decade-long silos across departments and work together to provide funding for at-risk and vulnerable populations with SUD. The projects below are a few of the achievements made between September 2020 and March 2021 utilizing funding opportunities from state agencies.

Supporting Pennsylvania Veterans

A variety of existing and new programs have been tailored to the unique needs of veterans with opioid and stimulant use disorders. These programs provide a combination of evidence based co-occurring treatment including treatment courts, recovery support, and robust case management services.

Pregnancy Support Services

Nine organizations connected approximately 500 pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorder (OUD) and their babies with evidence-based SUD treatment, specialty medical and behavioral healthcare, and case management services related to employment, childcare, and transportation.

Recovery Support Services

Four Recovery Community Organizations continued to expand or enhance recovery support services to approximately 2,500 individuals with OUD. Some services provided under this initiative include recovery coaching, telephonic supports, education, and employment supports, and life skills groups.

Opioid Prevention in Higher Education

Thirteen colleges organized a wide range of prevention and outreach activities including social media campus-wide stigma reduction campaigns, faculty and staff trainings focused on increasing awareness and understanding of opioid use and misuse in students, and trainings and events focused on Narcan administration and distribution on campus. Approximately 13,000 student and faculty members have benefitted from the 79 trainings and 52 outreach events these projects have facilitated.

Employment Support Services

Thirteen organizations delivered employment support services to individuals in recovery from OUD. Projects partnered with a variety of employers devoted to supporting and employing individuals in recovery from OUD. Through this initiative, 470 individuals have been served and 931 employers have been recruited.

Police Diversion to Treatment

Seven Single County Authorities have expanded or created collaboratives between law enforcement, treatment professionals, and recovery support providers to establish diversion programs aimed at offering treatment-based alternatives to arrest, booking, and incarceration for minor criminal offenses. As of March 2021, 322 law enforcement officers have received training on a variety of topics related to police diversion, and 122 individuals were referred to and admitted into SUD treatment versus incarceration.

DDAP maintains a toll-free helpline that connects callers seeking treatment options for themselves or a loved one to resources in their community. You can reach the Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The helpline is available 24/7 – including on national holidays. An anonymous [chat service](#) offering the same information to individuals who may not be comfortable speaking on the phone is also available.

To learn more about DDAP funding opportunities visit ddap.pa.gov.

For more information on Pennsylvania's response to the opioid crisis visit www.pa.gov/opioids.

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