

OPIOID AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Salisbury University



SLEEPY GULLS

ERIC LOPEZ, EMILY MACDONALD, PEDRO (PETE) GARAY

Credits Page

Team Bios

Eric Lopez: I am a senior at Salisbury University. My major is Communication-Public Relation with a minor in Marketing Management & Business Administrations. I hope to one day run a successful all green construction company.

Emily Macdonald: I am a senior at Salisbury University majoring in Communications on the public relations and strategic communications track, with a minor in business administration. I hope to one day go into social work or counseling.

Pete Garay: I am a senior at Salisbury University majoring in Communications on the public relations and strategic communications track, with a minor in psychology.

Acknowledgements and thanks to Kelly McColligan from the Community Outreach Addictions Team (COAT) in Wicomico County, Safe Station and Ms. Perry from Halo for assisting us during this project, and allowing us to assist them in their fight against opioid addiction and awareness.

Project Overview

The goal of the project was thought over by all three of us in our team, The Sleepy Gulls. We found that opioid addiction was an epidemic that has been going on for years in Maryland and particularly on the Eastern Shore. We began by researching the opioid crisis going on in Wicomico County. After gaining knowledge of the problem in the county, we begin educating ourselves on the drug itself and its impact on the individuals who suffer from addiction. We then continued on to learning about all its symptoms and the tell tale signs of someone struggling with opioid addiction. Finally, after all our research we began reaching out to groups and programs in the area to get their feedback on what they believe the biggest issues regarding the crisis are and what they need help with.

We first contacted the Community Outreach Addictions Team (COAT) and Safestation, after contacting them we found out that they work together. We spoke with Kelly Mccoughlin, who is a supervisor for the COAT team. We worked with her to receive her firsthand experience on opioid addiction and understand how the community can improve their resources on helping those who are suffering. Opioid addiction is an epidemic that can be significantly decreased if the proper steps are taken. We created a QR code that we will be providing to local institutions, including Halo, a homeless shelter, where the level of those at risk or already afflicted by opioid addiction is high; this QR code will give individuals access to our brochure and newsletter which contains a plethora of resources on opioid addiction including how to detect the signs of addiction, how to cope with the stress of addiction and details on where to go or numbers to call when themself or others around them are in need of help. Our project holds a significant amount of importance in our community, as we feel that if we are able to help even a single individual with their addiction, we have made the community a healthier place.

Goals

Our goal for this project was community outreach about opioid crisis education. Addiction impacts people from all walks of life, we hope to ensure that our community is aware that there is a safe place that they can go to at any stage of their addiction. We wanted to specifically target homeless shelters and food banks. Additionally, many people may not know the signs of addiction and we wanted to educate ourselves and others on signs to look for, and how to appropriately act once an addiction problem is discovered. We hoped to educate both employees and individuals utilizing the facilities.

Objectives

We believe that promoting our campaign in homeless shelters and food banks would reach a lot of the community that may be affected by this problem. We want to provide information on how to detect the signs of addiction as well as how to proceed to both employees of homeless shelters and food banks as well as those afflicted who are utilizing the facilities. We want to be an assisting hand to those who seek help for their opioid addictions and to assist the community in becoming a better place.

Results

With the help of Kelly from COAT and Ms. Perry from Halo, we were able to create a backgrounder, newsletter and brochure that provide information on the opioid epidemic, how to deal with addiction and many other resources surrounding the topic. Our biggest accomplishment was met by creating a QR code that allows individuals to access the brochure and newsletter which will be displayed in local institutions that experience a high frequency of visitors who are overcome with addiction.

Summary & Look Ahead

By working with local organizations we were able to accomplish our goal of opioid addiction awareness and education in our community. We did this by communicating with local organizations who experience opioid addiction firsthand and are additionally willing to use our QR code that provides access to an informational brochure and newsletter. A major setback we experienced while completing this project was the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disallowed us from being able to work closely with the organizations, forcing us to communicate in all forms other than face to face as well as not allowing us to integrate ourselves in the community. We reached our goal by providing a hub of information on the topic of opioid addiction to individuals who may not otherwise have access to it. Though the local institutions have agreed to display our QR code, we are unable to measure how many individuals will actually take it upon themselves to access it, posing us with a goal we are unable to measure our success in. We hope that with the increased awareness and education about opioid addiction it will help flatten the curve of those affected by addiction. Additionally, we hope that those who were unaware of the severity of the opioid epidemic in our state and county, especially those who work in facilities with high addiction rates, will now be more vigilant in detecting signs of addiction and taking proper steps afterwards. Lastly, we hope that with our project, resources will be allocated more effectively, specifically providing more facilities for those affected by addiction to turn to.

Project Activities

Questions we asked the COAT supervisor and Halo employee along with our summary notes

Question 1: What do you think the community could do to increase opioid awareness and prevent the overdose rate from rising? How is our community impacted by the opioid epidemic?

- Waitlist
- Denied for additional location for detox facility
- Everyone knows someone
- Mental health connection
- Repeats

Question 2: How has COVID19 affected the opioid epidemic?

- A lot of relapsing
- Not always through narcotics anonymous- but now thats not an option
- Loss of routine
- Stimulus checks gave people who were normally scraping by

Question 3: What do you think are the biggest risk factors for opioid addiction in the demographic of those who utilize food banks and homeless shelters?

- Crowd that's there but around those who are using
- Sometimes homeless shelters are their only option, overcrowding
- Illegal use of substances

Question 4: What are the signs of addiction, how should those around them respond and go about getting them help?

- Changes in personality
- Losing weight, not taking care of yourself
- Severe mental health shifts

Question 5: What resources do you think homeless shelters and food banks would need in order to help the lessen effect of the epidemic?

- Resources to call detox facilities
- Utilize resources
- Peer on staff- someone who has been through recovery because they know the signs

***due to formatting, our artifacts will be submitted as separate files

Action plan

We conducted our own personal research on opioid addiction in order to educate ourselves on what actions are required before educating and reaching others. Additionally, we met with the supervisor of COAT and an employee of Halo, through our own research we were able to curate appropriate questions for them which helped us understand the challenges of the opioid epidemic and how to proceed with educating and promoting awareness. After our initial meeting, we created a brochure, newsletter and backgrounder that we presented to the organizations for them to use. We also provided these organizations with a QR code for them to display.