



# The Role of a Drug Abuse Task Force in a Rural Minnesota Community

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# About the Presenters

## Amy LaRue, MA, CHES

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# Objectives

- Describe the timeline involved in organizing a Drug Abuse Task Force
- Discuss how the community health assessment played a role in the formation of the Carlton County Drug Abuse Task Force
- Discuss how the Carlton County Drug Abuse Task Force found “action points” to work towards in the community

## Objectives, cont.

- Describe how a Community Forum on Heroin and Opioid Abuse was organized and how it led to future forum planning
- Discuss how the Carlton County Community Forum and Task Force brought together community members to work toward solutions to the drug abuse epidemic

# Where is Carlton County?

- Rural based on the definition of:
  - Census Place
  - Census Urban Area
  - RUCA codes Carlton County is in northern Minnesota
- Encompasses communities including:
  - Cloquet
  - Barnum
  - Moose Lake
  - Esko
  - Cromwell
  - Carlton
  - Wrenshall
  - Fond du Lac Reservation, a community composed of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa



# Timeline for Organizing a Task Force

- Drug Abuse Task Force was initiated by Carlton County Public Health and Fond du Lac Reservation in 2013
- Composed of individuals from Carlton County, the Fond du Lac Reservation community and neighboring St. Louis County:
  - Community members
  - Health Care
  - Education
  - Law enforcement
  - Public health
  - Treatment/Recovery
- Quarterly meetings to discuss progress and “Action Points”

# Carlton County Drug Abuse Task Force: Mission & Vision

- **Mission:** To engage, advocate, inform and bring awareness of substance abuse issues through education, prevention, enforcement, intervention, treatment and recovery to build a healthy and safe community.
- **Vision:** Carlton County and Fond du Lac Reservation will be a community where people embrace a healthy lifestyle free from use and misuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

# Goals of the Carlton County Drug Abuse Task Force

- Decrease access to prescription drugs and heroin in the community
- Increase community awareness of drug use and abuse in the community
- Increase multi-system collaboration



# Finding “Action Points”

- The Carlton County Drug Abuse Task Force splits into three small groups, which meet at every quarterly meeting:
  - Education
  - Diversion
  - Treatment
- Through intense discussion at quarterly Task Force meetings, the group decided that a Community Forum on Heroin and Opioid Abuse was a necessary step in addressing the drug abuse epidemic

# Organizing a Community Forum on Heroin and Opioid Abuse

- **Funding:** Grant (\$7500) received by the University of Minnesota Clinical and Translational Science Institute
- **Planning Team:** A small group of Task Force members expressed interest in planning the Community Forum
- **Time:** Planning team determined that a fall event would work best for the Carlton County and Fond du Lac Reservation communities

# Organizing a Community Forum on Heroin and Opioid Abuse

- **Location:** A neutral location (Cloquet Forestry Center) with capacity for up to 100 people was chosen
- **Speakers:** Planning team determined who the best speakers would be, with perspectives from law enforcement, treatment, county representatives, medicine and an individual personally affected by addiction

# Moving Forward Together as a Community

- Using feedback from the Community Forum
- Increased education for the community:
  - Monthly educational sessions at Fond du Lac Community College
  - Monthly articles in the Pine Journal on addiction, treatment and recovery
- Increased community member presence on the Task Force
- Follow-up Community Forums
  - University of Minnesota “Engaged Department” grant to fund
  - Moose Lake and Cloquet

# Barriers to Effective Collaboration

- Tensions between members of the city of Cloquet and neighboring members of the Fond du Lac Reservation resulted in team sensitivity towards the following:
  - Choosing the location of the Forum
  - Choosing the location of outreach events
  - Purposeful and thoughtful advertising
  - Choosing which panelists would be asked to speak at the event
- Geographic barriers that are unique to a rural area had to be thoughtfully overcome to allow for proper planning and implementation of the event

# Tips for Creating a Task Force

- Enlist a core group of individuals with representation across areas to form a Task Force
- Develop an agreed-upon mission and vision for the group
- Identify goals and target areas for the Task Force
- Recruit members and build community relationships with key stakeholders
- Advertise and educate the community about the Task Force
- Host community events, such as a forum, to bring awareness to the issues and educate about the Task Force

# Tips for Planning a Community Forum

- Enlist the help of someone who has been part of the planning process for a community forum
- Create objectives for the event (stay on track)
- Consider and include stakeholders in the planning process
  - Cultural considerations and sensitivity; tense relationships
- Determine location, date, time, food, etc.
- Set roles and responsibilities for planning team members
- Set recurring meetings/check-ins for team up until event

# Questions?



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