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

Laura Palombi, PharmD, MPH, MAT & Amy LaRue, MA, CHES
About the Presenters

Amy LaRue, MA, CHES
- Public Health Educator
- Carlton County Public Health & Human Services

Laura Palombi, PharmD, MPH, MAT
- Assistant Professor, Pharmacy Practice & Pharmaceutical Sciences
- University of Minnesota, College of Pharmacy - Duluth
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?