



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: February 21, 2024

SARATOGA COUNTY ANNOUNCES SCHOOL-BASED OPIOID AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SUPPORT PROGRAM

New Program Pairs School Resource Officers with Certified Peer Recovery Advocates to Help Students in Recovery

BALLSTON SPA, NY -- Saratoga County officials today announced the creation of a school-based opioid and substance use disorder advocacy and support program to address and reduce the impact of addiction and opioid use disorder in Saratoga County schools.

The program is a partnership between the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the Saratoga County Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to connect Certified Recovery Peer Advocates (CRPAs) with School Resource Officers (SROs) to assist students suffering from opioid and/or substance use disorders.

Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Chairman Phil Barrett (Clifton Park) said, "Unfortunately, Saratoga County is not immune to the devastating effects of the nation's opioid crisis. While abstinence remains our main message to our younger residents, we recognize the need to help those struggling with addiction. This program leverages the knowledge and expertise of our SROs who work in our schools daily and offers students in need access to an empathetic peer advocate who can help guide them through recovery."

The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors at its Board Meeting on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, approved a resolution for a two-year memorandum of understanding between the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the Saratoga County Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for the use of \$205,000 in regional abatement funds authorized from the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS). The Sheriff's Office will use these funds to contract with the Healthy Capital District Initiative (HCDI) and with two Certified Peer Recovery Advocates to launch the school-based opioid and substance use support program.

Certified Recovery Peer Advocates facilitate outreach with individuals currently in an addiction treatment program or who may be considering treatment. Utilizing their recovery expertise, professional training, and lived experience, CRPAs boost individuals' engagement in treatment

and commitment to recovery. CPRAs can also connect students to community-based recovery supports consistent with treatment, recovery, and discharge plans.

Saratoga County Sheriff Michael H. Zurlo said, "As first responders, our deputies know the damaging effects the opioid crisis is having on our residents of all ages, which is why the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office is utilizing a variety of strategies and strategic partnerships with County departments and community organizations to address the epidemic. This initiative to bring Certified Peer Recovery Advocates and School Resource Officers together to help struggling students offers a unique way to provide professional support to our younger residents in need of recovery services."

Michael S. Prezioso, Ph.D., Commissioner of the Saratoga County Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services said, "As Saratoga County residents continue to feel the effects of the opioid crisis, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is proud to continue its partnership with the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office to reduce the devastating consequences of addiction. By pairing CRPAs with School Resource Officers, existing relationships will become force multipliers in the effort to support recovery among younger members of our community."

Pat McGrath, Superintendent of Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District said, "I applaud the Board of Supervisors for the work they have done to provide this important program to our community. For several years, the School Resource Officer initiative has benefited schools across our county in numerous ways. This partnership will further support and enhance the resources available to our SROs and school administrators."

The school-based opioid and substance use disorder support program is part of Saratoga County's multi-department opioid epidemic prevention, education, treatment, and response efforts.

For more information about Saratoga County visit, www.saratogacountyny.gov.

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