

# Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with Their Communities

## Case Studies





# Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with Their Communities: Case Studies

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## PREFACE

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Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs.

The research has resulted in a [summary report](#) and eight [research-based case studies](#) highlighting varying opioid response efforts across the US. A [call-to-action white paper](#) will also be published as part of the project outputs. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Barrington Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with eight individuals: two staff members at the Barrington Public Library, two staff members at Barrington Adult Youth Team, a library board member, and three community members who participated in events at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](http://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Barrington Public Library (BPL) has a service population size of 16,068 and operates with one central location. It has an operating budget of \$2,053,831 with seven professional librarians and 39 other staff, totaling 48 personnel. The library reported 186,819 patron visits.<sup>1</sup>

Barrington, RI, is comprised mostly of White populations (93.4%), some Asian populations (3.7%), and some Hispanic or Latino populations (2.7%). Almost all of its citizens hold a high school diploma (96.7%) and over two-thirds of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree (67.7%).<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$117,408, and 2.8% of its residents are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Barrington's unemployment rate is 2.9%<sup>4</sup>, and 1.9% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

Bristol County has a prescribing rate of 39.7, which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose deaths for Bristol County was 31 people from 2015 through 2017.<sup>6</sup> From 2009 to 2016, Rhode Island experienced a 2.5-fold increase in the number of drug overdose deaths.<sup>7</sup>



**1 LIBRARY LOCATION**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 16,068**



**UNINSURED RATE, 2.3%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 39.7  
(per 100 people)**

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“I think it’s really important that they were already in tune with educating people and bringing awareness to mental health, and that it’s not just the presentations that we were offering to the community, but it’s about the staff being educated about increasing their abilities to understand and better serve their customers as they come in.”

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—Community Partner Director

## Barrington Public Library’s Opioid Response

Barrington Public Library has offered a variety of community engagement and mental health and wellness activities to address the growing opioid crisis. A robust six-month program of events is listed in the calendar in the appendix at the end; several highlights include:

- Community discussion of the book, *Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic*
- Study night for teens that included food, space to study, yoga, and a therapy dog
- Mental Health First Aid Training to teach the skills to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use in youth
- Film screenings related to substance use disorders and mental health, such as *Inside Out* for younger audiences and *Suicide: The Ripple Effect* for adults
- Naloxone training offered to the public
- Promoting drug take-back days

BPL planned a wide variety of programs to engage a diverse range of community members. In addition to the programming, all library staff received training on administering naloxone and one staff member participated in Mental Health First Aid training to support interactions with patrons experiencing mental health crises.

BPL and their partners at Barrington Adult Youth Team (BAY Team) developed the programming to be more broadly about wellness. Together, they wanted to help address the stigma associated with people experiencing substance use issues, and the resistance within the community to acknowledge the impact of opioid misuse in Barrington. This broad focus resulted in the “It’s Time We Talk” campaign, which had the underlying goal to connect the community through a series of discussions and events promoting emotional wellbeing.

The library director spearheaded the effort and worked to get buy-in from staff and community members and leaders at town council meetings and through communication channels such as social media, the library website, the local newspaper, and flyers posted at different locations throughout Barrington.

## Partnering for Success

The library director and staff from the BAY team met in February 2018 through their participation in Community Overdose Engagement (CODE), which is an initiative through the Department of Health, under the strategic plan of the Governor’s Overdose Task Force. The BAY Team was tasked with leading CODE and implementing the strategies such as the creation of a resource brochure for distribution throughout town, including at the library and by first responders.

The BAY Team operates as the substance abuse coalition for Barrington, and administers

grants throughout Bristol County, which includes the towns of Bristol, East Providence, Warren, and Barrington. Leveraging the BAY Team’s extensive relationships with community and statewide services made it possible for the library to present a wide variety of content and speakers in its six months of opioid response programming.

Prior to planning any activities, the BAY Team sought to understand how the opioid response activities would be received by the Barrington community as part of their regular programming. They did so through a community needs assessment, surveying parents and key community stakeholders. As a result, they concluded that the community was not yet ready for a six-month program specifically focused on opioid misuse. Instead, the team decided to approach the topics through a series called “It’s Time We Talk,” which incorporates substance misuse issues into community discussions and events on mental wellness.

In addition to working directly with the BAY Team, BPL continued to participate in CODE which is comprised of town leaders; rescue, fire, and police representatives; the YMCA; the superintendent of schools; faith-based leaders; community organizations; the recreation department; and the library. The group provided feedback and support to BPL and the BAY Team during program development.



BPL used materials from the Change Direction campaign to talk about and promote mental health awareness..  
*Photo courtesy of Give an Hour*

## Funding

The town manager prompted BPL’s educational events by sharing information about a grant opportunity with the library director. Because the library was already peripherally involved in working to address the opioid crisis as a community stakeholder, it made sense to the director to take a more active role.

The library then applied for and received a \$10,000 community grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to support six months of community-wide programming. The Friends of the Barrington Public Library contributed an additional \$1,000. BPL and the BAY Team covered indirect costs of staff time to plan and implement the programs.

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library’s Response

Several local factors and conditions led to BPL’s response to the opioid crisis with their community partners including:

- increased impact of the opioid crisis in the local area
- a change in needs of the community and the patrons coming into the library
- difficult situations indicating a need for staff training and support
- grant funding opportunity

Through their participation in the Barrington Community Support Coalition and CODE, BPL and its partners were discussing the national opioid crisis, noting its increasing impact on the community. Around the same time, a patron who visited the library experienced a mental health crisis, and staff were unsure about how best to respond—indicating a need for staff training and support. Moreover, the library’s location on the bus route from Providence was bringing vulnerable populations looking for safe spaces into the library, and BPL saw an increase in this population.

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“The opioid crisis is one that we all need to address. What better way to bring it to the community than to our library, where people feel so welcome and so safe? Our library is where all can learn according to their own interest and at their own comfort level about this critical issue that has such an important impact for all of us.”

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—Barrington Public Library Board Member

As one library frontline staff member explained, “There have been different populations that have been coming in over the past ten or 11 years. A lot more people are experiencing homelessness. I think we have to try to create a culture within the library and within the community where we recognize and try to work with a person in noticeable distress. Let’s show compassion. Let’s see if they need help.” The combination of these factors prompted the library to apply for grant funding when the opportunity arose.

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of BPL staff, the media, and impacted community members are positive and supportive of the library’s opioid response activities.

### LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

BPL’s staff and board were supportive of the six-month program of opioid response wellness activities offered to the public, though more communication about the purpose and expectation of the opioid response activities could have been shared with the staff to build buy-in and support. Library staff also mentioned the value of the Mental Health First Aid training in helping to support patrons experiencing a mental health crisis.

A library board member shared their perspective of the activities and efforts of the director,

“The vision of our director and her partnership with the BAY Team truly contributed to the success. Our library has a history of, and our current director has a personal and professional commitment to, bringing important issues to our library that affect our community.”

### MEDIA

Media response to the library’s opioid response work has been neutral to positive. Although the local media have not taken as active a role in covering BPL activities as the library would like, they are receptive to publicizing events if the library and its partners are proactive about submitting press releases. The local newspaper contains a section where the library can list its events.

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Based on the results of the BAY Team’s community readiness assessment, BPL staff and partners were concerned there would be resistance from the community regarding the opioid response programs offered. Anecdotal feedback from patrons has only been positive, with comments that they learned a lot from attending the events and appreciated them. However, naloxone posters hung in the library bathroom have been torn down several times.

A community member who participated in the library’s programming shared this, indicating the value of the activities, “I felt like I learned something at each of the events I attended. I really support the mission of educating youth, certainly, but also adults about substance abuse because I think that’s probably the best way to prevent people from using.”

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“Our library is a vibrant center of community knowledge and community participation. Our director’s commitment to making sure that important public issues are represented maintains that essential mission.”

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—Barrington Public Library Board Member

## Outcomes of the Library’s Response

Many positive outcomes have occurred as a result of BPL’s opioid programming, including:

- strengthened partnerships
- similar programs offered at other libraries in the region
- increased awareness and knowledge of mental health issues among community members

In order to implement the community-wide events, BPL developed new partnerships and strengthened existing ones. For example, the library developed a new relationship with the local schools when they worked together to publicize their youth-focused Mental Health First Aid Training and exam study nights.

Through their relationship with and funding from the local and regional prevention coalitions, the libraries in East Providence offer programs and events similar to those hosted at Barrington Public Library, such as therapeutic theater, which offers people in recovery an opportunity to use performance as a way to express themselves. Lastly, community members who attended the events indicated they learned a lot about mental health and substance use disorders and are now more aware of what might be happening in their community.

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

Many factors contributed to the success of BPL’s activities, such as:

- an involved, well-resourced community that values learning
- a champion at the library and support from community leaders to drive the work forward
- strong, collaborative relationship between the library and its partner, the BAY Team
- the BAY Team’s connections throughout the community

BPL benefited from working in a local context with a history of active community organizations and collaboration across groups. Since 1987, the BAY Team has been working on prevention issues locally and recently completed 10 years of activities supported by the federally-funded Drug Free Communities program. BPL started working with the BAY Team as a result of the opioid response activities and the library director has now formally joined their board.

Several of Barrington’s community organizations lent their support to the library’s grant application to the Rhode Island Foundation and wrote letters of recommendation. The BPL director’s commitment to addressing the opioid crisis and initiative to secure grant funding, in collaboration with the BAY Team, were key elements of the success of the programs. This strong and effective partnership made



Flyer promoting an “It’s Time We Talk” event.  
Photo courtesy of Barrington Public Library

it possible for program development and implementation to run smoothly. BPL's opioid response activities also benefited from the BAY Team's capacity-building skills and extensive network of contacts.

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing their opioid response activities, BPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- There is a perception among community members that drug misuse is not occurring locally and therefore is not affecting their community.
- There is stigma present in the community toward people with substance use disorders.
- Implementing a series of programs requires significant staff time and effort; additional staff is needed to provide administrative and technology support.
- Attracting sufficient interest in library programs can be difficult; several opioid response events were canceled due to low registration numbers.
- Additional and ongoing staff-wide training and professional development on topics of mental health and substance use disorder is needed to continue to build staff skills and confidence in these areas.

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"The biggest thing we have here is stigma. If we go really heavy with these topics, we're not going to get anywhere. Let's go in the side door because it all relates"

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—Barrington Public Library Director

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Assess community needs** and readiness before implementing community-wide initiatives.
- **Be as transparent as possible** with staff about plans for opioid-related programming and involve them in the development process to build buy-in, especially for those responsible for implementing the programming and interacting directly with the public.
- **Have a strong partnership** with an organization like the BAY Team, which can bring an extensive network of established relationships with mental health and substance abuse organizations in the community, rather than needing to start from scratch.
- **Engage in an aggressive marketing campaign** that includes advertising through businesses, local hangouts, and other non-traditional channels to reach people who may not read the newspaper or attend the community events where the library typically advertises.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The staff of the Barrington Public Library and their partners at the Barrington Adult Youth Team generously provided their time for these interviews, as well as for review of the case study.

The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (project number LG-00-18-0298-18).

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Blount County Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with eight individuals: three staff members at the Blount County Public Library, two staff members with their partners at the Blount County Recovery Court, a library board member, and two community members who participated in training at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Blount County Public Library (BCPL) has a service population size of 128,670 and operates with one central location. It has an operating budget of \$2,197,819 with 13.9 librarian staff and 29.13 other staff, totaling 43.03 personnel. The library reported approximately 390,000 visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

Blount County, Tennessee, is comprised of predominately White populations (94%). About one-quarter (23%) of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree, and 89% have at least a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$51,172 and 13% of its citizens are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Blount County's unemployment rate is 3.1%,<sup>4</sup> and about 10% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

The library is located in an area with a shortage of primary care and mental health care

professionals.<sup>6</sup> Blount County has an opioid prescribing rate of 80.2, which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose deaths for Blount County was 121 per 100,000 people during 2015 through 2017.<sup>7</sup>



**1 LIBRARY LOCATION**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 128,670**



**UNINSURED RATE, 10%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 80.2  
(per 100 people)**

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“The purpose of going to the library or health department is empowering for our people because they’re welcome there. It’s just another place in the community where they have an open welcome and that’s really what recovery is about. It’s finding your place back in the community.”

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—Community Partner Director

## Blount County Public Library’s Opioid Response

Blount County Public Library is working to address the opioid crisis in its community by partnering with the local Recovery Court to provide the Life Skills Curriculum to Recovery Court participants. Recovery Court is an alternative sentencing program offered to nonviolent offenders with a history of drug and alcohol abuse with the goal of lowering habitual criminal activity by providing treatment, monitoring, random drug screens, required employment, community service, education, and payment of fines.

The library collaborated with Recovery Court to develop the Life Skills Curriculum program, which teaches participants the skills necessary to succeed as a contributing member of the community. Participants attend a regular schedule of classes at the library, with each two-hour session combining education and counseling into a single meeting. The curriculum covers communication, finance, social health, physical health, nutrition, personal appearance, and career development. Participants typically take three to four years to complete Recovery Court, and, as a result, experience the 15-month Life Skills Curriculum program twice.

To optimize success, BCPL staff continually refine the curriculum to meet the diverse and unique needs of the participants. Participants can also schedule time with the Life Skills Curriculum coordinator for

help connecting to resources introduced in class, such as enrollment in school and employment assistance.

BCPL and Recovery Court program staff also conduct outreach to key service organizations and community stakeholders addressing recovery and addiction education to continue to build community connections and supports for participants. Recovery Court participants will often speak at schools or at local events to share their experiences with the program, increase community awareness, and break down stigma often associated with substance use disorder.

Direct, intentional marketing of the program to the public is limited because the participants come directly from Recovery Court, and not from the general public.

## Funding

The BCPL director has championed the Life Skills Curriculum program and made it a priority. As such, it is financed and maintained with library funds, and there is a designated library staff person to maintain and implement the Life Skills Curriculum. The city council and mayors provide the library with its budget, and the Friends of the Library group is also available for additional financial support if it is needed.

## Partnering for Success

Blount County Public Library’s Life Skills Curriculum program relies heavily on relationship building and community-based

supports to foster growth and reintegration of participants into the community. The decision to hold the sessions at the library was intentional—to encourage the participants to develop a sense of ownership in the library and to aid in the transition to life after Recovery Court.

BCPL's primary partner in the Life Skills Curriculum is the Recovery Court. However, each module of the curriculum presents an opportunity to engage a different community partner with expertise in that topic. For example, the health department contributes to the health modules. Some partners, like the Pellissippi State Community College admissions counselors, help participants move into higher education by pursuing two-year or technical degrees.

Partners like the American Job Center assist with job placement. There are also individual community volunteers who provide guidance on topics like banking or résumé building, while local realtors explain the differences between renting and owning and how to find housing with a felony offense.

The library has developed partnerships for this project organically. As other community organizations learn about the program and seek to engage, BCPL staff are ready to listen to how those organizations want to contribute. The library director's perspective on partnership and success is that "Every bit of it just narrows down to relationships. This has been grassroots, relationship-driven, flexible, a let's-do-this kind of project. There's been no territorialism. Everything is freely available. It's very transparent."

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library's Response

Several local factors and conditions led to BCPL's response to the opioid crisis with community partners, including:

- a "creative collision" between the library and Recovery Court staff



Life Skills Curriculum class being held at the library.  
*Photo courtesy of Blount County Public Library*

- alignment of Recovery Court needs with the library's services and resources
- the increasing negative impact of the opioid crisis in the community

The idea for the Life Skills Curriculum developed during a chance meeting in 2015 between the BCPL director and a staff member from Recovery Court. During the conversation that followed, the Recovery Court staff shared their need to offer soft skills courses and physical space to hold classes. The library director offered both; BCPL already provided instruction in soft skills to the public and had the facilities and resources to support the training in-house. This, in combination with a growing opioid crisis in Blount County and a desire to support the community, led to the development of the Life Skills Curriculum program.

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall, the reactions and experiences of BCPL staff, the media, and the broader community have been mixed while the reactions of community partners and impacted community members are positive of BCPL's opioid response activities.

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“The need is there. The crisis is there. We always ask ourselves, ‘So what can the library do? How can we, within our mission, contribute to this? And who do we need to partner with?’ “

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—Blount County Public Library Board Member

## **LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD**

There have been some mixed reactions from library staff and board members, particularly when the program started. This is largely based on preconceived notions about people who have been formerly incarcerated and people in recovery. To address this, library leadership has focused on transparency and relationship-building to help break down stigma. For example, BCPL has made the Life Skills Curriculum available online for free to the public and regularly shares updates internally to staff about how the partnership and work is proceeding.

A library board member shared their supportive view of how this program is an example of the library continuing to meet local needs, “We’ve moved from being a wonderful, beautiful building with nice books to being really a community center. We are very much plugged into every element of this community in mission-appropriate ways.”

## **MEDIA**

Generally, the local newspaper publishes information about the opioid crisis occurring in Blount County, but has not covered the partnership between the library and Recovery Court, and generally does not promote much of the activity at the library, even though it is often requested.

The library does pay for an insert of their newsletter into the local paper, and that represents the bulk of the media engagement. The Recovery Court itself, however, has received some media coverage about their efforts. The nature of this partnership and programmatic efforts also does not require external promotion to garner attendance because they are focused

on a specific segment of the population and is not open to public participants.

## **COMMUNITY PARTNER**

Recovery Court staff are highly supportive of the library’s Life Skills Curriculum work. They particularly appreciate the new partnerships that have resulted from working with the library and the consistency and stability the library staff and Life Skills Curriculum programming provide to Recovery Court participants. Other stakeholders in the community who are aware of the details of the program tend to respond positively. For example, interviewees shared that many government officials, including all three of the mayors (two city and one county) support the work.

## **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Interviewees felt that many community members are unaware of the library’s involvement in Recovery Court but are pleasantly surprised when they learn of it. Generally, those that are aware of the library’s work with the Life Skills Curriculum program have not pushed back on it. Those directly engaging with the program speak very highly of it.

One community member enrolled in Recovery Court shared, “I love it. I love that we can go to the staff with anything. To be active in this community that is very hampered with opioid addiction is huge. I think once the word really, really gets out, I think that it’ll really help the community.” However, library staff have heard some rumblings about whether taxpayer money should be spent on helping people with felony offenses. The library administration and staff have taken a strong line that library services and resources are for everyone, and everyone deserves access to their programs.



Participants in the Life Skills Curriculum learn to purchase food and cook healthy meals.  
*Photo courtesy of Blount County Public Library*

## Outcomes of the Library's Response

Many positive outcomes have occurred as a result of BCPL's Life Skills Curriculum, including:

- reduced recidivism rates
- increased awareness of the role of the library in the community
- development of new partnerships
- improved lives for Recovery Court participants

BCPL staff document the number of Life Skills Curriculum classes held and the number of attendees. They do not track additional information because of privacy concerns. Over 90 participants are engaged in the program currently, and over 50 have completed it to date. The estimated recidivism rate is just over 50% percent, a rate that is comparable or higher than other similar programming.<sup>8</sup>

Anecdotal stories indicate participants in Recovery Court have improved their lives significantly since participating, including building confidence and gaining employment. Since joining the program, participants feel more connected to the community as a result of the relationships they have built with the library and the other community organizations involved.

One community member shared their experience with the program and the value it is bringing to their life, "Being a recovering drug addict isn't always the most confident thing. So being able to utilize the tools that they gave us and the patience to use some direction in our life versus just winging everything gives you a different level of confidence to take on everyday life."

Local organizations and community members have become more aware of the impact of the opioid crisis and the library's role in addressing it. Though most of the community is still not

aware of the collaboration between the library and Recovery Court or the opioid crisis, the Recovery Court director discussed the shift she has seen in the community, “The awareness that the community has of this program and of addiction and the effects addiction has on people has exploded.”

Working on the curriculum has provided BCPL new partnership opportunities with a variety of organizations in the community who are helping to deliver aspects of the curriculum along with the library. Developing and strengthening relationships with agencies like the health department and higher education institutions enables library staff to connect with these partners to support individual participant needs and other help that may be needed in the future. Employers in the area also now contact the Recovery Court seeking potential job applicants.

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“I’ve had students who have realized what an asset a library can be in terms of employment. For example, they can take practice tests for career exams at the library. One of the students applied for a job at a local manufacturer. She needed to take a mechanical and spatial test, so we got her set up with a practice test at the library. She got the job. It was the connection for her that you can find other resources you need to make a life at the library.”

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—Blount County Public Library Frontline Staff

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the Life Skills Curriculum, BCPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- The work can be emotionally draining at times because relationships are developed with Recovery Court participants who have difficult life experiences. Participants have also died while in the program.
- Engaging a diverse group of Recovery Court participants at different stages in life with the same curriculum is challenging.
- There is stigma present in the community against individuals with felony offenses or those struggling with substance use disorder.
- More library staff and Recovery Court counselors are needed to help prevent burnout and keep up with the demand for the program.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Jump in, learn along the way, and be flexible.**
- Recognize how your community might feel about the issue and **meet them where they are.**
- **Provide opportunities to engage** while also allowing for ways for community members to see the success of the program naturally.
- **Collaborate with partners**, particularly those working directly with the issues of addiction and recovery.
- **Show up** in the community in other ways outside the primary programming to demonstrate support and help understand the needs of the community.
- **See the person first**, before their issues with substance abuse or misuse; this includes asking them what they need versus telling them.
- Continually **develop relationships** with allies.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The staff of the Blount County Public Library and their partners at the Blount County Recovery Court generously provided their time for these interviews, as well as their review of the case study.

The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (project number LG-00-18-0298-18).

The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this case study do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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## NOTES

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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### Case Study: Everett Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with five individuals: three staff members at the Everett Public Library, a staff member at Snohomish County Human Services Department’s Behavioral Health division, and a library board member. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](http://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

### Community and Library Overview

Everett Public Library (EPL), located in Washington state’s Snohomish County, has a service population of 109,800 and operates with one central and one branch location. It has an operating budget of \$5,804,314 with 17.2 full-time equivalent librarian staff and 34.3 other staff, totaling 51.5 personnel. The library reported over a half million visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

Everett is comprised of approximately two-thirds White populations, followed by 15% Hispanic or Latino populations, and 9% Asian populations.<sup>2</sup> Eighty-eight percent of its population has at least a high school diploma, and one out of four of its residents has a bachelor’s degree (23%).<sup>3</sup> The median household income in Everett is \$54,562, and 16.3% of the population are living in poverty.<sup>4</sup> Everett’s unemployment rate is 4.2%,<sup>5</sup> and 10.6% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>6</sup>

The central library is located in an area with a shortage of mental health and primary care professionals.<sup>7</sup> Snohomish County has an opioid prescribing rate of 60.9,<sup>8</sup> which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose

deaths for Snohomish County was 390 people per 100,000, during 2015 through 2017.<sup>9</sup> Opioid related deaths comprise the majority of all drug overdose deaths in the county.<sup>10</sup>

In 2016, Snohomish County represented approximately one out of every six heroin deaths in Washington state.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the county has declared the opioid crisis a life-threatening emergency and activated the emergency management system.

The Snohomish County Health District estimated 5,000 to 10,000 people in the county have opioid use disorder and that another 35,000 to 80,000 people are misusing opioids.<sup>12</sup>



**1 CENTRAL AND 1 BRANCH LOCATION**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 109,800**



**UNINSURED RATE, 10.6%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 60.9 (per 100 people)**

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“I think most people who came to the public training didn’t leave feeling scared. They left feeling really empowered. Part of that training was us also connecting staff to the humanity of the crisis. That it’s not just these abstract people with this addiction problem. That this could be you. This could be your co-worker. And that you could see that there are a lot of people in our community who could fall victim to this. And it’s not just a street drug problem.”

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—Everett Public Library Manager

## Everett Public Library’s Opioid Response

To address the concerns connected to the opioid crisis in Everett, the library has engaged in a variety of opioid response activities independently and with their community partners.

### NALOXONE TRAINING FOR THE STAFF AND PUBLIC

EPL was one of the first library systems in Washington state to offer optional naloxone training to its staff. This training program was offered in partnership with the Snohomish County Human Services Department’s Behavioral Health (SCHSD) division.

The program teaches how to administer naloxone, in addition to general opioid prevention education such as recognizing the signs and symptoms of an overdose, substance use disorder, addiction, and physical dependence, in hopes of demystifying and destigmatizing the opioid crisis. SCHSD also conducted these naloxone trainings at the library for the public.

### FACILITY MODIFICATIONS

To make the bathrooms safer for both patrons and staff, EPL added sharps containers for needle disposal, made the stall height shorter so security could more easily see in if there was a problem, and added windows to the main doors to the bathrooms to also increase visibility.

Because they added the windows, they removed the mirrors for patron privacy.

### COMMUNITY RESOURCE DAYS

The library holds monthly Resource Days where local service organizations offer information to community members about social services such as housing, health care, employment, and substance abuse treatment. The organizations send a representative to the library to host a table where they can share resources and speak with the public about the programs and services that they offer. Participating organizations include ChildStrive, Sea-Mar Community Health Center, Volunteers of America, Cocoon House, Community Health Centers of Snohomish County, Compass Health, WorkForce, WorkSource, and Employment Securities Division.

### BOOK TALKS AND AUTHOR EVENTS

EPL hosted community events highlighting books related to the opioid crisis (e.g., *American Fix: Inside the Opioid Addiction Crisis - and How to End It* by opioid survivor Ryan Hampton)<sup>13</sup> and author speaking events focused on substance use as part of the Everett Reads! community-wide reading program (e.g., *Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey Through His Son’s Addiction* by David Sheff),<sup>14</sup> where over 350 patrons attended.

### INTERNAL OPIOID RESPONSE POLICY

The library developed an internal policy that addresses naloxone administration procedures for its staff. To encourage continued availability and use of naloxone at a city-wide level, the

city's human resources department worked with the library, parks and recreation department, and the police to develop a policy for the city.

EPL garnered internal support for these activities through administering an informal survey to the staff about perceived needs, and then discussing the potential trainings and changes at staff meetings. The administration was also able to evaluate community needs by reviewing staff-submitted incident reports, which are required to document events such as where and when needles are found, or if there is a concern about a specific patron, to keep everyone updated on potential safety issues. Staff also learn about incidents that may be relevant to their work through a weekly staff newsletter.

To increase awareness about their work and advertise the naloxone trainings to the public, the library shared flyers with agencies they work with and posted them on their website and social media. The library's public relations officer creates press releases and communicates with the media. The Board also receives copies of all press releases and relevant updates via email.

## Partnering for Success

Partnerships have been key to the library's ability to implement several of their opioid response activities. One partnership is through the city-wide task force that started in 2014 called Community Streets Initiative, that has evolved into the present-day Safe Streets Directive. This original task force was comprised of 23 community partners working with the city of Everett, charged with finding "comprehensive, collaborative, and compassionate responses to street-level social issues." The group developed a report with 63 short and long-term recommendations to address street-level social issues, many of which directly address substance misuse and opioids.

Today, the initiative, called the Safe Streets Plan, uses "outreach and enforcement, supportive housing, and diversion programs to address issues of homelessness, mental illness, crime and addiction." By participating in the task

force, the library staff were able to increase their awareness about issues impacting the community, which prompted the growth of the library's opioid response activities.

EPL's partnership with SCHSD started when the library inquired about having its staff trained in naloxone administration. SCHSD has since provided training to the library staff, the public, and provided EPL with naloxone free of charge. By offering the training at the library, SCHSD also increased their profile in the community and saw an increase in requests for similar training in other locations, allowing them to form new partnerships and reach more people to address community health concerns.



Community Resource Day event.  
Photo courtesy of Everett Public Library

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library's Response

Local factors and conditions that led to EPL's response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- an increase in the number of people who needed services
- drug use occurring within and near the library
- physical location of the library in the city center

- the city of Everett as the county seat
- the implementation of the city-wide Community Streets Initiative

Drug use happening in and near the library served as a major prompt for discussions to address the opioid crisis. Moreover, some community partners and library staff reported there was an increase in the number of people seeking help for substance abuse within the community, and this prompted the library to begin asking what they could do to help.

The city of Everett is also the county seat, making it the center of all of the social services provided within the county, including shelters, food assistance programs, bathing facilities, and treatment. The library's location near these social service points may also be why the library has become an epicenter for those seeking services. An EPL board member stated, "There's a debate about whether or not this brings more people that need these services to the area or is, in fact, meeting a need that already existed in the area. But what ends up happening—because the library is a public space and welcoming for everyone—is we become sort of a gathering place for people who have no other place to go."

Finally, the library's involvement with the city-wide Community Streets Initiative provided opportunities for continued discussions about the opioid crisis, as well as the needed supports to continue their work.

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"We made our decision because we did want our staff to be educated and trained and prepared. It saves lives, and it saves them instantly and immediately. And that kind of training, knowing what that is and what to do in that moment, absolutely can save lives. And that is something we thought was both valuable and empowers our staff in a situation where you can feel pretty powerless."

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—Everett Public Library Board Member

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of EPL staff, their community partners, the media, and the community as a whole, are supportive of EPL's opioid response activities.

### LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

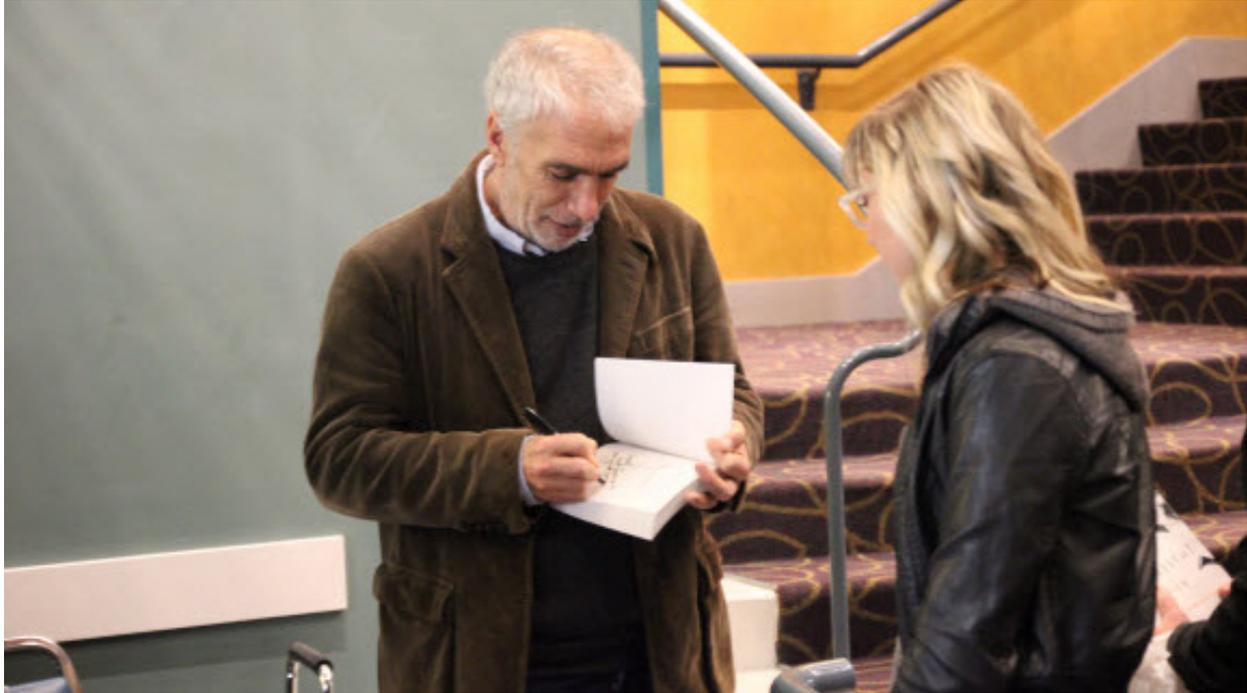
Largely, EPL's staff was supportive of the opioid response work the library decided to engage with, however, there were initially some mixed opinions. The naloxone training was intentionally offered as optional to respect the fact that some staff may not be comfortable intervening in overdose situations. Interviewees felt that the library director's efforts to communicate with staff about their opioid response, along with conducting an informal staff survey, helped build stronger internal support for the work.

The board has been supportive by recognizing the library's role in the community as not only an information center and community resource, but also as an organization with a goal to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone, no matter what life challenges patrons might be experiencing.

### MEDIA

The media responded to and engaged with EPL's opioid activities positively. EPL did not publicize some of its opioid work, such as the staff training in naloxone or physical changes made to the bathrooms. However, the public training in naloxone was shared with the media via press releases. The library shared the press release via email to about 80 recipients including different media groups and neighborhood leaders.

The media took an interest in the public training in naloxone because there was curiosity surrounding why the library was engaging in this work, as it differed from the standard author talks and events EPL typically hosts. The media also covered EPL's first overdose reversal via naloxone.



Author David Sheff at a library event.  
Photo courtesy of Everett Public Library

## COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Library staff noted that the community had mixed reactions to EPL's opioid activities. The reaction was most noticeable when physical changes were made to the building, specifically to the bathroom, to discourage drug use. Some community members felt that the changes condoned drug use, even though the changes were made to make the space safer for the public. Others vocally supported these changes and appreciated the library addressing the issue.

The opioid-focused author events hosted by the library were well-received and well-attended by the public. Some community patrons might find it easier to attend an informational session at the library than reaching out to different service or information providers that may have a stigma associated with them. But following the opioid-focused sessions, library staff also heard feedback from the community that patrons wanted to revisit lighter subject matter as well since the topic of the opioid crisis can be intense and emotional.

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"I think a role the library plays is really the community education piece. We may not be the answer for everything, but we are pretty good at finding who knows the answer and connecting people to resources."

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—Everett Public Library Director

## Outcomes of the Library's Response

Positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of EPL's opioid response work include:

- reduced stigma for addiction issues
- a more connected, educated community
- new partnerships created

Within the community, library staff and community partners believe there has been at least an anecdotal reduction in the negative stigma associated with drug use, as well as a change in perception regarding who is affected by the community's opioid crisis. In Everett,

many of the drug overdoses in the community are people over the age of 60, which defies the stereotypical images of who is impacted by drug use. Through the library's training events, community members are learning that the opioid crisis affects everyone.

In addition, the programming has led to a more connected, educated community, which ultimately leads to a healthier one. The Everett Public Library director expanded on this by saying, "I think the opioid work is definitely helping connect the communities. Not only connecting them to resources, but also to each other. They haven't met before, but they're in this—talking about a sensitive issue—and they hang out talking afterwards. You see them walking out together, and they didn't know each other before the meeting. And I think that's one of the things we do is connect people through our programming."

As the library's involvement in the opioid response garnered attention, the library started supporting the community by providing library materials to a local diversion program. The library was contacted by the program and asked to provide books that would be made available to people going through treatment and rehabilitation. Participants were leaving the program early and citing boredom as a key reason. The library materials were made available to participants, providing access to an activity that could encourage them to stay and complete the program.

Though EPL does not yet have a formal program evaluation set up, they do track attendance at their programs. For example, the opioid events offered through the library have garnered almost 600 participants. To date, there has been one overdose incident at the library, and staff were able to successfully administer naloxone and revive the individual. To support the tracking of local statistics, library staff will report overdose events by mailing in a postcard to the health department with basic demographic information about the naloxone recipient.

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"It's not an easy topic. And it's not a fun topic. But I think it's great that our library has decided to be responsive to this, and to be part of the solution. Our library can stake a claim in the community. We're affected and we can help affect solutions and be a player in that space and use our strength that people trust us as an educational facility, as an information facility, and as kind of a social and community gathering point."

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—Everett Public Library Manager

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

Several factors contributed to the success of EPL's opioid response activities including:

- **Credibility and importance of the library.** Local organizations and community members recognize the importance of EPL, and public libraries generally, seeing them as a place where a person can get access to credible information and resources.
- **A champion to move the work forward.** The Community Streets Initiative has a champion in its manager. This manager developed the initiative, propelled the work forward, and continues to serve as the main contact for the library.
- **Local prioritization of the topic.** The city and county declared this topic a priority to address. When the topic was acknowledged as a federal priority, this provided additional leverage to move the work forward, including successfully advocating for increased security and facility changes.

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid response activities, the library experienced challenges and identified needs and opportunities for the future:

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“We’re so grateful to libraries for their willingness to do this because it is sensitive messaging. We understand that culturally it has a lot of stigma associated with it and a lot of misinformation and that can be a delicate thing. But their willingness to address that, become ambassadors, and help eliminate some of that misinformation is a huge benefit to the community as a whole.”

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—Community Partner Director

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- **Stocking naloxone.** Currently the library is provided with naloxone for free but this may not always be the case. It would be ideal if naloxone could also be provided to the public who attend the trainings.
- **Financial support needs**
  - Special programming often has an additional cost, such as travel or honorariums for speakers.
  - Developing a social worker program that would operate for a several hours per week at EPL would potentially be a large benefit to the community and those who are or know someone with substance use disorder.
  - There is a need to emotionally support library staff related to potential stress or emotional toll from engaging in the opioid work such as through acute or long-term debrief counseling or therapy.
- **Balancing programming needs.** Opioid prevention programming is just one aspect of the library’s efforts to serve community needs. Community members value diverse programming that reflects a range of educational, positive, and fun activities.
- **Not winning everyone over.** Not everyone will agree with the library’s programming and engagement with opioid misuse prevention, so it is important to focus energy on those willing to participate and learn.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Develop more and even stronger partnerships.** There are always more partnerships and organizations to engage with, which can lead to a bigger impact and an opportunity to share in the development and distribution of resources.
- **Start earlier.** Respond as soon as feasibly possible to the community’s needs.
- **See the human in need.** Put your personal beliefs aside, and demonstrate compassion even if you do not agree with a decision or policy made to benefit the community or individuals in need. Not everyone will agree with all decisions and programming, so there is a need to be comfortable with potential pushback.
- **Provide a forum for people to come together in recovery.** The library could serve as a physical space for those who are in recovery to be able to express and support one another.
- **Engage with continuous education and training.** Regularly offer the library staff naloxone administration training and stay up to date on the community’s needs. This needs to be revisited so people feel confident in their ability to respond and have the opportunity to learn more about how the crisis is impacting their community.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The staff of the Everett Public Library and their partners at the Snohomish County Human Services Department's Behavioral Health generously provided their time for these interviews, as well as for review of the case study.

The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

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## NOTES

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Kalamazoo Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with nine individuals: three staff members at the Kalamazoo Public Library, two staff members at their partner organization the Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan, a library board member, and three community members who worked with peer navigators at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Kalamazoo Public Library (KPL) has a service population size of 116,445 and operates with one central and four branch library locations. It has an operating budget of \$11,638,645 with 19.5 librarians and 100 other staff, totaling 119.5 personnel. On average there are over a 600,000 visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

The library's service area includes Kalamazoo City, Oshtemo township and Kalamazoo township. These communities are comprised of 71.2% White population, one-fifth Black or African American populations (19.4%), and 6.6% percent Hispanic or Latino populations. About one-third (36.4%) of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree, and 91.8% have at least a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$40,749, and about one quarter (26%) of its citizens are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Kalamazoo County's unemployment rate is 3.5%,<sup>4</sup> and about 8.7% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

The central library location is in an area with a shortage of mental health care professionals.<sup>6</sup> Kalamazoo County has an opioid prescribing rate of 63.3,<sup>7</sup> which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. Kalamazoo County has more people using prescription opioids than the national average.<sup>8</sup> The number of general drug overdose deaths for Kalamazoo County was 144 people during 2015 through 2017.<sup>9</sup>



**5 LIBRARY LOCATIONS**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 116,445**



**UNINSURED RATE, 8.7%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 63.3  
(per 100 people)**

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“I predict that it is going to be common for a library of our size, or any library, to have a social work connection. It just makes sense to me because libraries are the democratizing, stigma-free place where people feel like they can come to and have some semblance of safety, especially in the kind of polarized world we live in. You can just go to the library, and be in the library, and talk to people, and not have to wear your feelings on your sleeve. I think that’s really important.”

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—Kalamazoo Public Library Manager

## Kalamazoo Public Library’s Opioid Response

Kalamazoo Public Library’s primary strategy to address the opioid crisis is their peer navigator program, which supports patrons in need by identifying and guiding them to appropriate resources and services. For this program, the library has partnered with the Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan, an organization that employs people in recovery as peer navigators. The Recovery Institute peer navigators work on site at the library and serve as a resource to help the public, just like other library staff. The navigators connect patrons to recovery services, community services, and also offer direct support.

KPL and Recovery Institute staff collaborated on the development of the program, intentionally starting small using existing resources and working together on iterations of the program as it grew. A staff member at the Recovery Institute described this further, “We just put the pieces together and started small with a couple of hours per week, because we were basically using other funding resources to loan out our staff to the project before there were any identifiable funds. We squeezed out a few hours here and there that we could spare. Then the library put some money in the budget to hire us and that

was nine hours a week. And then it was 15, and now we just secured our grant funding to get 40 hours per week.”

KPL leadership first sought board approval for the program, then moved on to internal staff buy-in. The Recovery Institute provided library staff with a presentation that covered what a peer navigator is, what they do, and what the program would look like in the library. Awareness for the program is built through word of mouth and by making contact in person when peer navigators walk around in the library and introduce themselves to patrons. The library does not do other external marketing of the program.

In addition to the peer navigator program, library staff have the option to become trained in naloxone administration, the opioid overdose antidote, and there are sharps containers in the bathrooms to allow for safe needle disposal.

Staff also began distributing comfort kits available with items such as shampoo, deodorant, and snacks to distribute to community members in need.

## Partnering for Success

Much of the success of KPL’s peer navigator program can be attributed to its community partner organization, the Recovery Institute,

which is equally invested in the work as the library. From the start, Recovery Institute staff jumped to offer their services for free to help get the program up and running.

The library and the Recovery Institute share similar missions and values. A staff member at the Recovery Institute elaborated on this, “The library is a public service organization, so it’s a philosophy they have that allows us to partner easily with them. That’s just the way I’ve understood it as we’ve gotten together. They also have a real principle of civil liberties that rights of people should be honored with dignity and respect. These are values we really hold strongly.”

The library is also an active member of the Kalamazoo County Opioid Coalition, which addresses opioid treatment, awareness, and education in the community. For example, the Coalition worked on the safe needle exchange law passed in Kalamazoo, as well as on the extension of a Good Samaritan law

that passed in June 2019 and exempts staff in Michigan libraries from lawsuits if naloxone is administered onsite.

## Funding

Initially, KPL’s peer navigator program services were offered three hours a week, with the Recovery Institute donating these hours. The Recovery Institute provided the services to the library for about six months, without the need for additional funding. The program has since expanded, and out of the 40 hours per week that the peer navigator program will operate at the library, the library will fund 15 hours through its operating budget.

The Recovery Institute negotiated with Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health to fund the expansion to 40 hours per week, under a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration program called State Opioid Response Grants. This increase in hours for the



Peer Navigators meet at the library.  
Photo courtesy of Kalamazoo Public Library

program was accomplished as a result of staff investing time and effort to demonstrate the impact of the program to share with the library board and other funding decision-makers.

A Recovery Institute staff member described the value of this outreach, “The library has written articles and given talks to audiences that we wouldn’t really necessarily have been involved in before. Having somebody speak about your organization in a positive way in this kind of partnership really increases our reputation in town. We’re a really small non-profit. A lot of people hadn’t heard of us. So when the library talks about you, it’s a whole different level of exposure and it’s a really positive level of exposure for us.”

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library’s Response

Local factors and conditions that led to KPL’s response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- **Regular use of the library by populations experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder.** Library staff had recognized the challenge of serving patrons who were experiencing difficult circumstances and required additional supports the library was not equipped to provide.
- **KPL participation in the Kalamazoo County Opioid Coalition.** In fall 2017, the Kalamazoo County Opioid Coalition gathered community leaders and medical experts to discuss the local impact of the opioid epidemic. KPL staff attended this initial meeting and decided they wanted to be a part of the solution. This is also where KPL learned about the Recovery Institute’s peer navigator program as they were also a Coalition member.
- **Examples of successful social work efforts at other libraries.** Library staff

were also tracking what other US libraries were doing to address the opioid crisis in their own communities and were inspired by the social work and peer navigator programs of public libraries in Denver and San Francisco.

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“Really, the library covers about everything. Anything I need to know or what I have to do, I can ask one of the librarians here. They’ve been very helpful. And it’s very refreshing and uplifting when I talk with the peer navigator also. We are kind of peers because he’s in recovery too, so we have good conversations. He’s kind of like a recovery coach with me, which is cool because I’m comfortable with talking with people that been down the road I’ve been.”

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— Community Member

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of KPL staff, their community partners, the media, and the community as a whole are supportive of the library’s opioid response activities.

### LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

The library’s leadership shared that they were initially concerned about how the program might be received by the staff and board, and worked to mitigate these concerns and generate buy-in when it was introduced.

For example, library staff participate in professional development sessions called “KPL Academy,” and prior to the launch of this program, a KPL Academy session introduced the staff to the Recovery Institute, how they work in other organizations, what they do, and who they are. As new peer navigators start at the library, they are introduced via email to the library staff,

including a picture, and they also walk around and meet staff in person.

Library staff also understand peer navigators will help them to do their job better by providing direct assistance to patrons with specific needs. One library frontline staff person expanded on this, “A lot of times you interact with people and you’re like, ‘I just wish I could help them a little bit more but I don’t have the resources to be able to do that.’ So having peer navigators in the library has been really great.”

## MEDIA

Library staff have intentionally not promoted the program to the media to allow the program to get its footing before sharing the work externally. There is a concern that the program might cause unwarranted worries in the public. The library would prefer to provide some data to demonstrate the program’s positive impact on the community to offset any concerns, but this data is not yet available.

In addition, there is a lack of local media in Kalamazoo. Most of the television media is produced out of a larger, neighboring city, and the local newspaper is part of a group of small-town papers without much local content.



Staff provide comfort kits to community members in need.

*Photo courtesy of Kalamazoo Public Library*

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

KPL’s main partner, the Recovery Institute, has been very supportive of the library since the start. Its staff are “110%” on board because a number of their staff have experienced challenges in their own life, such as homelessness and substance misuse, and have used the library as a refuge. These individuals and the organization as a whole were pleased to be invited into the library as an equal partner. Moreover, other partners of the Recovery Institute are also excited about the library’s involvement in peer navigation.

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Library staff shared that as patrons learn more about the program, they either express support that it seems like a great idea or some discomfort with the evolving role of the library in meeting these community needs. The patrons who access the peer navigator program speak very highly of it and are grateful for the benefits they have received and the relationships they have built through these engagements, “The peer navigator is about the only person I’m comfortable talking about my situation with. It’s been very helpful at the library, and I appreciate that the navigator’s here with the program. I hope this program continues.”

## Outcomes of the Library’s Response

Several positive outcomes have occurred as a result of KPL’s opioid response activities. The library has developed new partnerships because of presentations at community events with the Recovery Institute. For example, the library plans to work with the local food bank to have their food pantry truck come to the library and set up during specified times for their patrons.

The library is also having exploratory discussions with the police department about working with their community liaisons, and with Western Michigan University about potential opportunities for social work students to intern with the library’s peer navigators. KPL

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“The key to this whole thing is having a partner that’s totally in on it. I have never worked with a group in my 20-plus years working in public libraries that’s so invested in the program as much as they are. It’s so incredibly awesome.”

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—Kalamazoo Public Library Manager

staff believe they are overall more connected with the city and seen as a resource for other community organizations as a result of their opioid response programming.

Collecting data to help demonstrate the effectiveness of the program is a challenge because of the need to build trust in the populations served by the program. Individuals accessing these services might not want to share their personal information or have it written down at the library, and the peer navigators feel that trust is critical.

There are, however, anecdotal stories of impact from staff. For example, over 100 contacts have been made with patrons by peer navigators since the start of the program, and patrons who have accessed the program now have housing and are off the streets. Anecdotally, there are fewer behavior and safety concern incidents occurring at the library since the peer navigators started.

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

There were many factors that contributed to the success of the KPL’s peer navigator programming, including the following:

- champions within the library and at the library’s equally committed community partner organization
- a new library director who demonstrated support for the peer navigation program and created an opportunity to explore the partnership
- starting small and letting the program grow naturally

- mission alignment between the library and partner organization

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid response activities, KPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- There was, and still exists, **some resistance from staff** to any change in current procedures and protocols, such as bringing in the peer navigators.
- **Additional funding** is needed for more peer navigator capacity support during all library hours.
- The scope of work between peer navigators and library personnel **should be clearly defined** for the organizations and the staff.
- Substance use disorder affects all populations and spans many substances. The **programming needs to address the full spectrum** and not target certain groups or substances.
- **More community collaboration and awareness building** between organizations is needed so that resources and efforts can be combined versus competitively fought over.

- Broadly, there is a **housing shortage and public transportation issues** in Kalamazoo which can limit access to services.

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Reach out to and partner** with organizations that have overlapping missions already potentially working on similar issues.

- **Educate the public and staff to break down stigma.** The library is currently looking at offering Mental Health First Aid training to staff to aid in this education.
- Communicate and ensure **board and frontline staff buy-in** from the start.
- **Provide compassion and trauma training for staff** to see a person for more than their substance use disorder.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The staff of the Kalamazoo Public Library and their partners at the Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan generously provided their time for these interviews, as well as for review of the case study.

The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: <https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis>.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (project number LG-00-18-0298-18).

The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this case study do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: New Orleans Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with nine individuals: three staff members at the New Orleans Public Library, two staff members at the New Orleans Health Department, a library board member, and three community members who participated in training at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) has a service population size of 393,292 and comprises 15 locations. It has an operating budget of \$19,451,435 with 140.88 librarian staff and 52.5 other staff, totaling 193.38 personnel. On average there are over 1.6 million visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

New Orleans, Louisiana, is made up of mostly Black or African American populations (60%), followed by White populations (34%). About one-third (37%) of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree, and 86% have at least a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$38,721, and one-quarter of its citizens are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> New Orleans's unemployment rate is 4.7%,<sup>4</sup> and 12.4% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

The main library location is in an area with a shortage of primary care and mental health care professionals.<sup>6</sup> Orleans Parish has an opioid prescribing rate of 59.8,<sup>7</sup> which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose deaths for Orleans Parish was 405 people per 100,000 from 2015 through 2017.<sup>8</sup>



**15 LIBRARY LOCATIONS**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 393,292**



**UNINSURED RATE, 12.4%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 59.8  
(per 100 people)**

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“We connect patrons to resources, whether they are books, computers, people, or organizations. That’s what we do. This is another resource: putting people in touch with certain health department–level groups that would be able to help them, whether it’s a short-term, ‘I need naloxone right now,’ or, ‘I need to talk about a relative that I need to get into treatment.’ We’re just connecting those resources, just like we connect everything.”

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—New Orleans Public Library Administrator

## New Orleans Public Library’s Opioid Response

The New Orleans Public Library, in partnership with the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD), is coordinating and offering opioid overdose and prevention educational and training programs both internally to library staff and externally to the public. The curriculum provides education on the opioid crisis in New Orleans, how to recognize overdose symptoms, and how to administer naloxone (the opioid overdose reversal drug) to someone suspected of experiencing an opioid overdose.

This program, Bystander Response Training, is unique in that it is offered in combination with Stop the Bleed<sup>9</sup> and CPR training, an approach that often encourages higher attendance because people opt to attend for the less stigmatized topics. The training is offered at locations throughout the NOPL system to increase community reach.

The curriculum was developed by NOHD; NOPL and NOHD work together to coordinate the locations, recruitment, and advertising. Publicity about the classes is distributed through the library’s monthly magazines, flyers displayed in the buildings, the library’s and NOHD’s websites and social media, and press releases for the radio and TV.

To encourage participation in the training events, the library and NOHD do not require attendees to provide their real names or full addresses, in case interested individuals are concerned about privacy or they may be experiencing homelessness or living in transitional housing. Library leadership encourages staff participation in the training, and managers support the effort by coordinating schedules to ensure that staff members who want to attend are able to do so. Library staff are informed of training opportunities via email communications.

NOPL and NOHD are also working together to secure funding to install sharps containers in all library restrooms and on the exterior of library buildings. So far, NOHD has provided NOPL with seven sharps containers at four library locations.

## Partnering for Success

NOPL worked closely with their partners to implement the naloxone training, specifically NOHD and New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (EMS). NOHD coordinates with the library to offer naloxone training, and if the library uses a naloxone kit or if they have kits set to expire, EMS will replace them.

NOHD has also tapped into a federal program called the Medical Reserve Corps. The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a program that started after the September 11 attacks, and can be found in localities around the

country. It is a group of volunteers that support their community during health emergencies; volunteers sometimes have a public health or medical background, but often simply want to address public health concerns. The MRC has helped the health department in New Orleans expand its reach and capacity, including through this partnership with NOPL, where MRC volunteers often provide the public naloxone training.

As a result of the success of the Bystander Response Training offered through the library, NOHD is reaching out to other organizations, such as centers of worship, local restaurants, bars, hotels, gas stations, and universities, regarding their interest in participating in a similar training program.



Bystander Response Training for the public.  
Photo courtesy of New Orleans Public Library

## Funding

The library made an initial investment of approximately \$2,300 to purchase naloxone kits to have on-site and have incurred minimal costs to operate the program beyond staff time. NOHD received a grant of \$7,000 to purchase naloxone training supplies and support program development. After the library began offering the training, they applied for and received a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine to fund a staff position called the

Health Literacy Educator. This staff member will implement health education that will focus on strengthening the health literacy and information the public receives, some of which will specifically focus on opioid overdose prevention and addiction treatment.

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library's Response

Factors and conditions that led to NOPL's response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- influence of other public libraries' efforts
- media coverage of the opioid issue in New Orleans
- increase in severity and use of opioids
- drug use occurring at the library

Library staff became aware of efforts at other libraries across the country, such as at the Free Library of Philadelphia, to combat and prevent opioid overdoses within their facilities. This prompted discussion at the leadership level at NOPL regarding what the library could do, knowing that New Orleans was facing a similar crisis.

Library administrators spoke with the medical director of NOHD and decided to offer the naloxone training to staff. This opportunity, accompanied by information on how safe and easy naloxone is to use and facts about how opioids are affecting the community in New Orleans, was then presented to the library board and to the library staff.

During the same timeframe, the local media was showcasing the rise of opioid use both across the nation and locally in New Orleans, highlighting the fact that New Orleans had more opioid-related deaths than the national average. Additionally, NOPL administrators and staff noted drug use in and around library facilities, prompting concerns about how to respond.

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“I like that it was spread out geographically, and that during the training, I could tell they really put effort into it. I could tell that the person who was training us really cared about it, and that they wanted to make sure that we all really knew how to do this. We all went up and had to actually practice administering naloxone several times.”

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—New Orleans Public Library Frontline Staff Member

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of NOPL staff, their community partners, the media, and impacted community members are positive and supportive of NOPL’s opioid response activities.

### LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

NOPL staff and board were very supportive of the naloxone training program, though staff initially raised questions about safety and liability, specifically if something were to go wrong while administering naloxone. To assuage any concerns, the library worked with city attorneys to confirm that Good Samaritan Laws in Louisiana would protect staff members who aided an individual experiencing an overdose.

Some staff were also worried about their personal safety—either with individuals under the influence of cross-contaminated fentanyl or the behavior of someone who has just been revived with naloxone. Library leadership and NOHD anticipated these concerns; they provided information about what to expect in an overdose situation and they did not make the training mandatory. Staff appreciated that the training was available at multiple sites and reviewed the class positively.

In a presentation to the library board, the NOHD medical director outlined the severity of the opioid crisis in New Orleans and explained what

the naloxone training would entail. One board member shared, “It’s one thing to watch the opioid epidemic and what is happening across the United States. But to be involved in the process and understand the necessity to help someone that may be suffering or in an opioid crisis and how naloxone can assist with saving a life, I just thought that it was extremely positive for the board to be educated on this and understanding what it can do to save a life.”

### MEDIA

The media’s coverage of NOPL’s opioid programming was positive. Members of the media often attended training events, which helped to publicize these offerings to the public.

### COMMUNITY PARTNER

Prior to the development of the opioid response training, partnership activities between the library and the health department were informal and infrequent. For example, NOHD brochures about emerging public health issues would be available in the library. Now the partnership is stronger, with both organizations looking for additional ways to work together in the future.

The partnership between NOHD and NOPL has resulted in the implementation of similar training at additional community organizations. NOHD has reached out to other groups, like the recreational departments, to host opioid response classes, and points to the program at the library as a success story. Moreover, the mayor’s office has been supportive of naloxone training, overdose prevention work, and harm reduction strategies.

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“It’s turned out to be a great partnership, in terms of logistics and support. The library and their staff have gone out of the way to spread the word in ways that we wouldn’t have access to, like getting it on the events pages, flyers at the library, and the magazines, things like that. And the physical space actually has been very useful because the libraries are somewhere that is publicly accessible and publicly comfortable for people to show up and not feel like they’re being funneled into some government agency.”

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—Community Partner Frontline Staff

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

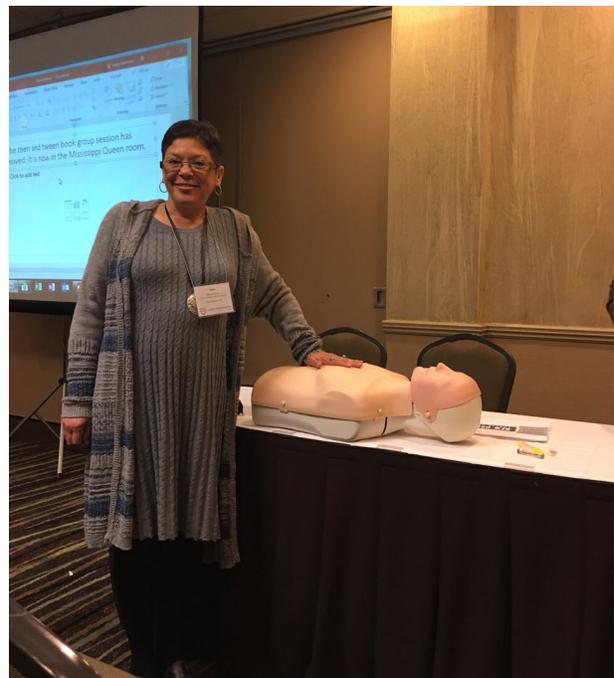
The larger community has responded positively to the Bystander Response Training; they are interested in the work the library is engaging in, and appreciates that the library is hosting trainings at various locations throughout the city. At first, some community members wondered why NOPL and NOHD were focused on helping people with substance use disorder, but the curriculum proactively addressed this concern by explaining who is affected by the opioid crisis and how addiction can develop, which helps to reduce the stigma.

Community members who attended the training had very positive experiences. They appreciated the hands-on nature of the course and the opportunity to try the supplies on test dummies. Participants learned about the training through announcements on TV, the radio, and bulletin boards at the library. They attended to be able to help their fellow citizens, should it be needed, and felt it was important to have an educated public.

One suggestion from the attendees was a request to include more information in the training about substance abuse referral to better aid others in seeking treatment for addiction.

Community members shared the following about their experiences in the Bystander Training program:

- “I’m a pastor in a neighborhood where there are lots of drugs, and some of my congregation have family members who are abusing drugs. Two years ago, we actually had someone die outside of our gates from an overdose. We want to be able to assist our family members, but also our communities, and help the persons who are addicted to substance, particularly opioids.
- “I was so happy with that course in that they showed everything that a bystander or uninitiated person could do to save a life, and I think the library is doing an excellent job in teaching the public.”



New Orleans Public Library staff member preparing to present on their program at a conference..  
*Courtesy of New Orleans Public Library.*

## Outcomes of the Library’s Response

Many positive outcomes have resulted from NOPL’s opioid response work. Though NOPL and NOHD are not formally evaluating their opioid response programming, they do track attendance at the training sessions. To date 167 community members and 101 library staff members have been trained. Using naloxone,

library staff were able to revive one individual in the library who experienced an overdose.

Since its implementation, NOPL has presented the naloxone training program to other parishes in the area. Moreover, the training is being hosted at other organizations outside of libraries, including in the office of public defenders, the Sheriff's Office, and recreational departments. NOHD has also been contacted by training participants and asked to provide the classes at other sites.

NOPL received a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine to fund a staff person to implement health education that will focus on strengthening the information the public receives.

Community members and library staff who attended the opioid training expressed feeling more confident and knowledgeable should an opioid overdose situation arise. As one library frontline staff member stated, "I think it generally just makes us feel more confident and competent to deal with this issue whenever it comes up."

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

Factors that contributed to the success of the collaboration between NOPL and NOHD to develop and implement the opioid curriculum include:

- **Having a champion to drive the work forward.** The director of NOHD is very invested in and supportive of the project. The library also has a dedicated staff member who serves as the key liaison to the health department to coordinate training and communicate needs.
- **External partner capacity and support.** Via the Medical Reserve Corps, NOHD has access to a group of volunteers that can be trained as instructors for the courses. The police department and the city attorney's office also support and enable the work. The local EMS replaces naloxone kits as they are used or expire.

- **Support of the mayor's office.** The library and health department are a part of the local government, which has support by the mayor. This provides credibility and signals approval from the city.

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid overdose prevention training, NOPL experienced challenges and needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

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"Not everyone is privy to the same life, and there are some people out there that need help and need assistance. If we each are aware of what is going on in our community and we are training properly and we are in a position of saving one life, then we've done a lot. Because even one life is too much to lose."

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—New Orleans Public Library Board Member

## CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- **Additional naloxone supplies** are needed at each branch location, and program partners would like to distribute naloxone to all participants in the public training.
- **Supplies and equipment**, such as mannequins, to support the training are needed, as well as additional promotional materials to advertise the courses.
- In order for library staff to stay current and comfortable with naloxone administration, it is recommended that they **repeat the training** annually.
- **Debriefing and counseling** should be made available to staff after naloxone is used to reverse an overdose.
- It is important to ensure that all trainers have **cultural and community knowledge and awareness**.

- The training program needs to better **reach populations who are at a higher risk** for opioid overdose.

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- Offer the **opioid training to new staff** when they are hired.
- Highlight to library staff the **importance and ease of the training**.
- Remain in the forefront of community issues and **understand what problems your community is facing**.
- **Keep communication with partners open**, with a regular exchange of information.
- Begin any necessary **legal research** or processes immediately, including confirming local or state Good Samaritan Laws, and any training requirements.
- Work with “boots on the ground” **organizations that have the expertise** to support the program.
- **Research best practices** and identify what has already been done in the community.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The staff of the New Orleans Public Library and their partners at the New Orleans Health Department generously provided their time for these interviews, as well as for review of the case study.

The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (project number LG-00-18-0298-18).

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Peoria Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with seven individuals: three staff members at the Peoria Public Library, two staff members at Human Service Center, a library board member, and one community member who participated in events at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Peoria Public Library (PPL) has a service population size of 115,007 and operates with one main and four branch locations. It has an operating budget of \$7,277,207 with 17.3 librarians and 64.88 other staff, totaling 82.18 personnel. The library reported over 712,000 visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

Peoria, Illinois, is roughly comprised of two-thirds White populations (60.8%), one-quarter Black or African American populations (26.5%), and about five percent (5.5%) Asian American populations. About one-third (34%) of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree, and 88% have at least a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$47,697, and over one-fifth (20.9%) of its residents are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Peoria's unemployment rate is 5.3%<sup>4</sup>, and 7.2% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

The main library location is in an area with a shortage of primary health care professionals.<sup>6</sup> Peoria County has an opioid prescribing rate of 69.2, which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose deaths for Peoria County was 134 per 100,000 people during 2015 through 2017.<sup>7</sup>



**5 LIBRARY LOCATIONS**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 115,007**



**UNINSURED RATE, 7.2%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 69.2  
(per 100 people)**

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“We want the library to be open to everyone. No matter where you are financially in life or what kinds of things you’re dealing with. The library is open, safe, and you’re welcome to come here. I think doing things like offering interventions through naloxone is reinforcing that because I want everybody to feel welcome here at the library.”

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—Peoria Public Library Executive Director

## Peoria Public Library’s Opioid Response

Peoria Public Library has implemented a multitude of opioid response activities in collaboration with community partners and the Mayor’s Community Coalition Against Heroin.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

The library serves on the Mayor’s Community Coalition Against Heroin. One of the largest events produced by the coalition was hosting Sam Quinones, the well-known author of *Dreamland*, which chronicles America’s opioid epidemic. This book was selected as the focus for the annual One City, One Book project where everyone in the community is encouraged to read the same book, discuss it together, and participate in associated programming.

The coalition received money via the city to host the author and purchase 500 books for the library to give out for free to the community. Leading up to the author’s visit, the coalition hosted community forums discussing opioids, as well as viewings of the film, *Chasing the Dragon: The Life of an Opiate Addict*<sup>®</sup>, which focuses on the dangers of substance use disorder.

The library also provided a local private Catholic high school with 70 copies of *Dreamland* so their 11th and 12th grade students from Human Body’s Systems, American Legal Issues, and Advance Placement Psychology courses could study the topic. Nurses from the local university and members of the coalition,

including the mayor, the state’s attorney, and president of OSF HealthCare, spoke to the classes about the book.

In addition to presenting at an evening discussion at the library, Quinones also participated in a local radio talk show interview, met with coalition members and elected officials, visited Peoria Public Schools to meet with department heads and managers, and visited the county jail and met with the sheriff. Following the author’s visit, Peoria Public Library decided to expand their efforts and received funding from Illinois Humanities to host four community discussions on heroin and opiates at different library locations.

Bradley University’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which provides continuing education for people over the age of 50, contacted PPL to inquire about offering a course addressing heroin and opiates. The library worked in partnership with the institute to develop the curriculum, which resulted in a six-week, 12-hour course in which different community leaders presented on topics at each class.

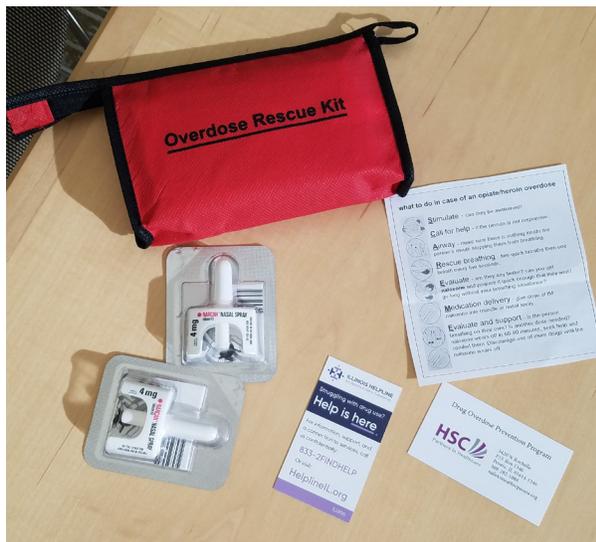
For example, one class featured the mayor, the state’s attorney, the police chief, a police captain, and a person in recovery discussing how the opioid epidemic is manifesting itself in Peoria. Another session included a presentation by a local mother about her experience with her son’s struggle with addiction and eventual fatal overdose, followed by a discussion facilitated by the President and CEO of the Human Service Center about what can be done to address the opioid problem. The course was very successful and was repeated one year later.

Today, the library is working to publicly share information about substance use and opioid overdose prevention by hosting relevant content on their website that shares news of the coalition’s activities, highlights resources available in the community for people struggling with substance use disorder, and provides a link to the Illinois Addiction Hotline. Posters and bookmarks are available in the library with information about the Hotline, and the library has displayed addiction awareness materials at the check-out desk in the past.

### NALOXONE TRAINING FOR THE STAFF

At one of the community discussions, a nurse educator offered to teach library staff how to administer naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug. Three days prior to this scheduled optional training, an opioid overdose occurred at the library, which prompted staff to sign up for the training after experiencing the epidemic in such proximity.

The training included information on the benefits of naloxone, how it works, and information about opioid addiction. Training was offered to the staff again one year later by the Human Service Center, and now the library has both nasal and injectable naloxone on-site for administration (also provided by the Human Service Center).



Overdose Rescue Kit.  
Photo courtesy of Peoria Public Library

## Partnering for Success

The initial opioid response work that the library engaged in grew out of the mayor’s coalition and those immediate connections. Following this, the majority of the library’s partnerships grew organically from each opioid response activity. If a new partner was needed, PPL could easily reach out, share information about what they were doing, and request help.

The library sees that one of the valuable aspects of the partnerships is their partners’ assistance with promoting the work of the library. For example, an article on the front page of the local paper quoting the mayor and the coalition outlined the problem and began to raise awareness of the issue. The Human Service Center expanded on this effort by promoting the library’s naloxone trainings on their website, flyers, and social media pages.

The range of opioid response activities allows PPL to engage with a wide range of community partners including: the City of Peoria, the mayor, the state’s attorney, OSF Healthcare, the Human Service Center, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, the police department, and Illinois Humanities.

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library’s Response

Many local factors and conditions led to PPL’s response to the opioid crisis with their community partners, including:

- formation of the Mayor’s Community Coalition Against Heroin
- drug use occurring at the library
- increase in severity and use of opioids in the community
- library leadership’s desire to address the opioid epidemic

The mayor of Peoria regularly meets with the state’s attorney and chief of police to

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“There is a shared interest in helping people in our community not overdose or die from heroin and opiates. Public libraries have good reputations. We’re not trying to compete with anybody else. So people say yes. The library can be a good matchmaker or connection maker.”

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—Peoria Public Library Board Member

discuss significant events occurring within the community. As they discussed the rise of overdoses, the mayor decided to form the Mayor’s Community Coalition Against Heroin, and the library was invited to join the effort. The library’s opioid response activities grew out of their involvement with this initiative.

During the early stages of the library’s response activities, an individual overdosed in the library. Additionally, the overall number of overdoses and the availability of street drugs increased in the community, both of which signaled a need to address the growing opioid epidemic.

When the library was invited to join the coalition, a member of the library’s leadership team expressed interest in being the primary contact and led the library’s work on this issue. Community partners highlight the drive and vision of this staff member as one of the key factors to PPL’s successful community engagement. One community partner described how the library manager explained the library’s place in the community, “When [we] met, she talked about how she saw the role of the library being more than a building with books in it that people came to, but to [a place to] help facilitate community education.”

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall, the reactions and experiences of PPL staff, their community partners, the media,

and impacted community members have been positive and supportive of PPL’s opioid response activities.

### LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

There has been no resistance from library staff, which is partly because the naloxone training has been optional. The board of the library is also supportive of the staff, expressed no concerns with the opioid response activities, and sees the value of the efforts. A library board member shared, “I think now we see ourselves as proactive, an expanded role that goes beyond offering literacy and learning and those kinds of opportunities that you traditionally associate with a library. We want to see ourselves growing and expanding and evolving to meet the community’s needs.”

### MEDIA

The media has been involved in the community’s broad opioid response activities since the inception. For example, the mayor called together the local newspaper, radio, and public radio, when he announced the coalition. The media also promoted the library’s community education programs and naloxone training. Recently, the *U.S. News & World Report*<sup>9</sup> featured PPL’s opioid response efforts. The media’s coverage of the activities has been supportive, but it was also noted that additional coverage could be beneficial, to help raise awareness about specific activities and events.

### COMMUNITY PARTNER

Community partners have been immensely supportive of the library’s engagement with the opioid crisis. These partners frequently contact the staff of the library to present at various



Materials available to distribute to the public on receiving support while in crisis.  
 Photo courtesy of Peoria Public Library

events and community activities, and the library can equally call on their partners and important community leaders to engage in library events. Partners also described the value of working with the library on this issue, “I think the library is setting a standard that the conversation about opioids is allowable and approachable.”

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The community’s response to PPL’s opioid work has been mixed, largely due to the stigma and a need for broader education around substance use disorder. Some patrons who attended the community discussion sessions voiced concerns that people with substance use disorder should not be helped, and that naloxone should not be given out for free when other pharmaceuticals are not. In contrast, there are patrons who have attended multiple events at the library and have found themselves reconnecting with the library and advocating for others to attend.

## Outcomes of the Library’s Response

Many positive outcomes have occurred as a result of PPL’s opioid programming. PPL recently started to track outcome measures with informal surveys of the community discussions, but this data is not yet available. At the time of this report, three overdoses have been successfully

addressed in the library, and 500 copies of *Dreamland*<sup>10</sup> have been distributed.

The coalition community forums garnered around 60 participants, while the daytime author event had 30–40 participants, and the evening event had 60–75 attendees. As described above, PPL has been invited on multiple occasions to present on their work at various venues, including to other libraries in the area, which resulted in more community education events. Overall, the library has received a lot of positive recognition for their opioid work.

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“It has been really cool for me in my own journey of having the chance to tell my story, build positive relationships with my community, and hopefully find an opportunity for somebody to learn something from my mistakes. I know for my growth, little things like that have just bolstered my foundation, my support, my peer network, my positive behavior.”

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—Peoria Public Library Community Member

In addition, PPL’s opioid response activities reached new populations in the community as many of the program participants were new visitors to the library. Moreover, there

was intermingling of varying groups of populations because of large variations of the socioeconomic classes of the participants.

Staff from PPL have presented on their activities at the Illinois Library Association conference. As a result of this presentation, directors of other public libraries reached out with requests for PPL to present to their staff on their opioid response activities and how they were implemented. PPL staff also spoke at an opioid listening tour that the Illinois Lieutenant Governor hosted, illustrating why the library is a part of the opioid prevention strategy and advocating for all public libraries to be involved in their community to increase accessibility of opioid and substance use information and resources.

The following factors contributed to the success of PPL's opioid response activities:

- They engaged partners with a vested interest in improving the community.
- They had an internal champion and community leaders to drive the work forward.
- There was political support from the mayor's office.
- The mayor's coalition was financially supported by a variety of sources.

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"All of us have collaborated from the top down to evolve our facilities from uniquely a place where someone would come to read, to being what could be more accurately considered community centers. That implies a safe haven. Certainly, it's a place of books but also a place where we can have discussions to show we're open to every issue whether it's a celebration or a challenge that our community would face. We want to welcome everyone with open arms, most especially when the topic has serious implications."

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—Peoria Public Library Board Member

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing their opioid response activities, PPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- The library is working with high-level personnel such as the mayor and state's attorney so scheduling a coordinated community event can prove difficult.
- Money and support to garner big-name speakers can be challenging for the library to fund independently so they often rely on requesting funding together with partners, particularly because the state of Illinois has experienced a decline in public funding.
- Funding needs to be directed toward measuring the impact of the community's opioid response activities.
- There is stigma against individuals with substance use disorder in the community.

The drug challenges keep evolving and proving difficult to address. For example, the opioid epidemic is more than opioid addiction. This has evolved into heroin, fentanyl, and methamphetamine substance use disorder, which results in a greater number of overdoses and deaths, and an increasing need for additional resources to address the related issues.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Form partnerships**, which are critical to implementing community-based work because each organization knows their niche area and populations served.

- **Outreach** to the organizations and people already working to address the issue in the community builds credibility when more than one voice advocates for change.
- **Step outside your comfort zone** to see what helps the community and be open to trying new strategies and approaches.
- **Be prepared for public recognition** if you begin to lead in offering non-traditional library services.
- **Provide regular staff training on naloxone** to keep staff current on signs and symptoms of substance use disorder and overdose.
- Start with increasing the level of **knowledge in the community** about an issue before asking community members to change their opinions or advocate for change.
- **Foster a safe and welcoming environment** in the community so vulnerable individuals feel secure coming forward for help, and provide information to patrons on accessing social services, such as treatment centers, safe housing, and food services.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The steering committee for this project provided guidance, recommendations and resources to create the interview protocol used for this case study, as well as feedback on the content and structure. More about the steering committee and the project team is available on the project website: [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).

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The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this case study do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Salt Lake County Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with ten individuals: three staff members at the Salt Lake County Library, three staff members at partner organizations (R&R Partners and Utah Naloxone), a library board member, and three community members who received naloxone distributed at the library. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Salt Lake County Library (SLCL) has a service population size of 878,380 and operates with 18 branch locations and one large event center. It has an operating budget of \$41,419,930 with 113 full-time equivalent librarians and 285.5 other staff, totaling 398.5 personnel. On average there are about 3.5 million visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

Salt Lake County, Utah, is comprised of mostly White populations (80%) and 18% are Hispanic or Latino. About one third (33.6%) of its citizens hold a bachelor's degree, and 90.2% have at least a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income is \$67,922, and one out of ten (10.4%) of its citizens is living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Salt Lake County's unemployment rate is 2.7%,<sup>4</sup> and 12.1% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

Salt Lake County Library branches are located in a county with a shortage of mental health care professionals.<sup>6</sup> Salt Lake County has an

opioid prescribing rate of 63.2,<sup>7</sup> which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The number of general drug overdose deaths in Salt Lake County was 817 per 100,000 people during 2015 through 2017.<sup>8</sup>

In 2015, more than 2.6 million opioid prescriptions were dispensed in Utah; the equivalent of almost one prescription per Utahn.<sup>9</sup>



**18 BRANCH LOCATIONS AND ONE EVENT CENTER**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 878,380**



**UNINSURED RATE, 12%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 63.2 (per 100 people)**

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“Most people who are going to the library are looking for something to improve their life. Maybe they want to teach their kid to read. Maybe they want to study to take a test. Maybe they need to escape from a domestic violence situation. The library can present resources to them in a way that is not abrasive. It’s accessible, and they trust the librarians to ask for it. Because of this I think the opioid work is such a perfect fit.”

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—Salt Lake County Library Manager

## Salt Lake County Library’s Opioid Response

Salt Lake County Library has conducted three key initiatives to respond to the opioid crisis, and all three include support by their local partners.

### NALOXONE AND OVERDOSE AWARENESS TRAINING

The first initiative is the availability of naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug, for use by library staff within the library. Each branch in the Salt Lake County system is stocked with naloxone kits for staff use, and all staff have had the opportunity to become trained in naloxone administration. In addition to standalone training, the library has also added naloxone training to the optional CPR training already provided to staff.

The training includes information on recognizing the signs of an opioid overdose, statistics on who is impacted by the opioid crisis, how to administer naloxone, and information on available substance abuse resources. Four trainings have been offered so far to library staff. All library staff are invited to attend the training, no matter their role.

### NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC

The second initiative is making naloxone available to the public, free of charge. This means any patron can walk into the library and request a free naloxone kit, no questions



Naloxone kit distributed by the library.  
Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County Library

asked. Up to two kits can be picked up per person, per visit. In order for a branch library to be eligible to distribute naloxone, at least one staff person from the branch must attend a naloxone training.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The third response from the library is its participation in the advertising campaign: Use Only as Directed. As part of this, one branch of the library displays an art installation of 7,000 paper pill bottles hanging from the ceiling of the library foyer—a visual representation of the 7,000 opioid prescriptions that are filled in the state of Utah every day.

Other aspects of the campaign include wall posters, large graphics near the checkout desk, and window decals calling attention to the opioid crisis. One of the campaign messages

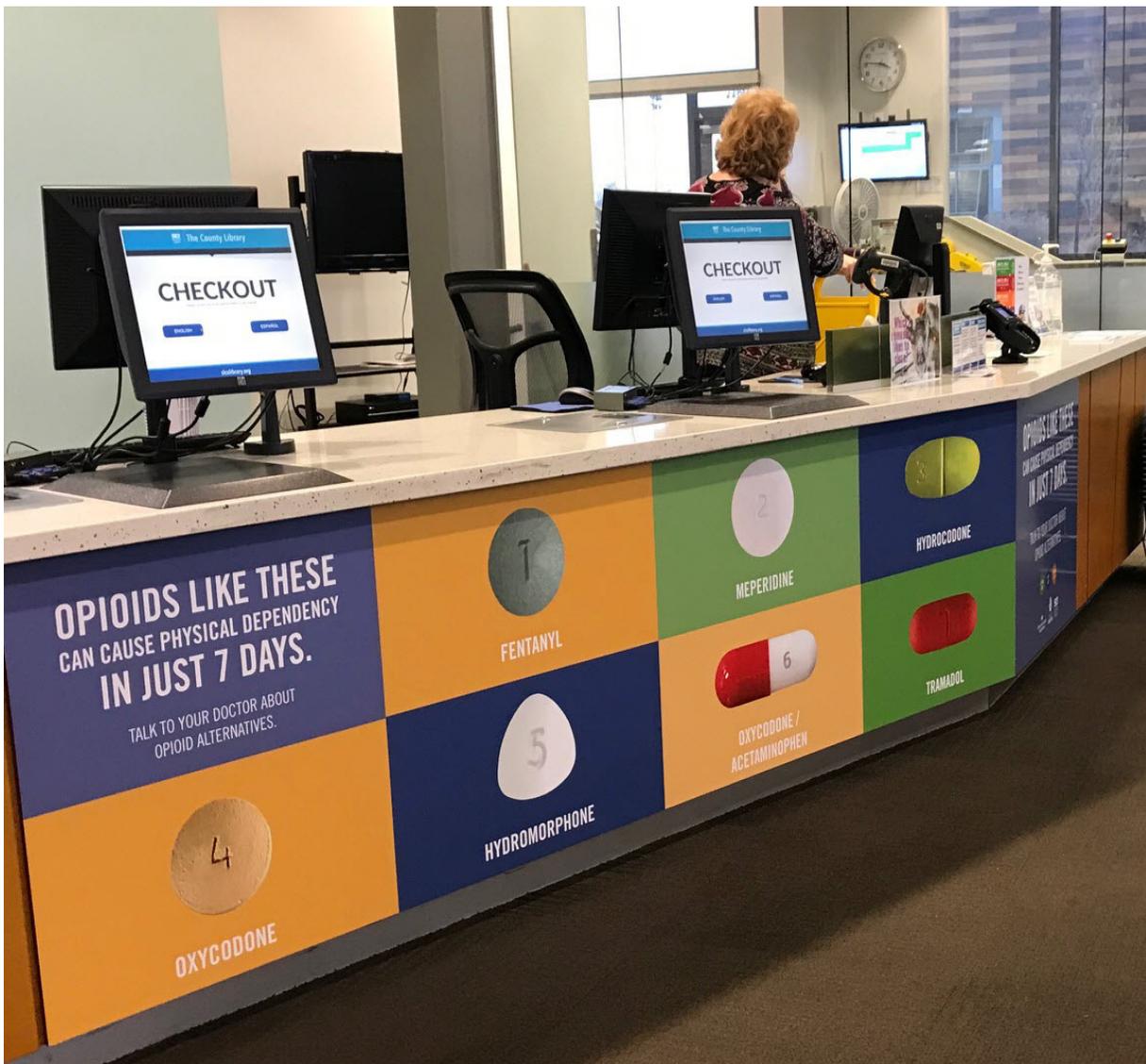
shares the fact that an individual may become physically dependent on opioids in as few as seven days. The campaign also encourages safe disposal of unused and unwanted prescriptions by sharing the statistic that 74% of Utahns currently addicted to opioids get them from a friend or family member. Drop boxes to safely dispose of these unused medications are available to the public through the campaign.

Similarly themed art installations and advertising are in use in other parts of the community, including hospitals, recreation centers, and community centers, and often include messaging tailored for the particular audience.

The overarching objectives for the Use Only as Directed campaign are to encourage people to speak to their health care providers about the inherent risks of opioids, discuss alternatives to opioids for pain management, and to learn about proper disposal of leftover opioids.

## Partnering for Success

To implement their opioid response activities, the Salt Lake County Library works closely with their sister government agency, the Salt Lake County Health Department. The health department provided the initial supply of naloxone and training to the library staff. The



Use Only As Directed, public awareness campaign at the checkout desk.  
Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County Library

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“That’s one of the advantages of being in a county system. You have these cross-cutting concerns and cross-cutting populations. Collaborating with all of those organizations on a number of different things helps us to understand better what the needs are within the community.”

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—Salt Lake County Library Director

library previously worked with the health department on other issues, and recognizes the advantage of cross-sector collaboration. The health department also initiated the Use Only as Directed public awareness campaign. The library worked directly with the lead ad agency, R&R Partners, on the messaging and placement of the campaign materials in the library.

As a result of the opioid response activities, SLCL developed a new relationship with the team at Utah Naloxone, a nonprofit based at the University of Utah Department of Pediatrics, which works closely with a local health provider, Intermountain Healthcare. This partnership provides the library with access to the free naloxone kits for the public, as well as with staff expertise from Utah Naloxone.

Many county agencies and partners have been very supportive of SLCL’s response to the opioid crisis, including both the previous and current mayors. The Salt Lake Valley Suicide Prevention Coalition has called the library “pioneers” in the field, and the Utah Opioid Task Force, which has members such as the attorney general, the Drug Enforcement Agency, senators, and the governor, are also supportive of the library’s opioid response activities. When asked to reflect on what makes all of these partnerships work so well, library and community partner staff shared their thoughts:

“It’s a very powerful thing to get all those different people and organizations coming in and advocating for a change in attitude and behavior surrounding opioids. And the library is where the rubber meets the road for reaching audiences. They’re a gathering center and in a great place to put out social

cause messaging that gets the dialogue going.” —Community Partner Director

“I think it’s trust, number one. There is a common goal and belief that we’re all in the business of delivering great services to our county residents. It’s because of that shared goal, as well as the trust that we have in each other’s abilities. There’s no need for us to be at odds with each other, so we have a very common set of objectives.” —Salt Lake County Library Director

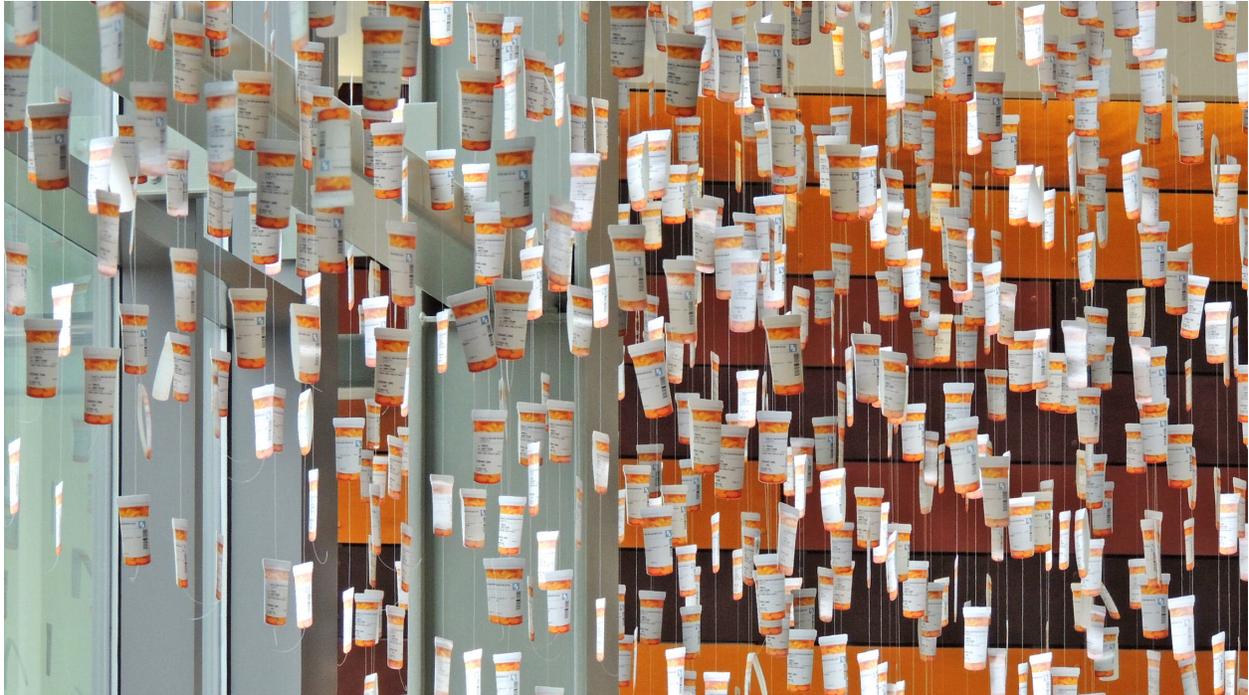
## Funding

There was minimal financial support needed to start the opioid response work at SLCL. The library allocated approximately \$3,000 in their budget to purchase additional naloxone kits for staff use. Additional staff time was needed to promote and participate in the training at all of the locations. Utah Naloxone provides the library with injectable naloxone kits to distribute to the public. The Use Only as Directed is a statewide prevention campaign, supported financially with a combination of state and county funds, and support from Intermountain Healthcare.

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library’s Response

Local factors and conditions that led to SLCL’s response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- passionate staff who care about the communities they serve



Use Only as Directed pill bottle display.  
Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County Library

- observing that the community was, and is, in crisis
- existing collaborations with other county divisions that brought awareness of the library's strengths in reaching the community

The library staff care about the community they serve and want to support those in need. Because they are embedded in the community, staff sees the need for the opioid response activities on a regular basis. Moreover, working closely with the other county divisions such as the health department, parks and recreation, and aging services has allowed the library to see and understand the greater need to address the opioid crisis.

The library director noted that knowledge of the community, engagement in the branches, and the library's reach also informs the library's efforts, saying "We're passionate about our communities, and we care deeply about them. We're neighborhood libraries and are embedded within the community, so we know the population that we serve, and we see those individuals on a regular basis. We know that some of them are in crisis."

## Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of SLCL staff, the media, and impacted community members are positive and supportive of the library's opioid response activities.

### **LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD**

When the library began their opioid response activities, staff had questions about their responsibility and potential liability with administering and distributing naloxone. The health department and Utah Naloxone addressed these concerns when they provided the naloxone training, which helped staff feel more comfortable. The library's implementation strategy first included training and ensuring managers were comfortable and supportive so they could then disseminate information to their staff and address any concerns. Eventually all library staff had the option to be trained in naloxone administration.

In addition, staff became supportive of the Use Only as Directed ad campaign and art installations, as time and effort was spent to educate the staff on the campaign's purpose and importance, along with getting their input on where it was placed and the messaging that was used.

The library's board has both advisory and policy-making responsibilities. Board members are very engaged with the services that the library provides and saw the opioid response activities as not only expanding their reach into the community, but also as an opportunity to make a difference in the community. It also opens up the possibility to find other ways to serve; as a board member stated, "I think that we're willing to put ourselves out there and be an active member of the community. This makes it possible to participate in other opportunities when they arise and improve people's lives."

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"The wonderful thing about libraries is the feeling that we're here because we like to help people. We want to make a difference in their lives, whether it's teaching them how to read, or working on a résumé, or helping them with computers. The opioid work just adds to this."

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—Salt Lake County Library Frontline Staff

## MEDIA

Prior to the naloxone distribution being completely ready to launch, the local news aired a story promoting the opportunity to the public and that they could pick up naloxone at all 18 SLCL branches. The library and their partners were not fully set up with training or materials when the announcement was made, but other than this initial timing mishap, the media covered both the naloxone kit distribution and art installation in positive terms. Multiple television and radio news stations aired stories, including one in neighboring Idaho. Partners of the library also shared that the media has been supportive of their work and that the media was trying to accurately depict what was going on in the community versus sensationalizing it.

## COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Some community members had questions about the possibility of attracting people with substance use disorder into the library because of the availability of naloxone. They also expressed concerns that the library would feel less safe. These concerns were addressed as more information was shared about the opioid crisis, who is affected by it, and the importance of being ready to support and serve the community in an emergency.

The naloxone distribution program is reaching a wide range of community members. For example, one library staff person shared, "There have been people who have said, 'I have a loved one who has cancer and I want to make sure that I have something.' Or we have people who say, 'My son or daughter is addicted, and I want two kits because I want one in my car and I want one at my house.' We've had someone who has lost a family member to substance use disorder and wants to have the tools to not have that happen again. We've had people say they've had to use one of the kits previously. We've had a kid tell us that his parents are struggling with addiction. It's across the board what we get. And then some people don't tell us anything. They just take the kit."

One community member who picked up a naloxone kit from the library shared, "I live in a community shelter where there are a lot of opioids being abused, and I'll get woken up at 3 o'clock in the morning with someone yelling, 'Does anyone have Narcan?' So it's like it finally hit me. I need to start carrying it."

## Outcomes of the Library's Response

Some of the positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of SLCL's opioid programming, include:

- **Greater understanding of the role of the library.** The partners working to implement the opioid response work and the broader

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“We’re so grateful to libraries for their willingness to do this because it is sensitive messaging. We understand that culturally it has a lot of stigma associated with it and a lot of misinformation, and that can be a delicate thing. But their willingness to address that, become ambassadors, and help eliminate some of that misinformation is a huge benefit to the community as a whole.”

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—Community Partner Director

community needs around this crisis have a greater understanding of the role of libraries and other ways libraries can contribute to a community.

- **Heightened awareness of the opioid crisis by community members.** The presence of the art installations has encouraged patrons to ask questions and have conversations about opioids and overdoses. It has also elicited suggestions from the public on where to have other naloxone distribution sites and campaign materials.
- **New partnerships.** The library has new partnerships as a result of the work, including with Utah Naloxone (out of the University of Utah), and the State of Utah’s Use Only as Directed campaign. In addition, the library now partners with the Utah Department of Public Safety to distribute gun locks to the public, an opportunity that surfaced because of their successful distribution of naloxone.
- **Information shared with other libraries.** Salt Lake County Library has been contacted by other library systems interested in learning how SLCL implemented this work because these libraries would like to support their communities in similar ways.
- **Distribution of over 1,300 naloxone kits** to the public, throughout the system’s 18 branch libraries.

The library and their partners at Utah Naloxone do not formally track distribution and use of

the naloxone kits for fear that collecting this information might drive people away from accessing them. The library does have an optional survey which staff complete after distributing kits to the public. Details recorded include the date it was received, the number of kits requested, and the branch location. If the recipient of the kit(s) voluntarily shares additional information as to why they are requesting the kit(s), or how they heard about the program, that information is added to the survey by staff.

#### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS**

There were many factors that contributed to the success of the library’s opioid response activities, including the following:

- **Strong partnerships that already existed.** SLCL already had strong partnerships with other government divisions in the county from working together on other community issues.
- **Strong support.** Salt Lake County’s mayor and County Council are supportive of addressing opioids and have trust in their county agencies.
- **Messaging coming from multiple, credible organizations.** Many organizations in Salt Lake are sharing the same messaging about the importance of preventing opioid addiction, emphasizing it is not just a city or public health issue but the entire community’s issue.
- **Highly motivated staff.** The library personnel, ranging from custodial staff to

the administrators, have a passion for, and commitment to, making the community better for everyone.

- **Champions to drive the work forward.** Within Salt Lake County, there have been multiple champions at the various organizations innovating, leading, and driving the work forward in collaboration with their partners. This includes staff and champions that bring years of experience and expertise from previous roles related to substance abuse prevention.



Use Only as Directed campaign display and naloxone kits.  
Photo courtesy of Salt Lake County Library

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid response activities, SLCL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- The **stigma of addiction** present in the community might cause some people to not seek the help they need or may prevent others from helping loved ones.

- Related, there is a need for **more community-wide education** as there is misinformation circulating about possible opioid contamination if you administer naloxone and that providing free naloxone increases opioid use.
- More education is needed for providers and patients to **reduce opioid prescriptions**.
- **More media coverage** is needed about the library's opioid response work and generally about how the community is being affected by the opioid crisis.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Generate staff buy-in** with any new program implementation, including starting at the top and getting leadership buy-in to help disseminate the information to the rest of the staff.
- **Start as soon and as robustly as possible**, and do not let striving for perfection keep efforts from beginning.
- A **continuous and reliable source of naloxone kits** are needed for distribution to the public.
- **Ensure programming** is ready to launch before media is involved.
- **Keep the work simple** so partners, staff, and the public can easily engage with the programming and feel empowered.
- **Provide supplemental education with the naloxone kit** so patrons without a medical background can easily utilize the kit and consider providing only nasal injections to increase ease of use.

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

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# Case Study: Twinsburg Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with nine individuals: three staff members at the Twinsburg Public Library, two staff members at the Summit County Community Partnership, a library board member, and three community members who benefited from the opioid response activities. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

*This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at [oc.lc/opioid-crisis](https://oc.lc/opioid-crisis).*

## Community and Library Overview

Twinsburg Public Library (TPL), located in Ohio's Summit County, has a service population of 24,453 and operates with one central location. It has an operating budget of \$2,824,757 with 12 librarian staff and 36.42 other staff, totaling 48.42 personnel. On average there are approximately 325,000 visits per year.<sup>1</sup>

Twinsburg is comprised of approximately three-quarters White populations (76%), followed by 14% Black or African American populations, and 6% Asian populations. Ninety-six percent of its population has at least a high school diploma, and almost half (46%) of its residents have a bachelor's degree.<sup>2</sup>

The median household income in Twinsburg is \$75,365, and 6.7% of the population are living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Summit County's unemployment rate is 4.4%,<sup>4</sup> and 2.8% of the population does not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup>

Summit County has an opioid prescribing rate of 61.8,<sup>6</sup> which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The general drug overdose death rate for Summit County was 754 per 100,000 people from 2015 through 2017.<sup>7</sup> From 2009 through 2016, there was a 277% increase in the number of yearly overdose-related fatalities.<sup>8</sup>



**1 LOCATION**



**SERVICE POPULATION, 24,453**



**UNINSURED RATE, 2.8%**



**OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 61.8  
(per 100 people)**

## Twinsburg Public Library's Opioid Response

To address the concerns connected to the opioid crisis in Twinsburg, the library has engaged in a variety of opioid response activities with their community partners.

### COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

Before beginning opioid response activities, TPL conducted an informal community needs survey to understand how to best serve their patrons. The anonymous survey was available in the library, on the library's website, and through Facebook and Instagram. From the responses, the library learned some of the community needs included recovery support groups and opportunities for counseling.

### DETERRA BAG DISTRIBUTION

TPL serves as a Deterra bag distribution site for its community. The Deterra® Drug Deactivation System is a drug disposal pouch for unneeded prescription and over-the-counter medications. People can dispose of these medications in a safe and environmentally friendly way in the privacy of their own home. The library's community partner in this endeavor is Summit County Community Partnership, and they provide the library with the bags for free so any patron can pick them up at no charge. This partner also works on broader community education related to the safe usage, secure storage and removal of medication.



Deterra disposal bag  
Photo credit: Twinsburg Public Library

### SELF-MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY TRAINING (SMART)

The community survey indicated a need for more recovery services, so the library decided to host and facilitate SMART meetings for their community for any patron seeking support for substance use disorder. The meetings are offered once per month, are anonymous, and sign-up is not required. Any patron dealing with issues related to misuse of substances like alcohol or opioids can attend. There is online training required to become a meeting facilitator, but no additional certifications or prior education are required, making this a relatively low-cost program to implement.

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE PUBLIC

The library also offers educational events for the public on topics of mental illness and substance use disorder. For example, they plan to host a speaker from Summa Health, a local health system, to discuss "What is Addiction?"

### WORKSHOPS ON SUBSTANCE USE FOR LIBRARY STAFF

TPL partnered with the local police department to offer training to library staff to be able to recognize different substances and how to respond if they come across them on site.

Information for all of the public programs is shared through the local newspaper, social media, flyers, and word of mouth. Their partner, Summit County Community Partnership, also advertises the availability of Deterra bags via social media, and have shared information through national media outlets such as USA Today, and hosted a roll-out event on International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, 2016.

## Partnering for Success

The library staff working on the opioid response activities were proactive in making new partnerships to support the work. For example, a staff member attended a Summit County Community Partnership networking event

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“In the library world, we tend to be very introverted. You’ve got to get over that because you’ve got to go knock on doors, introduce yourself, and get partnerships solidified. I had to talk to people I had never spoken to before, and I had to talk to people who were very much more knowledgeable than I was. It can be intimidating. But you need to do it because that’s how you get started. Everything I have at the library that I was able to give my patrons, I got from someone else.”

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—Twinsburg Public Library Manager

and learned about Deterra bags. The library’s research into why the opioid crisis was such a problem in Summit County identified leftover medications in homes as a contributing factor. As a result, a library staff member approached Summit County Community Partnership about the possibility of TPL serving as a Deterra bag distribution site.

A staff member of the Summit County Community Partnership shared why they are especially excited to partner with the library, “The library is a part of the fabric of the community and they serve and interact with, and are contacted by, a very diverse group of residents. By working with them, we can reach out in probably the most effective way to the diverse residents of the community. It’s a great, great partnership.”

In addition, the library has connected with other local and national organizations, such as Summa Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in implementing their educational events and to administer the SMART meetings. Library staff commented that the new organizations they are working with are very excited to be involved because of the library’s ability to support them in community outreach.

## Funding

Most of the TPL’s opioid response activities have been provided in-kind. For example, Summit

County Community Partnership provides the Deterra bags to the library for free. Speakers for educational events have also presented for free. The library dedicated a small budget to promote participation in the community needs survey on Facebook. The library also has one staff member dedicated to community outreach activities, which includes the opioid response.

## Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library’s Response

Local factors and conditions that led to TPL’s response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- Prompting from the state lobbying organization, the Ohio Library Council, and state officials on an expectation for libraries to be involved in responding to the state’s opioid crisis. The state’s attorney general encouraged all libraries in Ohio to help respond to the opioid crisis in their community as it is an “all hands on deck” situation.
- Ohio experiencing some of the most severe impacts of the opioid crisis. For example, in 2017, Ohio had the second highest drug overdose death rate in the US. There were 4,293 deaths, totaling a rate 2.7 times higher than the US average.<sup>9</sup>

# Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of TPL staff, their community partners, the media, and the community as a whole are supportive of TPL's opioid response activities.

## LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

The majority of the library staff have expressed support of the library's activities, particularly those working on the frontline who directly interact with patrons and see these issues and needs daily. The board was also very open and trusting of library leadership and supports the current approach.

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"Everyone loves the Detera bags. They love being able to come and get those and not worrying about making long trips out to dispose of their medication. People who are environmentally friendly-minded also love the Detera bags because these are medicines that are not going into the water supply."

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—Twinsburg Public Library Manager

## MEDIA

The local newspaper has been supportive in raising awareness about TPL's work, but larger papers such as those in Cleveland and Akron have not taken an interest in publicizing the activities. NPR published a story about the Detera bag distribution happening at the library, along with other opioid response activities at Ohio libraries.<sup>10</sup>

## COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

One frontline library staff member shared the enthusiasm she has experienced from the public, "I'm surprised at how much of an overwhelmingly positive response we got. We

were kind of holding our breath, ready to defend this thing, but then a lot of the community is like, 'Oh, no. We love it'—especially the Detera bags. Everyone who has come to SMART Recovery, and even those who have heard about SMART Recovery, have said they are really grateful that the library's offering it."

Community members who used the bags expressed how grateful they were to have an option to get rid of their and their family members' unused medications in an environmentally sound way, "My brother passed last year, and I had a number of his medications from previous years and didn't know what to do with them. This was a great way to dispose of them properly."

The library did experience some pushback when a patron tore down a flyer promoting participation in the community needs survey and complained to staff. The individual felt that the topic was inappropriate and that it should not be happening at the library. No other negative feedback outside this event has occurred.

## LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

The main community partner in these efforts, Summit County Community Partnership, expressed gratitude and excitement for their new partnership with TPL because of the diverse reach the library has in the community, and because of the new partnerships that have formed as a result. Prior to the library reaching out, the organization hadn't considered libraries as an implementation partner. Other organizations in the community, particularly schools, health organizations, and the police department, have also expressed appreciation for the opioid response work that TPL has taken on.

# Outcomes of the Library's Response

Positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of TPL's opioid programming include:

- distribution of over 700 Deterra bags, which can dispose of the equivalent of 31,500 pills if filled to capacity
- about 25% of these bags were used to dispose of opioid medications
- additional libraries offering Deterra bags to the public
- over 20 individuals reached by SMART programming

Though TPL does not formally track Deterra bag usage, their partner does. Summit County Community Partnership provides a postcard with the bags that asks for patrons to fill out information on what they are disposing of, how much, their zip code, if they normally clean out their medicine cabinet, and any other comments they wish to provide.

In addition, TPL and Summit County Community Partnership hosted a meeting for surrounding libraries to learn about how TPL is distributing these bags. As a result, additional libraries began distributing bags in their communities, including the Akron Summit public library system, and the Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, and Stow-Munroe Falls public libraries.

The SMART program is anonymous and informal feedback is gathered about participants, but there are iterative feedback processes in place where the facilitator asks the participants how the program is going and what can be improved.

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

“We’re always looking for new sites but we had not thought about the library. When Twinsburg came forward, we thought, ‘What a great idea.’ It was because of Twinsburg that we were able to reach out to the Akron Summit County Library, which is a much larger library system, and connect with them so that we could get even more pouches distributed within the community.”

—Community Partner Director

Several factors contributed to the success of TPL’s opioid response activities, including:

- proactive library staff driving new partnership development
- Summit County Community Partnership and other partners ready to collaborate
- community needs survey

## Adult Event

### SMART Recovery®



SMART Recovery groups empower people to achieve independence from addiction problems.

This monthly meeting follows the SMART Recovery principles to help those in the Twinsburg and surrounding areas who would like help. No registration is needed.

Note: Family and friends are welcome to attend and observe, but support and participation are mainly for those suffering from addictions.

**Tuesday, Dec. 11th • 6 - 7 pm**  
**Bissell Local History Room**



10050 Ravenna Road | Twinsburg, Ohio 44087 | 330.425.4268 | www.twinsburglibrary.org

Promotional Flyer for SMART Events.

Photo courtesy of Twinsburg Public Library

## Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid response activities, TPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- TPL needs to increase the response rate to the community needs survey.
- The community does not realize or accept there are social issues present like poverty and addiction.

- Spreading awareness to the community that the library offers resources other than books would help garner support of the library's opioid response activities.
- More funding is necessary to build capacity for both marketing of the work (including future community surveys and advertising for the Detera bags and SMART Recovery) and more staff is required to be able to offer SMART Recovery more than once per month.

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Get big name or well-known local organizations to support** and sign-on to

the work to use their credibility to help spread awareness.

- **Hire staff who are passionate and driven** to lead the work forward.
- **Assess community needs** before developing programming.
- **Be aware of language when communicating** social issues to encourage full participation with topics that have stigma.
- **Do not let fear of negative responses stop you** from bold or new programming.
- **Join a coalition** if one is available in the community to come at the problem from multiple angles.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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