

Pomperaug District Department of Health

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Re: US Attorney's Office and DEA will facilitate Oxford Opioid Awareness Forum

Pomperaug District Department of Health, the United States Attorney's Office for the District of CT, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Oxford Public Schools, and the Oxford Local Prevention Council, are sponsoring a community forum at Oxford High School on April 24, 2018, in response to the opioid crisis sweeping the state. Free and open to the public, the forum, which runs from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, is facilitated by a panel of subject matter experts and includes candid presentations by local families who've suffered the loss of a loved one due to substance abuse.

The evening's agenda includes a screening of "Chasing the Dragon: The Life of an Opiate Addict," a documentary released by the FBI and the DEA, in an effort to raise awareness of the nation's opiate epidemic and to help educate young people on the dangers of addiction. The movie is formatted for all ages, gives a compilation of heart-wrenching, first-person accounts, and generates meaningful dialogue between people who use drugs, their family members, and professionals who are dedicated to saving lives.

Pomperaug Health District Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) was recently awarded grant funding from the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response for an innovative program called MRC PHACTS (Public Health Actions to Combat and Treat Substance abuse); the program includes bringing the Heroin Education Action Team (HEAT) forum to Oxford, with the help of a Prevention Corps member (assigned through AmeriCorps Connecticut).

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Additional PHACTS presentations are facilitated for older adults and their caregivers, and include training on the use of Narcan (medication used to reverse an opiate overdose).

According to acting Drug Enforcement Administrator Chuck Rosenberg, each year more than 60,000 people die from a drug overdose. That's more people than those who die from car accidents or from gun violence, and half of those 60,000 deaths are related to opioid abuse. In response to this public health crisis, the US Attorney's Office, District of CT, created USA HEAT, with the mission of informing CT residents of the consequences of using heroin, fentanyl, and other opioids.

The CT State Office of The Chief Medical Examiner documents a meteoric rise in overdose deaths: up 300 percent since 2012. Neal Lustig, director of health for the towns of Oxford, Southbury, and Woodbury, CT, notes that 2016 and 2017 overdose deaths have been recorded in virtually every Connecticut town. "No town is spared," he says, "urban, suburban, and rural communities are all afflicted."

Lustig sits on several local prevention councils, including the newly-formed Oxford Addictive Substances Information Services (OASIS), along with local law enforcement professionals, school administrators, concerned citizens, clergymen/women, medical professionals, and first responders.

For more information regarding the April 24 HEAT forum, please visit www.pddh.org or call 203.264.9616 ext 4. Reservations are not required; there are no age or residency restrictions.

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