

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM MIDDLESEX COUNTY REGARDING ITS HELPING HAND GRANT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Middlesex County has received funds from the Attorney General’s Office for its 2022-2023 Middlesex County Operation Helping Hands Grant Program (the “Program”); and

WHEREAS, the funds available are used to reimburse federal, state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies in Middlesex County (the “County”) who are tasked with contacting those who have been revived with Naloxone (Narcan), and/or family members, and assist other laws enforcement agencies, in an attempt to encourage them to seek treatment and link them to recommended treatment sources; and

WHEREAS, the Middlesex County Prosecutors Office has applied for and received a grant in the amount of \$123,809.50 in regard to said Program for the period of September 2021 through August 2023; and

WHEREAS, the North Brunswick Township Police Department’s Detective Bureau and the County, wish to disburse a portion of the Program grant to the Township for said services; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of North Brunswick, that appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to accept a portion of the grant provided to Middlesex County from the Attorney General’s Office, in the amount of overtime rate to each assigned officer while conducting the duties required within the grant.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the appropriate municipal officials are authorized to execute such documents in order to effectuate receipt of said funds.

Cavel Gallimore
Chief Financial Officer

Joseph Battaglia
Chief of Police

Justine Progebin
Business Administrator

Ronald Gordon, Esq.
Township Attorney
Approved as to legal form

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a Resolution passed by the Township Council of the Township of North Brunswick at a meeting duly held on this 14th day of November 2022.

Lisa Russo
Township Clerk

Resolution # _____

RECORDED VOTE:

COUNCIL MEMBER	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	NOTES
HUTCHINSON				
MEHTA				
GUADAGNINO				
ANDREWS				
SOCIO				
DAVIS				
MAYOR WOMACK				

**State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021 Governor Phil Murphy Budget –
Operation Helping Hand Grant Program**

Program Narrative

Agency Background:

The mission of the Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office (MCPO) is to ensure public safety and security through the professional investigation of crimes and aggressive prosecution of the criminals responsible, while preserving the rights of all victims, witnesses and accused. The Prosecutor, in her role as the chief law enforcement officer of the County, ensures that municipal and other law enforcement agencies adhere to the state laws, Attorney General Directives and Guidelines, and County Prosecutor Directives. The MCPO routinely works in partnership with various local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as the citizens and members of the county’s diverse communities.

The MCPO is currently staffed with over two hundred personnel, which includes assistant prosecutors, detectives, prosecutor’s agents, and support staff personnel. The Prosecutor also has law enforcement authority over approximately 1900 sworn officers from 29 law enforcement agencies in 25 municipalities.

Problem Statement / Needs Assessment:

The opioid addiction and overdose epidemic are still receiving increased attention throughout the United States. Yet, despite growing efforts to curb the crisis, overdose death rates continue to climb. Middlesex County is not immune to this problem. Although there have been great strides in our shared efforts to bring this issue under control, based on current statistics, the County is on the path this year for comparative or even larger numbers of overdose deaths. In 2019 there were 206 suspected overdose deaths, in 2020 there were 220 suspected overdose deaths, in 2021 there were 254 suspected overdose deaths and in 2022 from January to May there have been 36 suspected overdose deaths, all which show an increase from 2019.. Presently, especially after the crisis has gained national attention, there is a growing amount of disease management and recovery support available. However, there is a segment of our community that is more reluctant to reach out for help due to fear, stigma, shame, and despair. These emotions affect family members of those addicted as they may not recognize addiction as a disease.

Law Enforcement officials from the top down must shift their approach from arrest and penalty to intervention and support. This approach, if taken as sincere and genuine, can reduce the amount of stigma associated with the disease.

Under the FY18 Cooperative Agreement for Emergency Response: Opioid Public Health Crisis Response – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the SFY 2019 Gov. Phil Murphy Budget – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the FFY 2019 Overdose Data and Action – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program and the FFY 2020 Overdose Data and Action – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the MCPO established, implemented, and managed several OHH programs under its Blue Cares Program. Blue Cares is an OHH initiative created in Middlesex County that allows law enforcement officers to reach out to those suffering from substance abuse and connect them with a peer recovery coach who can link them into treatment and recovery. The MCPO has done this during direct outreach efforts to non-fatal overdose victims and a through a municipal court program. Blue Cares also has a 24-hour hotline, as well as a mobile cell phone application, which is managed by over thirty (30) peer recovery coaches who are in long term recovery themselves. They are employed, trained, and supervised by Woodbridge Township specifically Woodbridge Recovery Services.

Under the FY18 Cooperative Agreement for emergency Response: Opioid Public Health Crisis Response – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the MCPO established the Blue Cares Hotline by partnering with Woodbridge Township to set up a 24-hour hotline for individuals suffering from addiction. Blue Cares literature was generated and disseminated across Middlesex County to each law enforcement agency and other entities such as the courts and social services in hopes of educating our communities on opioid addiction and providing resources to connect individuals to treatment and recovery services. Additionally, local law enforcement in a few municipalities engaged with known individuals who were administered naloxone and suffered non-fatal overdoses by contacting them directly and providing them with Blue Cares literature in an attempt to link them to care. Further, the MCPO used funding to create a Blue Cares app that individuals can download and have access to resources in Middlesex County.

Under the SFY 2019 Gov. Phil Murphy Budget – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the MCPO focused on identifying and connecting to treatment those who have been administered naloxone, in three towns with the highest number of overdoses, specifically New Brunswick, Perth Amboy and Woodbridge. Learning from our short comings in the FY18 grant period, the MCPO utilized recovery coaches to accompany law enforcement on its proactive outreach efforts to engage individuals suffering from substance abuse issues using the best practices.

Under the FFY 2019 Overdose Data to Action – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program, the MCPO established Municipal Court Programs in North Brunswick, Woodbridge, New

Brunswick, and East Brunswick. This program has been continued and expanded under the FFY 2020 Overdose Data to Action – Operation Helping Hands Grant Program to Old Bridge and the SFY 2021 Governor Phil Murphy Budget – Operation Helping Hands Program to Perth Amboy. There have been 21 individuals enrolled in the diversionary program across the four municipalities from September 2019 through August 2020 and 66 from September 2020 to August 2021 across the six municipalities. These numbers are lower due to COVID-19 and the state shutdown. Further, New Brunswick indicated its inability to continue with the program in the Spring of 2021 due to staffing shortages and ceased participating in this initiative. From September 2021 through August 2022 that have been 147 individuals enrolled in the diversionary program across the five municipalities.

Moreover, the MCPO is attempting to implement the Municipal Court Program into at least one additional municipality in Middlesex County. These efforts are ongoing as court access has been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lieutenant who is in charge of overseeing the program has reached out to the Municipal Court Assignment Judge who oversees all the Municipal Courts in Middlesex County and has been attempting to expand to Middlesex Borough. The MCPO will continue to make ongoing efforts to expand the program.

Generally, under the Municipal Court Program, law enforcement officers and peer recovery coaches attend at least one, four-hour monthly Municipal Court sessions in one of the designated municipalities (North Brunswick, Old Bridge, Perth Amboy, East Brunswick, or Woodbridge), dedicated to drug related cases, in an attempt to encourage all defendants with drug addiction issues to seek treatment. The court administrator selects specific drug related charges and docket them for the specific drug court session. The clerk then provides the law enforcement officer with the list of defendants to call, after the prosecutor and defense attorney have had a chance to discuss the case to verify if the defendant is a candidate to accept treatment. After check-in, the officer greets the defendant and makes an initial affirmative outreach and provides Blue Cares literature. The officer then introduces the defendant to the recovery coach who initiates a private conversation with the defendant in an attempt to get the defendant to accept treatment. If the defendant agrees, his/her court case is continued until treatment is complete. Once the defendant accepts treatment, the coach continues to maintain updated records for the court. Upon successful completion, the judge makes the final decision if the case will be significantly downgraded or dismissed. The coach continues to monitor the progress of the defendant in treatment and updates the court monthly. If the individual refuses after initial contact, recovery coaches make additional outreach efforts directly or through family members, over the ensuing month to see if are open to treatment.

Under the SFY 2022 Gov. Phil Murphy Budget – Operation Helping Hand Grant Program the MCPO will continue these efforts as outlined below.

In 2016, Woodbridge Township Addiction Services began operating a substance abuse hotline that was managed by experienced peer recovery coaches who are in long term recovery themselves and are trained to encourage and facilitate linkage to treatment. Since 2018, the MCPO partnered with Woodbridge Township Addiction Services to offer the services of the substance abuse hotline, as part of its Blue Cares Program, to all individuals suffering from addiction across the county. The Blue Cares Program officially began in February of 2019. After partnering with Woodbridge Township Addiction Services, peer recovery coaches have monitored the calls and have assisted numerous people through different stages of the recovery process. In 2019 the hotline received 186 calls, in 2020, the hotline received 420 calls, in 2021, the hotline received 237, while in 2022 the hotline received 139. The Hotline average about 30 calls a month. The program has seen 591 individuals accept services and 321 individuals enter detox or a treatment.

Blue Cares – Continuation and Enhancement between September 2022 and August 2023

With the assistance of funding under the SFY 2022 Gov. Phil Murphy Budget Operation Helping Hands Grant, the MCPO will continue to run its Municipal Court program, whereby virtual court sessions, in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions take place once a month. North Brunswick, Old Bridge, Perth Amboy, East Brunswick, and Woodbridge Township implemented a Municipal Court program which consists of a four-hour monthly court session dedicated to drug-related cases. At these sessions, a law enforcement officer from the MCPO or respective municipality and a peer recovery coach are present at court and make affirmative outreach to defendants whose crimes are motivated by drug addiction. The law enforcement officer greets the defendant, provides Blue Cares literature, and leads them to a location where the defendant will speak privately with the peer recovery coach who attempts to link the defendant into treatment. The funding will allow Blue Cares to link those who have been arrested on drug-related charges in North Brunswick, Old Bridge, Perth Amboy, East Brunswick, and Woodbridge Municipal Courts into treatment. Once a defendant agrees to treatment, their case is adjourned while the coach obtains monthly updates regarding their progress in treatment and then updates the court. If the defendant successfully completes treatment, it is up to the judge if he/she chooses to either dismiss charges or downgrade them. As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and courts reopen, the MCPO plans to schedule more monthly court sessions and interact with the Municipal Court defendants in court in an in-person setting.

With the support of funding under SFY 2022 Gov. Phil Murphy Budget – Operation Helping Hands Grant, the MCPO plans to continue to fund its peer recovery coaches and the hotline services offered by the Woodbridge Township Addiction Services to be able to offer the residents of Middlesex County a 24/7 option to be connected to care. The MCPO also continue to generate Blue Cares literature for dissemination throughout all municipalities in Middlesex

County. Blue Cares literature encourages those affected by substance use issues to utilize the 24-hour hotline. In addition, the MCPO will continue to advertise and promote the Blue Cares hotline service to all of Middlesex County at law enforcement meetings, trainings, community events, Municipal Court sessions, county jails, and schools, and through its partnerships with faith-based organizations, community organizations, Middlesex County Services Department, and the Human Services Advisory Council. As a result of the MCPO's promotion of the Blue Cares Hotline, the number of calls to the hotline has increased monthly.

The MCPO has been successful in offering a gateway to treatment to those with substance abuse through the use of law enforcement and peer recovery coaches during its Municipal Court Program and providing literature to allow those in need to contact the 24-hour hotline to inquire about help. The coaches will generate a monthly spreadsheet in accordance with OAG Data collection requirements to include all necessary information on any/all contact made via hotline calls, Municipal Court connections, and other Operation Helping Hand related activities. All data will be gathered by the recovery coach and provided monthly on a spreadsheet.

SFY 2022

ACTIVITIES:

The MCPO plans on accomplishing the following activities between September 2022 and August 2023:

- A. Continue to implement a Municipal Court diversion program in at least five municipalities, utilizing a law enforcement officer to connect drug related defendants to peer recovery coaches who can link them to appropriate treatments and/or recovery services.
- B. Meet with appropriate stakeholders to evaluate and monitor the problem in Middlesex County and discuss additional activities that would complement current efforts.
- C. Generate and distribute Blue Cares literature (i.e. business cards, pamphlets, and posters) to defendants with drug-related charges during the Municipal Court programs in North Brunswick, Old Bridge, Perth Amboy, East Brunswick, and Woodbridge Township.
- D. Disseminate literature at community events to individuals with substance use issues and/or their family members in an attempt to connect them to the 24-hour Blue Cares hotline, which is answered by recovery specialist.
- E. Ongoing education for municipal and county law enforcement officers that addiction is a chronic disease and not a moral failing. Representatives from Woodbridge Township Addiction Services and/or the MCPO will continue to engage municipal law enforcement officers throughout the County on Blue Cares. The MCPO will also utilize Operation Helping Hand Peer Coordinators for training needs for law enforcement.

- F. Purchase Naloxone and distribute it to the municipalities who participate and/or support the Blue Cares Program.

Impact of COVID-19:

- A. Due to COVID-19, many in-person activities have been restricted since 2022. To safely carry out operations and outreach efforts, Municipal Court sessions may be held in a virtual capacity via ZOOM meetings.
- B. Once courts are opened completely, court activities will occur in-person using COVID-19 appropriate safety measures.
- C. Law enforcement officers and peer recovery coaches will follow CDC guidelines and wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when making outreach efforts in the communities and maintain social distancing between themselves and those around them. If COVID-19 impedes in-person outreach by law enforcement in the community to connect those at-risk with services, the MCPO will plan to conduct outreach via other means, such as virtually, telephonically, or by mail.

GOALS:

- A. Use law enforcement officers as a gateway for individuals with substance use issues to enter treatment and/or to connect with appropriate recovery services.
- B. Utilize law enforcement officers and peer recovery coaches in Municipal Courts to attempt to link defendants whose crimes are motivated by drug use to treatment.
- C. Utilize law enforcement officers to help reduce the stigma associated with addiction, and to cultivate an environment which fosters recovery.
- D. Educate law enforcement about their role in reducing the stigma surrounding addiction.
- E. Purchase and distribute Naloxone to the municipalities that participate and/or support Blue Cares.

PARTNERSHIP / COLLABORATION:

This project will be a collaborative partnership involving the following agencies:

- Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office
 - Will write and oversee the grant.
- Middlesex County Health Department
 - Will assist with advertisement of Blue Cares in Administration Building and social media/online support.
- Middlesex County Chiefs of Police Association
 - Will assist with advertising Blue Cares.

- Woodbridge Township Health and Human Services (Addiction & Recovery)
 - Provides peer recovery specialists and operate the Blue Cares hotline, cell phone application, and stats and spreadsheets.
- Wellspring Center for Prevention
 - Supports the MCPO with advertising Blue Cares in their treatment centers and affiliated agencies and social media.
- Mainstream Recovery
 - Assist with training our Blue Cares recovery specialists.

Memorandums of understanding and/or letters of support will be obtained by the MCPO as proof of partnership. Each agency will be essential in the success of the Blue Cares Program, bringing a variety of addiction prevention, recovery, and treatment services, as well as law enforcement support from municipalities and continued assistance promoting Blue Cares.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF:

Although a collaborative partnership, the project will be managed by the MCPO Program Evaluator. The Lieutenant of the Prosecutor’s Office Outreach Unit is responsible for overseeing the grant’s day to day functions and operations. The Outreach Unit Agent will schedule meetings with stakeholders, ensure that operations scheduled and executed, spreadsheets are generated, and deliverables are met. There is also a Detective assigned to the Outreach Unit who assists with Operations.

PROGRAM EVALUATION:

The evaluation of the programs efficiency and effectiveness will be evaluated by the stakeholders. This evaluation will be conducted periodically and will be based on the following:

- A. Number of law enforcement encounters with individuals who have substance use issues.
- B. Number of individuals with substance use issues who accepted offers of treatment and/or recovery services by law enforcement.
- C. Number of calls made to hotline and number of those who entered into treatment and/or recovery services as a result of those calls.
- D. Statistical analysis of whether overdose deaths have decreased after the program’s inception and/or as a result of the activities of law enforcement.
- E. Number of entries into treatment and recovery programs as a result of operations conducted by law enforcement.

The MCPO will submit quarterly progress reports and data collection as required by OAG.

PROPOSED ESTIMATED BUDGET:

SUB-AWARD AMOUNT: \$123,809.50

Expenditure Breakdown:

Advertising Campaign for Blue Cares: \$3,809.50

- A. Posters, pamphlets, and business style cards.
 - a. Additional advertising may include Blue Cares t-shirts for the MCPO staff and recovery coaches, and billboard advertisements.

Overtime for law enforcement personnel and costs associated with recovery coaches: \$70,000.00

- A. Law enforcement officers
 - a. \$100.00 OT per hour for all municipal court sessions for North Brunswick, New Brunswick, East Brunswick, and Woodbridge Township Municipal Courts.
 - b. And/or additional law enforcement officers OT to assist in additional municipal court \$100.00/ hour per four-hour court session.
 - c. Overtime paid to MCPO staff to manage grant documents, deliverables, operations, and day to day functions.
 - i. Blue Cares designed electronics for MCPO staff to manage grant documents (i.e. laptop, wireless mouse/keyboard etc.)
- B. Payment to peer recovery coaches.
 - a. Annual administration fee to Woodbridge Addiction Services for use of hotline and recovery coaches. \$12,000.00 to be billed annually and call center monthly bills.
 - b. \$15/hour for two peer recovery coaches per four-hour court session once a month in North Brunswick Township Municipal Court.
 - c. \$15/hour for two peer recovery coaches per four-hour court session once a month in Woodbridge Township Municipal Court.
 - d. \$15/hour for two peer recovery coaches per four-hour court session once a month in the City of Old Bridge Municipal Court.
 - e. \$15/hour for two peer recovery coaches per four-hour court session once a month in East Brunswick Township Municipal Court.
 - f. \$15/hour for two peer recovery coaches per four-hour court session once a month in the City of Perth Amboy Municipal Court.
 - g. Additional peer recovery coaches to assist in additional municipal court programs as needed at \$15/hour per four-hour court session.

Purchase of Naloxone for municipalities: \$50,000.00

- A. Purchase and distribute to law enforcement in Middlesex County that participate and/or support Blue Cares for use when interacting with those that suffer from Opioid Use Disorder.