

“The opioid epidemic continues to take a horrific toll on families across the country. But one day, if we persist in our efforts, continue to focus on data-driven interventions and treatment-based solutions, we will see a time where the opioid epidemic is confined to history – a lesson of pitfalls to avoid and new ways to address addiction, but a lesson that is learned and not tragically lived. We can end this epidemic, but we must do so by treating it as public health crisis and the people suffering from it with dignity and care.” - Marc Molinaro

The Challenges We Face

The impact of the opioid epidemic is shocking – the cumulative cost of the epidemic from 2007 to 2018 was \$5.6 trillion.

40% of overdose deaths between 2014 and 2020 involved synthetic opioids such as illegally manufactured fentanyl.

Over 3 million Americans are suffering from an opioid-use disorder (OUD).

8 to 12 percent of individuals treated with prescription opioids for chronic pain develop addiction.

The pandemic exacerbated the opioid epidemic in New York, CDC data shows overdose deaths increased over 30 percent in New York from March 2020 to March 2021.

Approximately 1 million people have died of an overdose since 1999.

My Experience

Expanded Medication-Assisted Treatment - including in local hospital emergency rooms, clinics, and physicians' offices.

Established a County Drug Task Force - a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement group comprised of members from local police forces, the District Attorney's office, and the Sheriff's office – to constrict the supply of illicit drugs by identifying and cutting off supply chains and distributors.

Opened a One-of-a-Kind Crisis Stabilization Center - a 24/7 walk-in facility providing a single point of service with access to crisis counseling, mental health assessments, supervised outpatient withdrawal services, counseling, and peer advocacy and support. The Center became a model for a statewide program.

Implemented Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training for Law Enforcement - to provide officer the de-escalate and effectively communicate while responding to persons with mental illness or a substance use disorder. Over 75 percent of law enforcement officers in Dutchess County have received CIT training.

Added peer support resources - by increasing the number of recovery coaches available to support those in need and opening an Empowerment Center to create a home base for Dutchess County's street outreach efforts.

The Path Forward

Disrupting the supply of deadly illicit drugs such as Fentanyl by Supporting the recommendations of the bipartisan Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking - including creating a central body to coordinate planning, implementation, and evaluation of all U.S. drug control policies; increasing efforts to disrupt drug supply through targeted oversight and enforcement, improving border security, and collaborating with nations involved in the production and distribution of synthetic opioids and their chemical precursors.

Creating a local opioid response grant program that utilizes a formula that calculates need based on both total opioid-related overdoses and the rate of opioid overdoses per 100,000 people to allocate funds to local governments responsible for the direct provisions of services.

Focusing on expanding access to life-saving treatments (e.g. buprenorphine and methadone) and increasing the availability of treatment beds, especially for at-risk populations.

Improving warm-handoff policies and coordination by increasing training and support for first responders, co-locating 911 centers and behavioral health support phone lines as we did in Dutchess County, and opening crisis stabilization centers/units across the nation.