



Tesei Announces Study on Opioid, Heroin Addiction in Greenwich

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Alan Mathis, President and CEO of Liberation Programs, First Selectman Peter Tesei and Alan Barry, Director of Social Services for Greenwich.

Greenwich First Selectman Peter Tesei asked for the Greenwich community's support at a press conference on Monday as he announced a study to be conducted by Liberation Programs and the Greenwich Department of Social Services to determine the extent that heroin use and opiate addiction is affecting the Greenwich community.

Addressing addiction is one of First Selectman Tesei's top priorities and he is looking for the findings to help him have a clearer understanding of the problem to develop an action plan in response to the perceived rise in heroin use and addiction. The study, by Liberation Programs and the Greenwich Department of Social Services, will measure the attitudes, values, and the extent that heroin and opiates are affecting the safety of Greenwich residents. It will be a critical component in fighting the epidemic of heroin and opiate use and unifying the community. The projected completion date for the study is May, 2016.

Alan Mathis, President and CEO of Liberation Programs, commended First Selectmen Tesei for facing the issue of addiction head-on.

"This short-term high level study will give us a clearer picture of how Greenwich is being affected by the use of heroin and opiates and how together we can begin to make an impact on the problem. We can't wait while families are hurting and losing their loved ones. We need to act now," Mathis said. "This study will

help us save the lives of those individuals struggling with addiction and help them enjoy lifelong recovery.”

Working with the Department of Social Services, Liberation will create a working format for the study for assimilating information so that it is consistent across sources. The entire process is expected to take four to six weeks. One of the first steps will be gathering any data currently available regarding Greenwich demographics as this data relates to drug use.

This may include arrest records, coroner reports, school statistics, or other secondary research studies.

The project will be focused on three primary goals that will assess the extent, nature, and impact of opiate and heroin use within the community:

- * Understand to what extent residents have tried heroin or other opiate and at what frequency levels.
- * Compile information regarding the values, beliefs and perceptions of risk and substance use held by youth, parents, teachers and other leaders and service providers in the community.
- * Learn how other service providers perceive and are affected by the problem. These will include law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, the education system, and other community partners that have direct contact with you such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Teen Center, United Way and others that may be able to provide relevant data.

The primary deliverable for this project will be a report that provides a clearer picture regarding the use of heroin and other opiates in the Greenwich community and information about the values, beliefs and perceptions regarding use. One of the most important outcomes will be the simple fact that all the stakeholders were willing to begin a very serious conversation about something that is an extreme threat to the well being, health and safety of Greenwich residents.

A chart published by the state medical examiner’s office summarizes opiate deaths in 2014 and includes individuals of all ages including teens.

Liberation Programs is one of Fairfield County’s leading behavioral health service providers helping over 2,000 adults and youth each year overcome their substance abuse problems. Liberation’s treatment philosophy is directed toward the single goal of enabling people to live and prosper in lifelong recovery. With seven locations throughout Fairfield County, Liberation Programs has two service sites in Greenwich; one at the Greenwich YMCA and one located at Greenwich High School.

With the mission of enhancing the quality of life for Greenwich residents, Greenwich Social Services serves as a bridge between people needing help and the essential resources they need. These resources provide support such as food, shelter, educational and employment opportunities, personal safety and access to health care services. Services are directed toward the ultimate goal of fostering self-sufficiency and economic independence.