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59 confirmed Overdose Deaths

as of October 1

**Westmoreland
County
Drug
Overdose Task
Force
October 1, 2014**

Mark your calendar—

- Prescription Take Back Saturday the 27th at local take back locations. More at [National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day](#)
- “Sages Army” 5K Run/Walk at Lynch Field, October 4th, 9a.m. <http://www.sagesarmy.com/>
- Red Ribbon Week October 23-31. Get your ribbon in the courthouse lobby on October 27th from 9:30 am till 1pm.

Committee Updates

Advocacy:

-SB 1164 (Good Samaritan/Narcan bill) was passed in the House and Senate and awaits the Governor’s signature. Click [here](#) for updates. The committee is also staying in contact with legislators to encourage action on SB 1180, which would strengthen PA’s prescription drug monitoring efforts. See 1180 status [here](#). Download a template here to write your legislator.

-The community is positioning itself to address any medical marijuana legislation that may arise. Read talking points [here](#).

Criminal Justice:

-Westmoreland’s Drug Court Planning Team, selected by Judge Richard McCormick, is being trained this week through Adult Drug Court Planning Initiative of the National Drug Court institute. Judge Christopher Feliciani will be running the Drug Court. In addition to Judge Feliciani, the team includes Probation Supervisor Eric Leydig, Public Defender Wayne McGrew, Asst. District Attorney

Peter Caravello, Sue Soroko of SPHS, Tim Phillips of Westmoreland Community Action, Probation Officer Christy Scott, Det. Tony Marcocci, and Court Administrator Paul Kuntz.

-Next meeting: October 20

General Public Education/Outreach:

-The General Public and Youth subcommittees have merged in order to best address the rapidly changing diversity of opiate addiction and overdoses.

-A smaller workgroup of the committee met last week to discuss the issue of the economic impact of opiate abuse, addiction and overdoses. Recent studies show that prescription medication abuse, while still at historically high levels, has declined. Unfortunately the overdose death rate has not. As medication abuse declines, a corresponding increase in Heroin and other illicit opiate use is occurring. There is also data to suggest that the average age of opiate use is declining and that the 18 to 35 year old group is the fastest growing segment.

-The committee is exploring using economic impact statistics to raise public awareness that addiction does not affect everyone, while being cognizant of the risk of increasing stigma when highlighting costs to the public. The work group members have been tasked with compiling data from numerous sources on costs/economic impact to CYS, DPW, the criminal courts, jail, family court, workers compensation, shoplifting, employee productivity, failed drug tests and increased medical costs and insurance fraud. The full committee will convene in October to discuss these findings and the specifics of a possible public message.

Health Care:

-Excelsa Health has launched a drug education net learning module reaching over 2400 employees; the effort was led by Excelsa's Ray Grabowski.

-Dr. Bill Jenkins of Excelsa's Emergency Department sent the Committee's latest installment of our "Your patients are dying" e-mail blast focusing on tramadol moving to schedule IV to health care professionals/providers. Providers learned of the change of hydrocodone combinations to narcotic status October 6th, 2014. The email alerted providers to the possibility of confusion with refills on prescriptions written before October 5th.

-We are working with Fred Brasson of [Project Lazarus](#), a community-based overdose prevention and opioid safety program in North Carolina, to bring an informational session to Westmoreland County later this year.

Treatment:

The committee remains focused on continuum of care with an eye on developing strategies to enhance communication among courts, families, and treatment providers and make accessing treatment and navigating the system more user-friendly. Initiatives under discussion include increasing services such as residential half-way housing and recovery centers.

Other news:

-In observance of **September's National Recovery Month**:

-Community Prevention Services' Tim Phillips and Renee Kell, and County Detective Tony Marcocci spoke on Local Drug Trends at the Adelphoi Substance Abuse Prevention & Awareness Day September 20. [Parents 360 RX](#), a parent's guide to drugs, and a screening of "[The Anonymous People](#)"—about the 23 million Americans living in long term recovery—were also featured. An additional screening of the film was also presented September 24 at Westmoreland County Community College.

-Community Prevention Services and Westmoreland County Drug & Alcohol Commission staff and volunteers were presented with proclamations on September 11 at the Courthouse in recognition of their work during September's Recovery Month and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder month.

-The **Center for Rural Pennsylvania** released its Heroin [report](#) this month. CRP conducted meetings throughout the state to compile state-of-the-state data and make recommendations.

-U. S. Attorney Hickton's **Regional Overdose Task Force** working group will release their action plan on September 29. This document will address western Pennsylvania law enforcement's efforts to dismantle heroin and prescription pill trafficking organizations. The working group will also meet that day to discuss recommendations for reducing opioid overdose deaths and next steps toward implementation.

-Warden John Walton of Westmoreland County Prison announced at a recent Prison Board meeting that **53% of new inmates in August required detox**.

-The Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh is establishing a [Substance Abuse Ministry](#) pilot program at a dozen parishes throughout the region.

-A new **Prison Relapse Prevention Program** has begun. Offered by Westmoreland Community Action's Prevention Services and facilitated by Tim Phillips, the group will meet Thursdays at the County prison. At the inaugural meeting, 15 participants discussed relapse prevention techniques such as refusal skills and signs and symptoms of impending relapse. The goal is to equip prisoners with tools and knowledge to use in their environment upon release.

-University of Pittsburgh's **Program Evaluation and Research Unit** launched a new web resource that will complement the DOTF's efforts to raise awareness of the OD issue. Check it out at <http://www.overdosefreepa.pitt.edu/> . You'll find fresh data from around the region, resources for staff training, an educational toolbox, and current information from communities throughout the region.

-The **Building Recovery Together** annual conference was held Sept. 25-26 in Bolivar. This is a multi-county initiative to implement Recovery Support Services. The conference provided

continuing education credits for Certified Recovery Specialists, Recovery Coaches, and others involved with recovering individuals at the community level. Over the past three years, Westmoreland County has provided scholarships for approximately 15 people to the conference.

·Medtech's recent radio commercials on Froggy 95 radio received overwhelmingly positive responses from people who called to thank the radio station for running **information on addiction and treatment**.

·Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc., Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services (SPHS) Drug and Alcohol Case Management Unit and Excelsa Westmoreland Hospital, have collaborated to implement the **Mobile Case Manager (MCM)** program. The goal of the MCM initiative is to make sure survivors of overdoses receive immediate hand-offs to appropriate drug and alcohol services once they have been medically stabilized. Without treatment, overdose victims are at a high risk of overdosing again.

·Since the June 24 program start, 33 individuals have been referred by hospital staff and seen for a level of care assessment by the MCM. Of the 33, 10 were referred for detox, 5 for inpatient, 4 for dual inpatient, 5 for IOP/Outpatient, 1 referred for housing, 1 was not medically stabilized from the hospital and 7 refused referral or evaluation. 40% of individuals referred to treatment were admitted the same day of discharge from the hospital and 50% were admitted within 24 hours. Of the 24 individuals referred to treatment; 4 completed treatment and 4 are still involved in treatment services. The remaining 16 refused treatment, left Against Medical Advice (AMA), were unsuccessfully discharged from treatment or failed to follow through with the treatment referral.

·The Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. is pleased to announce it has been awarded the **Drug Free Communities Grant**. This five-year grant is for community based coalitions and focuses on creating environmental change in one targeted area. The Council on Substance Abuse and Youth (CSAY) chose the Mt. Pleasant area with the goal of creating environmental change concerning underage drinking and prescription drug abuse.

October is [National Substance Abuse Prevention Month](#), when we focus on the role substance abuse prevention plays in promoting safe and healthy communities. "Substance abuse" includes underage drinking and non-medical use of prescription and over-the-counter medications.

- An estimated 10 million people aged 12 to 20 report drinking alcohol during the past month
- Approximately 23 million Americans are current illicit drug users and almost 18 million people are classified with alcohol dependence or abuse.
- Alcohol is a factor in approximately 41% of deaths from motor vehicle crashes.

In October and throughout the year, Community Prevention Services of

Westmoreland and Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects are providing school-based programs pre-K through grade 12, on college campuses, and community-based programs in our work places, worship centers, civic and social organizations, recreational centers, boys and girls clubs, and general community festivals and events. Show your commitment to prevention this month begin by taking the [Prevention Pledge](#). Together we can create safer and healthier communities.

Your feedback is welcome--tell us what you'd like to see in the next issue!

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