

Introduction:

- According to data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention A.K.A the CDC, “New Hampshire is leading the nation for heroin overdose deaths among men ages 25-34” (CCNH-LFDA Highlights, 2017, Web).
- The CDC also stated that “over the past 5 years, New Hampshire has seen a 191% increase in overdose deaths due to opioid use” (Casey [Portland Press Herald] 2016, Web).
- In 2015, the state medical examiner stated that there were “385 drug overdose deaths in New Hampshire. Of those, 351 were opioid related” (Anderson [WMUR] 2016, Web).
- This statistic is a jump of over 100 people since 2014 and an increase of more than double from statistics from 2013.
- Just half way through 2016 there were already “161 deaths from drug overdose” (Nilsen [Concord Monitor] 2016, Web), and by the end of 2016 “nearly 200 people had died from fentanyl overdose in New Hampshire” (Leclerc [WMUR] 2017, Web).
- So far in 2017, 38 people have died due to drug overdose and 34 of those deaths were opioid related. About “18 people in New Hampshire have also died because of fentanyl thus far in 2017” (Leclerc [WMUR] 2017, Web).

These statistics are the reason why Christopher Hickey, a Manchester New Hampshire firefighter proposed the development of the Safe Station Program. (UnionLeader.com)

- A relative of a Hickey’s fellow firefighter was struggling with opioid addiction and was on the brink of suicide.
- Hickey asked the man to come down to the fire station before he did anything drastic.
- To Hickey’s surprise, the man actually showed up.
- So Hickey proceeded to have a conversation with the man and within 20 minutes had him connected with a counseling center called Hope for Recovery.
- Within 48 hours the man was on a plane to California on his way to a drug rehabilitation facility.
- This, Hickey said, was the genesis of the Safe Station Program in New Hampshire.

Before we go any further, it is important to note that I am going to provide you all with some brief definitions of the content of my research to give a better understanding of what is being presented today.

What is a Needs Assessment? :

- Applied anthropology textbook by Alexander M. Ervin defines a needs assessment as the “process of identifying/ seeking solution to problems of particular peoples/ institutions regardless of other designed programs/ solutions already in place”.

- In terms of my research, this consists of identifying potential problems and suggesting some possible solutions to remedy the needs of clients as well as staff of the Safe Station Program.
- In other words, a needs assessment is basically a tool used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Brief History:

It is important to note in this brief history that the program is still in infancy.

- 1st Safe Station was implemented in Manchester New Hampshire in May of 2016, after local firefighter Christopher Hickey decided that fire stations should be open to anyone in need.
- After Hickey proposed the program, Manchester Mayor Ted Gastas quickly approved and proceeded to get collaboration with...
 - AMR Ambulance to transport clients to the hospital in emergency situations.
 - Hope for Recovery to get clients talking to certified drug and alcohol counselors in order to get into a rehabilitation facility, or into a medical respite, which is used for clients who are not in an emergent enough situation to go to the hospital, but are also not well enough to go directly to a treatment facility.
 - Catholic Medical Center, Anthem, and United Ways for funding for the program.
- After the Manchester Safe Stations took off, Nashua NH developed their own Safe Station Program in November of 2016.
- Nashua Mayor Jim Donchess put together a drug task force to make it happen.
- Most recently, just back in March of 2017, Hooksett NH has now adopted their own Safe Station Program.

What are NH Safe Stations? :

- As previously mentioned, the Safe stations are run by the fire departments of Manchester, Nashua, and Hooksett NH.
- They provide a safe place for people in a substance abuse crisis and people in need can go to any of the 10 Safe Stations in Manchester, 7 in Nashua, of either of the 2 in Hooksett.
- Assistance from Safe Station is available any day, any time, and all year round and allows clients to connect with a fire fighter on duty right away.
- However, before getting any sort of assistance, the client must part with any paraphernalia in a collection box located at the Safe Station.
- The client is then evaluated by EMTs to determine their level of need and transported to...
 - The hospital for immediate medical attention.

- Or to speak with a licensed drug and alcohol counselor by phone who will send them to a medical respite or get them on the list for a drug rehabilitation facility.
- It is important to note that the fire station is the first step to treatment for the safe Station Program and that once the client is transported from the fire station they are then put in the hands of non-profit counseling centers such as Harbor Homes and Keystone Hall for further assistance.

Are They Effective? :

- As previously mentioned, I am using this needs assessment as a tool to determine whether the safe station program is effective or not.
- While conducting this research my findings determined that the safe station program was successful in reaching clients suffering from substance use disorders, mainly people suffering from substance opioid use disorder.
 - An example of this success would be that on thanksgiving in 2016 the Manchester fire department welcomed its 800th client through its doors (NHPR).
- However, while these clients are being successfully reached, there are a few potential issues with communication between collaborating institutions.
 - In some cases clients are not taken to medical respite when they needed to go due to the lack of communication to the people running the medical respites.
- There are also potential problems with the information that is being relayed to the clients.
 - In some cases clients are told that if they go to Safe Station they will get into a treatment facility right away.
 - This is not necessarily true because there are not always available beds for these clients.
- To remedy any miscommunication between collaborators as well as between clients, I suggest that monthly meetings be set in place in order to keep collaborators on the same page and make sure that clients are all being told accurate information by all parties involved.
- My research findings have also determined that Safe Station is successful in terms of assisting people in need.
 - An example of this particular success would be the fact that clients can go to any firehouse, any hour, any day and get immediately connect with a firefighter on duty who will help them start the process to recovery.
- Some aspects of the assistance given to clients are, however, potentially lacking.
 - While conducting my research, it has come to my attention that in some cases the nurses at the medical respites do not have the experience required to effectively assist clients who are in mental states of crisis.
- As a possible solution, I suggest that training seminars be developed for the nurses who lack experience in these situations in order for them to be able to fully assists their clients

and make them feel more comfortable. These training seminars will also allow the nurses to feel more comfortable while treating clients in states of crisis.

- The third and final success that I found to be most important while conducting my research was the fact that the Safe Station Program is successful in increasing the number of people seeking assistance for their Substance Use Disorder.
 - An example of this would be that of those 800 people previously mentioned, only 300 of them were Manchester residents.
 - The rest of those clients came from as far as Florida and California to get help.
 - This may be due to the fact that these people feel safe and comfortable that Safe Station is the best place for them to have a shot at recovery.
- When it comes to this increase in the number of people seeking assistance, my research has found that funding for the program may be a potential problem in the future.
- Funding, as previously mentioned, comes from non-profit organizations such as Catholic Medical Center, Anthem, and United Ways; but what happens to the program if funding stops for some reason?
- As my last suggestion to improve the program, I believe it would be beneficial to write up funding agreements with the various donors to the program that will allow it to flourish and continue to help those in need.

Safe Station is Successful:

- The Safe Station Program is successful, but only to a point.
- There are, as previously mentioned, successes when it comes to clients being reached, the assistance given to clients, and the increase in the number of people seeking help for their substance use disorder.
- However, as also previously mentioned there are some potential issues with communication between collaborating institutions as well as the information that is given to clients upon first arriving at Safe Station, the experience of the nurses at medical respite, and funding in the future.
- It is important to note again, that the program is still in its infancy and cannot be expected to be perfect just yet.
- But as long as progress and improvements are being made it is undeniable that the Safe Station program can and will continue to change lives.

Q and A:

I will now take questions or comments from the audience.