



BJA's
Comprehensive
Opioid, Stimulant,
and Substance Abuse
Program



Itasca County and Leech Lake Reservation
Itasca County
Itasca County Partnership to Address the Opioid Epidemic

10/01/19 Grant Start → 09/30/22 Grant End

Overview

Itasca County and Leech Lake Reservation span approximately 4000 square miles in north-central Minnesota. The collective population of the areas is approximately 55,000. Although many residents enjoy a high quality of life and the areas' beautiful natural resources, barriers to health and wellbeing persist, including poverty, unemployment, housing, transportation, mental health issues, and chemical use.

Substances of abuse include methamphetamine, marijuana, alcohol and opioids, contributing to treatment admissions, probation, and child protection involvement. Ninety percent of child protection cases in the Itasca area are related to substance use. Almost all probation cases are related to substances, 30 percent of which involve American Indian families. Similar disparities exist within the child protection and criminal justice systems. Adults are more likely than youth to use drugs and youth who use substances are more likely to use alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine. In 2017 in Itasca, 30

percent of treatment admissions were due to alcohol; 35 percent to methamphetamine; 16 percent to opioids; and 15 percent to marijuana. Treatment admission rates for opioids in adjacent Cass County are among the top ten in Minnesota. Itasca area leaders see costs due to chemical use rising at an alarming rate. The goal of the program is to offer alternatives to incarceration and resources in lieu of more costly interventions.

Grant Focus

- Expand law enforcement diversion and first-responder models that connect individuals to substance abuse treatment and recovery support services.
- Employ the use of alternatives to incarceration programs for nonviolent drug offenders.
- Prioritize real-time data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Educate public safety and criminal justice stakeholders about substance abuse.

Program Approach

The goals of the Itasca County Partnership to Address the Opioid Epidemic are to reduce opioid and other substance abuse across the county and adjacent tribal lands and decrease its impact on communities, as well as to divert affected persons from incarceration and the criminal justice system. Program staff members include the Recovery Support Team (RST), the grant coordinator, and the clinical supervisor. The RST provides support and encouragement for persons struggling with substance use to enter treatment, address barriers to treatment, and provide transportation and advocacy. Essentially, the RST mitigates factors perpetuating substance use and the consequences for affected individuals, their families, and the community.

Specific program goals are to:

- Embed substance use personnel within local law enforcement agencies to improve responses to individuals in need of substance use support and treatment.
- Improve collaboration between local law enforcement agencies by establishing an inter-agency task force focused on the opioid epidemic.
- Provide specialized training to first responders and improve the effectiveness of their responses as they work to identify and assist those impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Project Partners

- First Call for Help
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Itasca County Sheriff's Department
- Leech Lake Tribal Police
- Department of Corrections Probation
- Itasca County Probation
- Itasca County Rule 5 Assessor
- Itasca County Public Health

Contact Information

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Visit the COSSAP Resource Center at www.cossapresources.org.

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