



New Jersey
Newark Police Division
Project HOPE

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

Overview

Essex County in New Jersey has been devastated by the opioid epidemic, with an astonishing 400 percent increase in overdose deaths from 2011 to 2018. Ranked third in the state for overdose deaths from 2012 to 2015 behind Camden and Ocean Counties, Essex surpassed both in 2017 and 2018. In 2018 alone, there were close to 400 known overdose deaths in Essex. Newark, the largest city in Essex County, is home to 280,139 residents. Although located next to South Orange, which has a median income of \$121,000, the average income in Newark is \$33,025, with almost 30 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Newark has also been disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic. In 2011, there were 11.5 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents. In 2018 the rate shot up to 68.1, an almost 500 percent increase. Demographically, drug overdose deaths in Newark typically occur among middle-aged black males. Although men of color are overrepresented in overdose

deaths, the racial breakdown of drug overdose deaths generally follows the citywide population breakdown. In addition, the Newark Police Division has experienced an increase in the number of calls for service for suspected overdoses. The number climbed from 533 in 2016 to 1,376 in 2018, putting a significant strain on resources.

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.
- Increase access to naloxone.
- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Program Approach

Through Project HOPE, individuals arrested for low-level offenses and identified as having a substance use disorder are required to pass a warrant screen by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office to be eligible for treatment and other community-based services before an initial court appearance. If they fully participate, their cases will never be calendared at the Newark Municipal Courthouse. This enables participants to avoid the court process and the risk of a criminal conviction. If they fail, their cases are sent to the existing community court, providing another layer of diversion and service availability. This harm-reduction strategy expeditiously redirects eligible low-level offenders toward treatment and preventing overdose deaths.

- The planning phase of the program will provide the opportunity to train officers on how to recognize signs and symptoms of opioid abuse, dependency and overdose as well as guidance on how to introduce diversion to individuals eligible by charge.
- The initiative will be staffed by a program coordinator, a full-time (day shift) case manager, and a part-time (evening shift) case manager, based on arrest data across the city of Newark.
- Screening and assessments will be administered by Newark Community Solutions case managers. The assessments will help case managers create treatment plans and facilitate referrals for interested and eligible individuals. Participants who complete step one of their plans and report to the case manager within the allotted time will be considered meaningfully engaged in the program.

- Research staff members will provide de-identified data and create mechanisms to facilitate a user-friendly and sustainable data infrastructure and to provide ongoing rapid-cycle action research throughout the project. Rutgers University will conduct program evaluations.

Project Partners

- Newark Community Solutions
- Rutgers University
- Essex County Prosecutor's Office

Contact Information

Project Director: Kelly Mulligan

Email: Mulligank@courtinnovation.org

Phone: (201) 616-9064

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

About BJA

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. To learn more about BJA, visit www.bja.gov and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.