



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



North Carolina
AppHealthCare (Appalachian District Health Department) and The Mediation
& Restorative Justice Center
Watauga COAP Project

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

Overview

Watauga County, North Carolina is a mountainous area located in the northwest region of the state along the Tennessee border. A 2014 community demographics survey reported that Watauga County is home to 52,560 residents, with approximately 13 percent of the population under the age of 18. More than 95 percent of residents are white, nearly 2 percent African-American, and 3.5 percent Hispanic or Latino. The Town of Boone, named one of Forbes' "fastest growing small towns" in 2012, has approximately 18,122 full-time residents, touting a median resident age of 21.7 years, a statistic predicated on Appalachian State University's enrollment of more than 18,000 students. University enrollment comprises nearly one-third of the county population, transforming the small rural community into a quintessential college town. Watauga County Detention Center houses approximately 65 inmates on an average day. During 2017- and 2018, Watauga County Detention Center processed 1,890 individuals: charges comprised 799 felonies and 1,796

misdemeanors, 811 of which were alcohol- or narcotics-related. In January 2018, the Watauga County Sheriff's Office evaluated the risks and needs of chronic and habitual offenders in the Detention Center. The Sheriff's Office discovered that virtually the entire affected population had significant unmet needs that exacerbated their substance use and criminal behavior, with very few individuals having access or exposure to appropriate resources. Among the individuals sampled, 78 percent disclosed having a substance use disorder, with 42 percent claiming to use opiate drugs. Using the Drug Abuse Screening Tool, 86 percent fell into the most severe risk category for a substance use disorder.

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.
- Expand peer support services and recovery housing.
- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Expand public awareness about opioid abuse.
- Integrate standardized screening practices into the criminal justice system.
- Educate public safety and criminal justice stakeholders about substance abuse.

Program Approach

The goals of the Watauga COAP Project are as follows:

- Act as the point agency to support the Mediation & Restorative Justice Center and Watauga County Sheriff's Office in establishing the Watauga County LEAD Program.
- Operate the Recovery on the Inside Program within the Watauga County Detention Center.
- Serve as a community leader for restorative justice approaches in tackling the opioid epidemic.

Combined, these programs will strengthen the relationship between first responders and behavioral health professionals to meet the complex needs of the community.

The Watauga COAP Project will appoint the detention social worker/LEAD case manager to serve as project coordinator.

Project Partners

- AppHealthCare
- Mediation & Restorative Justice Center
- Watauga County Sheriff's Office
- DayMark Recovery
- High Country Community Health
- Hospitality House
- Hunger and Health Coalition
- Boone United Methodist Church
- Watauga Compassionate Communities Initiative

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

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