Turning Hope Into Action

There is reason for hope about ending the opioid crisis in Fort Wayne and Allen County. The Fort Wayne Allen County Task Force for Opioid Strategic Planning (FATOS) met from December 2017 through March 2018 to look at the opioid crisis in four areas: prevention, intervention, treatment/recovery, and enforcement. Strengthening systems to fight opioid use disorder helps those with other substance use disorders.

**Bright spots**

1. **Interdisciplinary commitment** from mental health services, healthcare systems, criminal justice, law enforcement, social service agencies and those with the lived experience

2. **Breadth of treatment and recovery services** with in-patient, residential, outpatient, medication-assisted treatment and peer support here

3. **Problem-solving courts**, like Drug Court and intensive supervised HOPE probation, that provide treatment and recovery services

4. **Syringe Services Program** (SSP), to reduce harm with anonymous needle exchange, wound care and confidential substance use disorder counseling

5. **Naloxone (Narcan)**, the opioid overdose antidote, available without a prescription

**Data:** The numbers tell a story: the rate of opioid prescriptions is going down while the number of people dying from opioids is increasing.

*Table 1

Opioid Prescriptions per 100 Residents, 2008-2016

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as calculated by Indiana Management Performance Hub

*Table 2

Indiana Opioid Poisoning Deaths, 2008-2016

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as calculated by Indiana Management Performance Hub

**What’s needed**

1. **Prevention education** focusing on the school-age population and parents about opioids and developing resiliency skills

2. **Seamless transition** from identifying misuse to entering treatment and recovery

3. **Resources to expand holistic treatment and recovery services**, especially for more mental health professionals

4. **More treatment and recovery services for people in the criminal justice system**, including the Allen County Jail, because we can’t arrest ourselves out of this problem

5. **Reducing stigma** around opioids and substance use disorder

Other needs are support for families, services for underserved populations, engaging faith leaders, a strategic plan for first responders, expanding Indiana’s Lifeline Law to cover opioids, and peer recovery services.