

Together Lexington
Courageous Conversations
Drugs and Heroin
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THE FACILITATION CENTER

FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Table of Contents

Purpose and Outcomes.....	3
Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation	3
What are the key issues that need to be addressed related to heroin use in Lexington?	5
What can be done to address these issues?.....	6
Key Next Steps	8
Appendix A: Meeting Debrief.....	9

Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify community concerns regarding drugs in Lexington and share ideas on how to address them.

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key issues that need to be addressed regarding drugs and heroin in Lexington
- List of ideas for how these concerns/issues might be addressed
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

Participants were asked to introduce themselves at their tables, share what brought them to the event and how they would characterize drugs in Lexington. Volunteers were asked to share their characterizations with the larger group. This conversation led to further discussion on drugs and heroin in Lexington, which is captured below.

How would you characterize drugs in Lexington?

- Affecting people in different ways
- Drugs do not discriminate
- Major problem
- Out of control – how do we deal with it?
- Varied and complex

When thinking about drugs in Lexington, what makes you cringe? What gives you hope?

Cringe

- Babies born to addicted moms
- Families hurt
- Long wait time between when an overdose happens and someone calls 911
- Losing young people
- Overdoses

Hope

- A multi-faceted approach – many people and groups are getting involved in different ways
- Individuals have the desire to get off drugs
- State level policies are beginning to move in the right direction, such as needle exchanges
- The entire community is concerned

What are the most concerning types of drugs in Lexington?

Participants identified the following most concerning drug types, but were in agreement that heroin was most concerning and it was a citywide issue that did not discriminate. They noted it was extremely addictive and more potent. The group also discussed that the low cost of heroin, combined with the successful efforts to control the growth of illegal prescription pill use had caused heroin to be the most concerning drug in Lexington.

1. Heroin
2. Methamphetamine
3. Fentanyl and Carfentanil

What are some of the contributing factors to drug use in the community?

- Addictive properties of heroin are more potent
 - Some drugs are more/less addictive than others depending on physical factors, but all heroin users become addicted much more quickly than other drugs
- Dealers can get slightly higher prices for their drugs in Lexington than in northern cities like Detroit, making Lexington an attractive market to dealers
- Geographic location of Lexington and having two major interstates run through the city (I64/I75)
- Heroin is cheap
- It's easy to get heroin
- Not recognizing it's a mental health issue
- Successful efforts to control the growth of illegal prescription pill use
- We're not dealing with the issue of addiction

What impact are drugs having on the community?

- Community members become more cautious and isolate themselves
- Crime
 - Children neglected/abused
 - Property crime
 - Shootings and other weapons used
 - Shoplifting/Pawning
 - Uptick of residential and vehicular break-ins
 - Violent crimes
- Increased call volumes cause stress and strain to emergency responders and make them less available for other emergencies
- Increased number of children in social services/Parental neglect
- Label certain areas of community with false stereotypes
- Medicaid/Medicare increases

- More people in jail creates problems
- Overcrowded jails and court systems
- Schools have to deal with children addicted from birth
- Too many funerals
- Young people put in harms way
- Workforce issues
 - Decreases local tax base
 - Employers unable to recruit and retain employees, impacting their business and local economy
 - Never getting into the workforce, creating socio-economic issues

What are the key issues that need to be addressed related to heroin use in Lexington?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Addiction resources and availability
 - Especially addicted mothers and newborns
- Address addiction and provide treatment
- Escalation/Increase in related crimes
 - Affecting people that make up the workforce
 - Are we feeling safe?
 - Impacts many areas of the community/economy, i.e., if someone is considering moving to Lexington, would they not move here because of the heroin problem?
 - Tax base is going down, welfare is going up
- Lack of resources to educate and treat
- Prevention of future addiction
 - Reach out to children – prevent a generation
- System of accountability – hold them and keep them accountable
 - Hold people accountable going through treatment, even those that don't want to be there
 - Won't accept until they're willing to change

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Availability of heroin
- Continue to reduce mental health/drug stigma
- Correlation between drug use and sex trafficking
 - Human trafficking as well
- Costs to community for treatment
- Difficult to get help – a stigma
- Financial impact on community/families
- Impact on children
- Increase mental health accessibility
- It takes a village
- Its availability
- Keep kids in school
- Knows no socio-economic boundary
- Number of people affected
- Our future, our kids, are impacted
- Resources for addicted mothers and newborns
- Tax consequences in the future
- Workforce

What can be done to address these issues?

Using their prioritized key issues, each small group was asked to answer the key question. Listed beneath each issue or concern are their ideas on how they can be addressed.

Accountability

- Community involvement
- Not waiting until a crisis
- Successful programs and utilization

Addiction Resources

- Accountability programs
- Budgets and increased manpower
- Identify successful programs and expand them
- Mental health and correlation with addiction
- Ratio of professionals to consumers/addicts

Escalation/Increase in Related Crime

- Look at successful programs in other cities
- Mentoring and education at an early age

Lack of Resources

- Consolidate organizations that have similar missions
- Define gaps (roadmap for effective treatment)
 - What's the Hope Center do versus other organizations?
- Identify the opportunities that are currently available

Prevention of Future Addiction

- Get the “village” involved
- Have mentorship/positive adult figure for children
- Identify successful programs/practices and follow their example/expand
- More coordination between agencies/groups that assist
- More expansive education
- Real life experiences/testimonials (all areas of community)

Provide Treatment

- Provide more positive outlets
 - More positivity → less need to feel good through negative means
- Provide opportunities for purposeful and meaningful outlets through the “village”

Key Next Steps

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for next steps based on the conversations.

- Define what drug addiction education looks like, including prevention education for children
 - Southland Church does a great job
- Develop a community roadmap for help
- Don't wait for the crisis to get involved, get the message out to everyone
 - Public service announcements
- Help for families
- Look at corrections system in Kentucky – increasing the number of people in jail creates more crime and corrections has become a warehouse

Meeting Debrief

Defining Success

After each group shared their ideas to address the issues and concerns, it was noted that each group had identified “successful” programs. The group took a moment to describe what success would look like to them.

- Acknowledge addiction and it is a long-term battle
- Businesses that hire past drug offenders
- Decrease deaths and relapses
- Mothers bond and raise their children
- No longer a customer for the dealer
- One day that families don’t have to worry about their loved one
- Programs in place that make them accountable
- Self-sustaining programs that are win-wins, such as promoting trade skills

Evaluation Questions/Responses

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. What worked for you during tonight’s session?

- Small group sharing/discussion***
- Ability to share and feel heard
- Being able to voice and see others
- Everyone expressed concerns
- Format
- Getting out and sharing
- Group discussion
- Illuminated aspects that I was not aware
- Table level and larger group discussion
- The process of allowing everyone a voice and listening to the words

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- Keep up the good work!*
- More attendees*
- None*
- Increase diversity
- More awareness of this program
- Place the ideas into action – don't stop at talking!
- Reach out to constituent groups directly to ensure diverse and relevant participation
- Wish everyone that RSVP'd had attended

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- Disclaimer for no politicking
- Makes me more motivated to do something
- More marketing about this event. I am trying to spread the word, but not enough people know.
Thanks!