



# BCPO News

Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor



Philip S. Aronow  
First Assistant Prosecutor

Darren N. Anderson  
Chief of Detectives

Joel Bewley  
Public Information Officer  
Desk: 609-265-5777  
Cell: 609-820-4407  
[jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us](mailto:jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us)

August 22, 2019

## Round Two of “Operation Helping Hand” Expands Services To Reach High-Risk Drug Users Prior to an Overdose

Building on the initial promise of Operation Helping Hand, the Prosecutor’s Office has expanded the program to offer an increased level of addiction outreach to high-risk substance users in an effort to provide treatment options and support services prior to the occurrence of an overdose, Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced today.

The first round of Operation Helping Hand, launched earlier this year, focused mainly on reaching and offering substance abuse treatment to individuals in the county soon after they had been revived with Narcan. As part of the second phase, recovery specialists have been available throughout August to respond to any call by law enforcement to assist an individual they encounter who is struggling with addiction.

“Combatting the drug use epidemic remains a top priority of our Office, and we continue to look for diverse ways to offer assistance to those in need,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “We have expanded the scope of Operation Helping Hand and can now provide additional outreach services to those who are at risk of overdosing, as well as others who could benefit from peer support services.”

Operation Helping Hand is a law enforcement-initiated outreach program run by the Prosecutor’s Office in partnership with City of Angels, a non-profit recovery advocacy organization based in Mercer County. It is funded through grants from the United States Department of Health and Human Services that are administered by the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General.

The first round was very successful in terms of how receptive people were to working with recovery specialists to address their addiction. During the month of May, Burlington County experienced 70 overdoses, seven of which were fatal. Narcan was successfully administered on 37 occasions. In other instances, the individuals who overdosed recovered without the use of Narcan. Of the 50 people who were reached by recovery specialists and offered assistance, all but 10 indicated they would accept help, and 14 received addiction treatment.

*more...*

The grant money received for the second phase of the program, which began August 1, has been used to support around-the-clock availability of recovery specialists (through continued partnership with City of Angels) to respond not only to overdose reversals but also to be available to respond to calls by police officers to connect with individuals suffering from opioid use disorders.

From August 1 through August 15, Burlington County experienced four fatal overdoses. During that same period, Operation Helping Hand recovery coaches were deployed on 25 occasions to overdoses as well as requests for assistance. Their efforts resulted in 15 people expressing a desire to receive help, and five have begun treatment.

“As with the first round, we have been very encouraged by these results,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “The City of Angels recovery specialists continue to do an outstanding job. They offer hope, real-life examples that sustained recovery is possible, and a critical ‘first step’ towards treatment to people in the throes of active addiction. We are very pleased to have them partner with us as we look for effective ways to help those who are struggling to turn around their lives.”

During the second phase of the program, the recovery coaches will occasionally accompany law enforcement officers to proactively engage community members and develop relationships with the goal of providing on-the-spot referrals to treatment and other resources.

Operation Helping Hand is one of three BCPO initiatives aimed at combatting the opioid epidemic.

Operation Safe Overnight, which began in November 2018, focuses on saving lives and increasing enforcement activity at hotels and motels that have experienced overdoses and drug-related criminal activity. Through this program, with the support of Virtua Health, the BCPO has provided Narcan to county hotels and has also trained hotel employees how to use it to reverse an overdose and save a person’s life.

Straight ... to Treatment is a program that allows people to walk off the street and into police stations in three municipalities to seek treatment for drug addiction, regardless of whether they are insured or live in Burlington County.

The Straight ... to Treatment program began in Evesham Township in early 2018, expanded to Pemberton Township in September 2018, and to the City of Burlington in April 2019.

### **Straight ... to Treatment Locations and Hours of Operation**

Evesham Twp. Police Department, 984 Tuckerton Road, Evesham Township  
Mondays: noon – 7 p.m.

Pemberton Twp. Police Department, 500 Pemberton-Browns Mills Road, Pemberton Twp.  
Tuesdays: noon – 6 p.m.

City of Burlington Police Department, 525 High Street, City of Burlington  
Wednesdays and Thursdays: noon – 6 p.m.

**END**