

Annual Report FY 19/20



Staying Connected

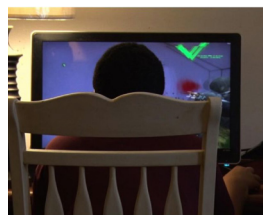
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WHAT IS COCA?

Since 1972, the Council on Chemical Abuse (COCA) has served in a lead role, offering the resources necessary to respond to the complex problems of substance abuse and addiction. Designated by the County Commissioners as the Single County Authority (SCA) for Berks County, COCA is responsible for the administration and management of publicly-funded alcohol, tobacco, and drug services. COCA is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors reflective of the local community, and serves as the coordinating agency for publicly supported drug and alcohol programming in Berks County, PA.

Learn more about us at www.cocaberks.org



Some of the key elements of internet/video game addiction are **obsessive thoughts**, significant **negative life consequences**, **withdrawal** (i.e., being severely annoyed when not on a screen), **tolerance** (needing more and more time), and using the activity to relieve anxiety or guilt.

In May 2020, we hosted an on-demand screening of *Screenagers*, a documentary about teens, technology use and addiction.



Panelists from our 2019 Annual Conference speaking on addiction and the family.

For additional information regarding 2019/20 fiscal and service specifics, please visit:
cocaberks.org/annualreport

MISSION

To provide leadership in the development and implementation of policies and programs related to a system of prevention and intervention services that prevent the onset of addiction, and treatment services that promote recovery.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Stanley J. Papademetriou

**The
treatment
system has
proven to be
resilient...**

Few of us will forget 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically affected various areas of our lives: work, school, family, social activities, health concerns - the list is long. We have also adopted new terminology into our everyday language: pandemic, flattening the curve, quarantine, social distancing, etc.

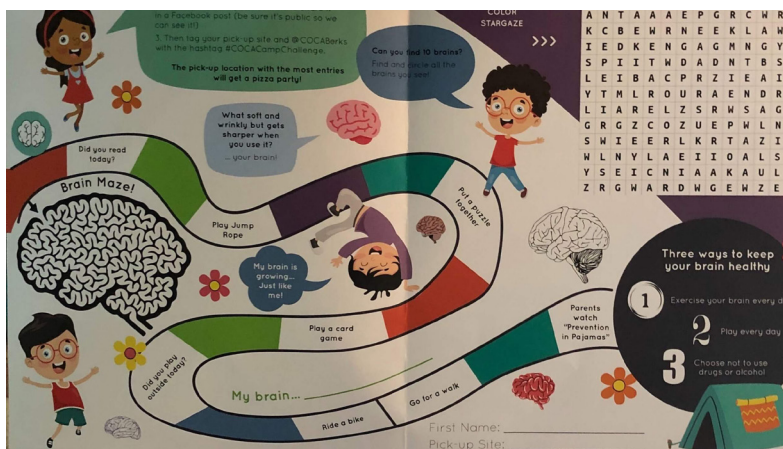
However, the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic does not diminish the significance of the devastating effects of substance use disorders (SUDs). The pandemic has not miraculously made SUDs disappear. People continue to suffer from alcohol and other drug use problems.

COVID-19 significantly disrupted substance use prevention, treatment and recovery services. With no in-person access to youth at schools or playgrounds, it was necessary to develop virtual prevention activities and lessons. The treatment system has proven to be resilient; individuals continue to access and obtain much needed services. Residential programs have had to take extra precautions and limit their capacity, but admissions continue. Outpatient programs have been limited to the number of in-person treatment services they are able to provide, but through the use of virtual platforms, therapeutic services continue. Mutual-aid recovery support groups for many months were not able to meet in-person. However, online and virtual interactions were and continue to be offered to help individuals stay healthy and sober.

COVID-19 economic impact continues to be felt by the substance use services delivery system. Like many other organizations throughout our community and nation, some prevention, treatment and counseling programs have had to endure financial hardships. Some programs may find it necessary to close. A painful example of this, is the Reading Hospital's Drug and Alcohol Center, a long-time fixture in Berks County. After close to five decades of vital services to our community, the center permanently shut their doors in August. While there are still many unknowns with regard to COVID-19, we know this for sure - people will continue to seek help for substance use problems. The treatment and recovery infrastructure in Berks County continues to provide a much-needed lifeline to those suffering from SUDs.

SUDs and addiction did not lose any of their destructive power during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we maintain hope and optimism. Our community has always shown its resiliency and ability to adapt. Especially now, it is important to remember that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover.

STAYING CONNECTED



Pictures from our Summer CAMP (Creative Activities for Meaningful Prevention.)

Every day, our staff works to build connections, whether it be providing life-sustaining resources to a Berks resident, working with school administrators to schedule prevention education, or getting an individual connected with addiction treatment services. Consistency and connection are key when it comes to addressing addiction-related issues. When COVID-19 came and changed the way we could connect, the conversation was not “oh, we just won’t do that,” but rather it was, “how do we adjust?”

Connecting with students over the summer is one of Prevention staff's greatest joys. Prevention staff creates and shares personalized programming for camps all over the county each summer. Unable to reach children in-person this year, we chose to create an activity book. A new addition was a parent video-component to follow along with our Summer CAMP lessons. These videos provided parents ways to connect prevention in the home.

When the time came to plan for Recovery Month, another shift was made. No in-person speaker events this year, but instead a Facebook LIVE series was offered. Nine individuals shared a pathway of recovery and their personal journey through a platform we had never used before.

Treatment and recovery services pivoted to provide virtual options and new connections were made to ensure the best care possible to Berks. We made the necessary change from in-person community events and programs to virtual. Although we’ve learned a lot this year, we look forward to the day we can provide in-person services again.

This year revealed how addiction does not stop when the world does. As your bridge to addiction resources, we will continue to adjust to address the community's needs for addiction prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.



IN MEMORY OF...

Kathy Zoga

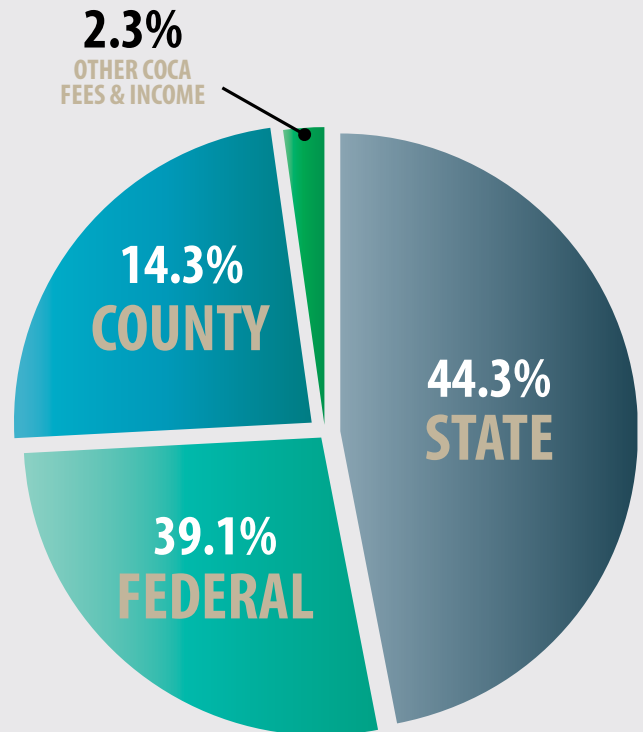
Passed away March 5, 2019

Kathy Zoga may have been best known by the community as a guidance counselor in the Reading School District or as the President of the Exeter School Board. But for our COCA family, Kathy was a dynamic champion of prevention. She dedicated her retirement years to school children, bringing to life the annual Peer Mediation Conference and the Red Ribbon Campaign. Kathy set the foundation for the strong school/community partnerships that have been key to our most successful prevention efforts.

JULY 1, 2019 TO JUNE 30, 2020 FISCAL REPORT

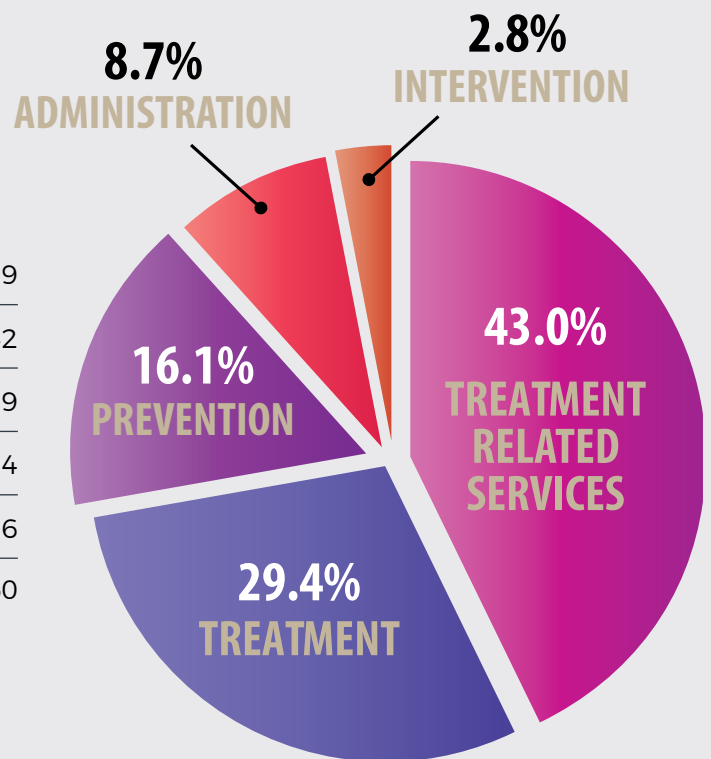
REVENUES

State Funds	\$3,783,823
Federal Funds	\$3,343,315
County Funds	\$1,224,556
Other COCA Fees & Income	\$197,066
TOTAL COCA REVENUE	\$8,548,760



EXPENDITURES

Treatment Related Services*	\$3,678,729
Treatment	\$2,511,742
Prevention	\$1,373,669
Administration	\$746,694
Intervention	\$237,926
TOTAL COCA EXPENDITURES	\$8,548,760



*Treatment Related Services include the following: screening assessment, referral, case management, recovery support services and transitional/recovery housing.

PREVENTION

GAMING POSTER CONTEST

We sponsored a poster contest as part of our annual awareness campaign about online gaming and problem gambling. The contest challenged Berks County students in grades 3 through 12 to create an artistic poster depicting "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Online Gaming."

PREVENTION IN PAJAMAS

VIDEO VIEWS: 66

Parents play the most important role in prevention. To guide parents in teaching their children valuable prevention lessons, we created a series of 10-minute videos called Prevention in Pajamas. Videos were created to accompany our summer CAMP program.



We had a number of outstanding submissions for this year's poster contest. Winners received gift cards and a pizza delivered to their home.

2020 SUMMER CAMP

HANDOUTS GIVEN: 5,125

In place of our in-person summer program, staff created the 2020 COCA CAMP (Creative Activities for Meaningful Prevention) Challenge. Each week in July, we provided about 900 activity booklets to 14 different camps, libraries and summer programs and in Berks County. Each booklet included a game board with fun activities and valuable prevention lessons. [Learn more on our website.](#)



Planning for the Future

COCA is responsible for putting into action effective prevention programs that respond to the urgent substance misuse problems facing our county. Substance misuse problems are complex, far reaching and touching all of our lives. Research and experience have shown that prevention planning is an important first step in the identification of priority problems. COCA, together with our community partners, engaged in a dynamic planning process during this past year, examining local indicators of substance misuse. Youth alcohol and marijuana use, youth vaping, adult opioid use, and adult binge drinking were identified as priority problem areas. Interaction with anti-social peers, family attitudes favorable to anti-social behavior, and access and willingness to use emerged as key risk factors. The result of our planning efforts has been the selection of prevention programs, proven to reduce these risk factors and strengthen protective factors. As we move forward to implement the selected program, we will continue to assess the impact of our efforts to reduce substance use and to create a healthier community for Berks County's youth and families.

Virtual Prevention Education

We now provide virtual prevention education! You can find on-demand prevention lessons on our website for all ages. Staff is also available for scheduling virtual or in-person sessions. As always, all COCA presentations are free and available to any Berks County school, organization, or community group.



PREVENTION

Single session prevention speaking engagement participants	7,129
Number of prevention-based school education sessions	970
Health Fair Events	49
Pledges from drug free youth	672
Parent program participants	96
Informational brochures and pamphlets distributed on various addiction topics	27,647
Red Ribbons Distributed	47,772
Students Reached with JUULing & Vaping Education	3,529

GAMBLING*

Participants that received COCA gambling recurring curriculum services	56
Participants in single service gambling prevention presentations	1,106
Gambling prevention materials distributed	1,866

**There are commonalities between gambling disorders and other addictions (alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs) and therefore, similar prevention strategies are considered to be effective.*



INTERVENTION

INTERVENTION SERVICES

Calls to the 24/7 Drug & Alcohol hotline with Reading Hospital (484) 628-8186	356
Clients who received drop-in services at the Reading Hospital Drug and Alcohol Center	35
Urine drug tests conducted	39,059
Number of distributed Opioid Overdose Prevention kits	1,236
Blue CARES Visits	86
Addiction Education Groups facilitated by contracted providers	588
Students who received Student Assistance Program (SAP) assessments	1,064

INTERVENTION DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AT "ROCK BOTTOM"

A trained addiction interventionist can assist and support families through the intervention process at any point. If you are worried about a loved one, there is help.

MARIJUANA DIVERSION PROGRAM

PARTICIPANTS: 422

Individuals who have been charged with possession of a small amount of marijuana can have charges dismissed after attending a 3-hour educational session provided by COCA. This program was launched in early 2019 with just 90 participants in the first quarter. This fiscal year, 48 sessions were conducted by COCA staff with 422 participants. Virtual sessions have been provided for participants due to COVID-19.

WARM HANDOFF PROGRAM

INTERVENTIONS: 1,131

The Berks County Warm Handoff program, often referred to as the WHO program, was designed to help individuals who are struggling with addiction. The goal of this program is to ensure that drug overdose patients and individuals who present themselves at emergency departments with the disease of addiction are immediately connected to treatment services.

Medical Assistance Jail Program

Through this program, COCA funds a Case Manager position on site at the Berks County Jail. The Case Manager provides drug and alcohol assessments and treatment referrals to incarcerated individuals in need of residential substance use disorder treatment.

The Case Manager assists the incarcerated individual in applying for Medical Assistance benefits in order to fund the appropriate treatment. The Case Manager coordinates with the jail, the County Assistance Office and the treatment facility to schedule admission into treatment and the start of medical assistance (MA) benefits from the day the individual is released from jail. The individual is transported directly from the jail to the residential substance use disorder treatment facility. This "door-to-door" process guarantees the individual's admission into much-needed treatment services.

214 INDIVIDUALS

received this service in FY 19/20

TREATMENT



iStock

WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT

Pennsylvania adopted the American Society of Addiction Medicine Client Placement Criteria in July of 2019. The ASAM criteria replaces the term “detoxification” with the term “withdrawal management” to describe the medical and psychological care of individuals who are experiencing withdrawal symptoms as a result of ceasing or reducing their substance use. Withdrawal usually lasts from 3-7 days and the individual may receive medications to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Some people think that when the process of withdrawal management is complete, the person with addiction has finished the treatment process. This is a harmful misconception. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, withdrawal management alone has little affect on changing long-term drug use.¹ While withdrawal management is a vital first step, the brain needs months, not days to return to normal functioning. In a study from Johns Hopkins, six-month abstinence rates were dramatically increased for individuals who engaged in ongoing treatment following withdrawal management.² People need more than withdrawal management; they need social and emotional support to develop new skills to live a satisfying life in recovery.

¹Niedzwiedek, K. (2017, August 04). Why Detox Is Not Enough: Reforming Addiction Treatment. Retrieved October 21, 2020, from <https://ldi.upenn.edu/sumr-blog/why-detox-not-enough-reforming-addiction-treatment>

²Sack, D. (2014, February 28). Home Detox: What's The Worst That Could Happen? Retrieved October 21, 2020, from <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/addiction-recovery/2014/02/home-detox-dangers/>

HELP IS STILL AVAILABLE

Find support for you and your loved ones.
Contact us:

(610) 376-8669 | cocaberks.org

DRUG TRENDS

Opioids continue to be the most reported primary drug for individuals funded for treatment by COCA. Alcohol is the second most commonly reported drug of use upon treatment entry. View more about drug trends in our [Facts & Figures document](#).

TREATMENT SERVICES

INDIVIDUALS FUNDED FOR TREATMENT: 1,510

In the course of treatment, an individual may require admission to several levels of care (i.e. detoxification followed by residential treatment). Approximately 1,874 treatment episodes were funded in fiscal year 2019/20, 478 were for residential levels of care (i.e. detoxification, residential treatment and halfway house) and 1,396 were for outpatient levels of care (i.e. intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization and medication-assisted treatment).

TREATMENT ACCESS

REQUESTS TO COCA: 2,839

When an individual requests access to treatment, screening/assessment is completed to determine the person's need for substance use disorder treatment and their eligibility for COCA treatment funding. Berks County residents with a substance use disorder and no public or private insurance benefits are eligible for COCA treatment funding.

RECOVERY



PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines addiction recovery as “A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” This definition goes beyond the single act of abstinence to include a positive change in the whole person. Recovery from substance use disorder and process addictions is an inside job, but there are outside supports and connections that assist a person in their maintenance of change.

How an individual chooses their pathway of recovery can be based on their cultural values, their socioeconomic status, their psychological and behavioral needs, and the nature of their substance use disorder. Mutual aid groups, faith-based support, recovery support programs and other newly emerging organizations play a key part in a system of continuing care for individuals and family members. These supports are available in schools, health care systems, housing, and community settings.

In September 2019, COCA opened the RISE Center as a place of support, resources and information for individuals and families in addiction recovery. RISE is an acronym for Recovery, Information, Support and Education. Several Mutual Aid Support group meetings are held at the RISE Center every week. The center embraces and acknowledges that there are many pathways to recovery, and it is a judgement-free zone that embraces a holistic approach to wellness. In addition to mutual aid support groups, the RISE Center hosts recovery-based events and activities that encourage improved quality of life and assists in building recovery capital for long term recovery growth.

COCA-Funded Programs

CRS Training

PARTICIPANTS: 48

The Certified Recovery Specialist (CRS) credential qualifies drug and alcohol peers who are in recovery to help others move into and through the recovery process. The training is a 10-week program with an exam at the end. Pictured left are program participants from last year.

HACIA ADELANTE

INDIVIDUALS SERVED: 23

In 2015, YMCA case manager, Leroy Cruz saw the need for Reading to have a recovery program where people who are Spanish-speaking can live together and support each other in their recovery from substance use disorder. With funding from COCA and the United Way, Leroy's vision came to life in December 2017 in the Hacia Adelante program. Hacia Adelante means “Moving Forward” in English and that is exactly what the residents are doing. Participants in the 8-bed program live at the YMCA and receive case management to help them achieve their goals. They attend counseling, mutual aid meetings, obtain employment, attend ESL classes, and learn life skills. [Read more about this program.](#)

WHAT ELSE DOES COCA FUND?

Our budget includes various recovery-related programs such as support services, the RISE Center, recovery housing (338 individuals were funded this year), case management and more.

Find out more:
cocaberks.org/annualreport

CONGRATULATIONS!



2019 Annual Conference Award Winners

These individuals and/or organizations have exemplified the highest standards in the areas of addiction prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services.

THE ALGOT "AL" ECKSTROM RECOVERY AWARD
John Janiszewski, TASC/WHO Program

THE BETTY J. MCDONOUGH TREATMENT AWARD
Caron Counseling Services

THE ROGER S. HERTZ EDUCATION AWARD
First Sgt. Joseph Cipko, Reading School District

THE FRANCIS "FRAN" DREXLER PUBLIC SAFETY AWARD
The Berks County Police Chiefs Association

THE JOSEPH "BUD" HAINES COMMUNITY AWARD
Richard Bradbury, Olivet Boys and Girls

THE GEORGE J. VOGEL PRESIDENT'S AWARD
Dr. Edward B. Michalik, Administrator / Berks County MH/DD Program
and Executive Director / Berks County Area Agency on Aging

Join an upcoming event or training!

cocaberks.org/events



In August 2019, we launched a stigma awareness campaign. The campaign focuses on language and testimonials to shed light on how stigma hurts, but support helps.

Learn more at SOSBerks.org/addiction.

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Saying Goodbye to the DAC

The Reading Hospital Drug and Alcohol Center (DAC) had to unfortunately close their doors in August 2020. For nearly five decades, the DAC was a staple in the community providing compassionate, heart-felt, evidence-based care. Tens of thousands of individuals afflicted with a substance use disorder and their loved ones transitioned from the depths of addiction and despair to recovery and a life filled with achievable dreams. Beyond the valuable services provided at the DAC, the beacon of hope that it stood for in our community will be difficult to replace.

Dedicated DAC staff and members of local 12-step programs were key in planting the seed which blossomed, instilling hope to individuals as they began their journey of recovery.

Linda Texter, CADC, CRNP,
DAC Program Director