



Annual Report

2020-2021



table of contents

- 2 Executive Director Message
- 3 50 Years of COCA
- 7 Prevention
- 9 Intervention & Treatment
- 11 Recovery
- 12 Fiscal Report
- 14 Commissioners, Board & Staff



WHAT IS COCA?

Since 1971, 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 COCABerks.org

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

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 found 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 2020. 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.

The treatment system has proven to be resilient...

How it all started



September 1, 1971
Date of Incorporation

1974
Established counseling program at Berks County Prison

1982
Treatment Alternatives to Street Crimes (TASC) opens

1986
"Men's Bridge House" opens. The first of 10 recovery houses established by COCA.

1992
TASC Inc. established as free-standing licensed central intake unit

1970's

1980's

1990's

The Council on Chemical Abuse (COCA) was established after a group of concerned citizens met in 1971 to address the problem of chemical dependency, specifically methamphetamines, in the Reading and Berks County areas.

Following the passage of Act 63 of 1972 and the creation of the Governor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, the Council on Chemical Abuse began to function as the primary agency for addiction-related services in Berks County.

COCA is governed by a Board of Directors, appointed by the Berks County Commissioners, which is representative of the community it serves. As a private, nonprofit corporation, COCA serves as the coordinating agency for alcohol and other drug services supported through public funds.

1972
COCA established as Single County Authority for Berks



1985
Youth Diversionary (underage drinking) Program starts, now known as UDecide

1987
COCA helps establish Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams in Berks

1994
Berks PRIDE is organized to address youth & substance use



The Future



September 2019
The Berks RISE Recovery Center opens.

April 2019
Marijuana Diversion Program begins



November 2014
Camp Joy Recovery House opens in Leesport.

Fall 2015
Warm Handoff initiative developed as a collaborative effort between COCA, TASC and local hospitals.

2020's



In response to COVID-19, COCA staff provide virtual training and prevention services.

December 2016
Berks Opioid Task Force is formed (now called SOS Berks Opioid Coalition)



2010's

August 2015
COCA begins Narcan© distribution.

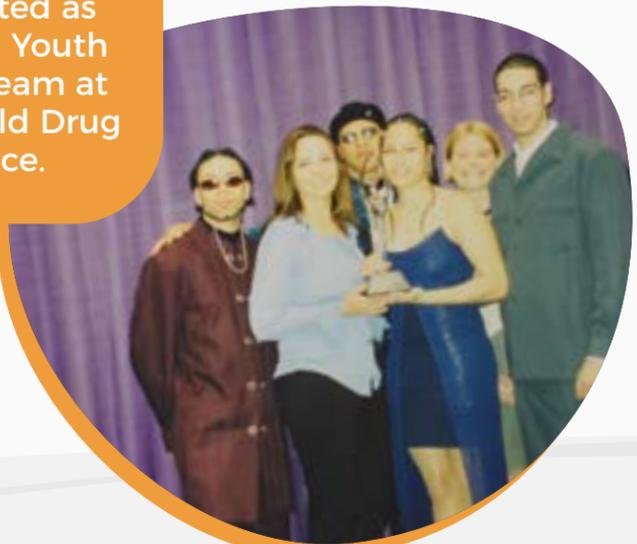


2005
COCA helped establish Berks Drug Treatment Court.

2000's



May 2002
Berks County PRIDE selected as International Youth Prevention Team at the 2002 World Drug Conference.



What is on the horizon for COCA?

What the past few years has taught us is that while COCA's mission remains the same, the way and types of services we provide will adapt to the needs of the community. Ten years ago who would have predicted a devastating overdose epidemic. However, this afforded us the opportunity to create and revise services to best serve those most vulnerable to an opioid use disorder or overdose. Likewise, a little over two years ago, no one would have imagined a global pandemic that would significantly hamper individuals from participating in in-person services and activities. Here too, it was necessary to look at alternative approaches and methodologies such as suitable technologies, as well as finding ways to "virtually" reach the community. The future of COCA is to remain flexible and open to best address substance use related needs of our community, by whatever means available to us.

Prevention

Addressing Alcohol

In response to our new prevention plan, this year we increased efforts on alcohol awareness and prevention. We joined a number of initiatives including the HERO Campaign (see below), "Parents Who Host, Lose the Most" and Project Sticker Shock. We also had our first ever virtual alcohol town hall "Party with Purpose." Over ## people attended for a night of education, games and prizes .

HERO Campaign

HERO Establishments: 25

The HERO Campaign is dedicated to preventing drunk driving deaths and injuries by promoting the use of designated drivers. HERO Establishments encourage patrons to use sober designated drivers and offer incentives like a free soft drink. [Learn more at cocaberks.org/hero](http://cocaberks.org/hero)

2021 Summer PAK

People Reached: 6,254

For the summer of 2021, the Council on Chemical Abuse provided participating Berks County summer camps, playgrounds and programs with weekly Prevention Adventure Kits (PAK). The kits were designed to teach children ages 5 through 12 valuable prevention lessons through fun stories, games and activities. Each week, children heard a story about COCA's mascot Courage the Lion.

[Read the stories at cocaberks.org/program-pak](http://cocaberks.org/program-pak)

“The sacrifice of your time is worth it. You will learn something about your child you did not know.

- Parent Participant



Strengthening Families

Parents want to protect their children, but it's challenging. Youth need skills to help them resist the peer pressure that leads to risky behaviors. The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) targeted to parents and youth, ages 10-14, is an evidence-based curriculum that provides parents and youth with the tools and skills necessary to improve family relationships and decrease the level of family conflict, contributing to lower levels of substance use. This seven-session program is comprised of interactive youth, parent, and family sessions complimented by a family meal and weekly at-home activities. COCA initiated this vibrant prevention program in collaboration with Kutztown Strong, a community coalition. Working with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, SFP was presented virtually to seven families in their homes by trained prevention specialists. Activity kits were delivered to families on a weekly basis and participants were encouraged to share their experiences as they progressed through the program. The dynamic engagement of families during these weekly sessions clearly points to the importance of providing families with the resources they need to build strong family connectiveness.

8 Students and 9 Adults

Served in FY 20/21



2020 Red Ribbon Week

In honor of Red Ribbon Week, our mascot Courage participated in a Virtual Mystery Tour of Berks County schools! The tour took the place of giving out ribbons in 2020. Courage visited 20 schools while no one was around and left his pawprints with a surprise message: "We all need courage to be drug-free."



Media & Communications

Social Media Posts	1,868
Social Media Post Impressions	164,896
<i>The Response</i> magazine - copies distributed to community	5,613

Prevention Services

Prevention Department Speaking Engagement Participants	792
Too Good For Drugs Evidence-Based Curriculum Participants	196
Teens & Technology School Education 2-Session Participants	473
Gambling Speaking Engagement Participants	259
Information and Promotional Material Distributed	105,804
Professional Trainings (Topics: Narcan, Juuling/Vaping & Pharmacist)	73

**Some participants may have attended more than one event*

Intervention, Treatment & Treatment Related Services

Intervention Services & Programs

Medication Lock Boxes Distributed	218
Narcan® Kits Distributed	1,666
Blue CARES Visits	124
SAP Assessments	749
Medication Assistance Jail Program Treatment Admissions	197
Warm Handoff Interventions	1,043
Marijuana Diversion Program Completions	483
Urine Specimens Tested	22,003

Warm Handoff Program

This program works to provide treatment intervention to individuals who enter hospitals with substance use disorders. Once a patient is medically stable, they are met by a Certified Recovery Specialist (CRS) who provides support and guidance for accessing treatment. This initiative has been made possible through funding from COCA, Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (CCBH) and Reading Hospital's Centers of Excellence. This program runs 24/7 at Tower Health Reading Hospital and on-call at Penn State St. Joseph's Hospital.

1,043 Interventions

Provided at local hospitals

Today There's Hope

Hope for saving a life with Narcan®. When properly administered, Narcan® may reverse an opioid overdose.

Learn more on our website at COCABerks.org/hope



Board member and retired officer Kevin Rudy being recorded for our Blue CARES: Next Step video.

Blue CARES: Next Step

Law Enforcement Officers Trained: 422

Blue Cares – Next Step provides law enforcement with the tools to assist individuals with stimulant or opioid misuse issues who are arrested, to be referred to treatment as an alternative to the criminal justice system. This program was developed in collaboration with the Berks County Office of the District Attorney and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, and is an expansion of the current Blue CARES program.

Safe Medication Management

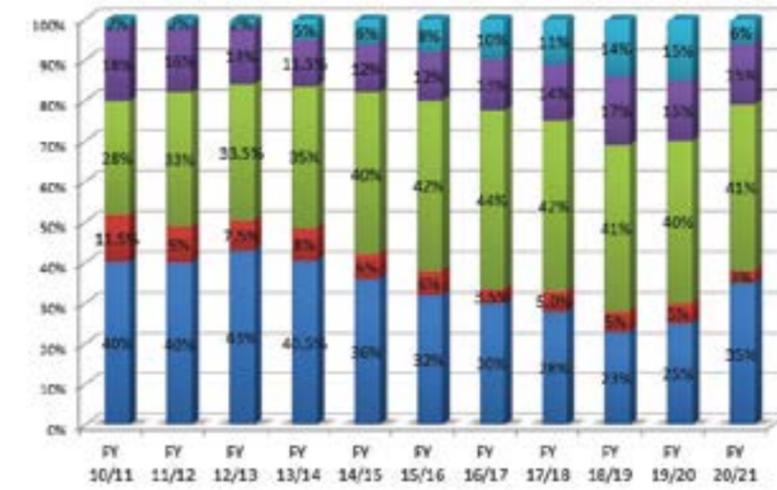
Number of Disposal Bags Distributed: 3,555

Proper medication disposal and storage prevents accidental and intentional misuse and helps protect the environment. COCA provides at no cost to Berks residents, medication disposal bags for at-home disposal, and medication lock boxes. Residents also have access to over 20 medication drop boxes throughout the county.

Treatment & COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had an affect on both treatment access and treatment delivery during fiscal year 2020/2021. Outpatient treatment continued to be offered both in person and through telehealth. While many inpatient providers reduced bed capacity to keep individuals safe, inpatient facilities continued to admit people into treatment. Despite the availability of safe treatment options, COCA saw a dramatic decrease in the number of individuals requesting access to treatment services. The number of people accessing treatment in fiscal year 2020/2021 decreased by 51% as compared to fiscal year 2019/2020. One of the primary reasons for this decrease is that outpatient treatment at the Berks County Jail had to be suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions. During a typical fiscal year COCA provides treatment services to almost 500 people at the Berks County Jail. When treatment was suspended, individuals in the jail received pre-treatment services through a workbook-based protocol facilitated by Berks Counseling Center.

In response to the decrease in treatment admissions, COCA launched a campaign to increase awareness about the availability of safe and effective treatment. This campaign included billboards, radio, social media posts, bus advertising and a direct mail campaign. Over 70,000 households received a postcard with the message "Today There's Hope." Zip codes that received the postcard were chosen based on overdose death numbers from the 2020 Berks Coroner's Report



Primary Drug for People Admitted for Treatment Through COCA Funding

625 Individuals

Received Pre-Treatment Services at Berks County Jail

Treatment Services

Individuals Funded for Treatment: 734

In the course of treatment, an individual may require admission to several levels of care (i.e. detoxification followed by residential treatment). Approximately 734 individuals were funded in fiscal year 2020/21, 267 episodes were for residential levels of care (i.e. withdrawal management, residential treatment and halfway house) and 666 episodes were for outpatient levels of care (i.e. intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization and medication-assisted treatment).

Treatment Access

Requests to COCA: 2,000

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.



Berks Counseling Center: Women's Programming

COCA funds have been instrumental in supporting integrated recovery services for women and women with children with a substance use disorder (SUD). Programming that addresses the needs of women, and is inclusive of children, has been instrumental in helping families impacted by substance use achieve self-sufficiency and recovery. Each of these COCA-fund programs has a dramatic impact on the lives of women and children.

The *Women with Children Bridge House* is a transitional recovery house for homeless women with SUD. This program affords women and their children safe, drug free housing along with case management and other recovery supports. The women in the house are connected to treatment services, health and wellness services and other recovery supports in the community. Children in need of services are also referred for care.

The *Integrated Support Services for Women Program* provides a broad array of supportive services and other assistance to mothers who are struggling with addiction. Case managers assist women with needs such as transportation, childcare, housing, employment, and financial support. Women in the program are connected to treatment and supported to attend recovery-focused meetings.

The *Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program* supports teen mothers providing psychosocial education on pregnancy, parenting, and substance use prevention throughout pregnancy. Teen moms are prepared and assisted in assuring they have car seats, baby clothing, diapers, and assistance with employment and/or permanent housing. Parenting groups are incorporated throughout both women and children's programs.

Icon from www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik

Recovery

Individuals who received Recovery Housing Services **311**

Individuals who received Case Management Services **1,178**

Individuals who received Treatment Follow-Up Contacts **253**

1,522 Individuals

Attended Recovery Support Services

35,633 Bed Days

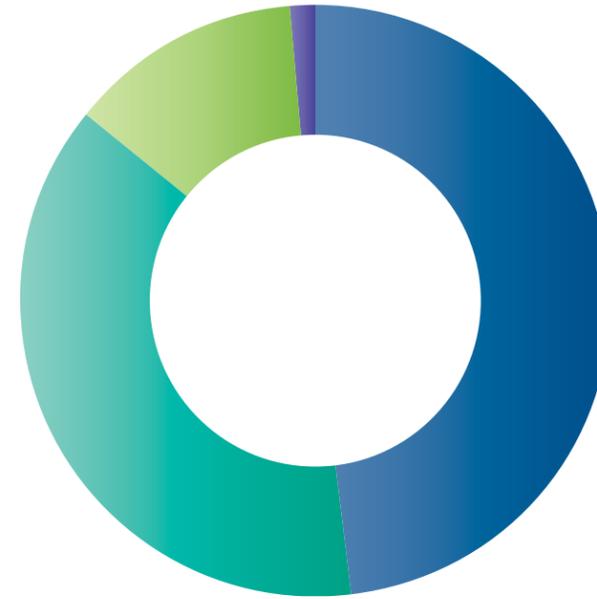
Provided to individuals in recovery housing



Recovery Walk -
September 2021

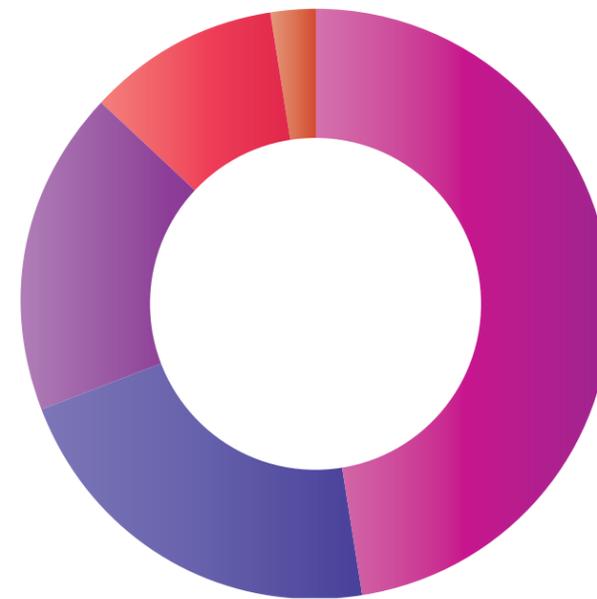
Fiscal Report

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



Revenues

State Funds	\$3,566,660
Federal Funds	\$2,782,013
County Funds	\$944,795
Other COCA Fees & Income	\$96,311
Total COCA Revenue	\$7,389,779



Expenditures

Treatment Related Services	\$3,512,661
Treatment	\$1,606,689
Prevention	\$1,328,566
Administration	\$773,358
Intervention	\$168,505
Total COCA Expenditures	\$7,389,779

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

For more information regarding our 20-21 fiscal report, please visit cocaberks.org/annualreport



Virtual 2020 Annual Conference

Over 150 individuals joined us online for our first ever online conference. The half-day conference including presentations on the topics of current drug trends, the effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic and identifying and addressing compassion fatigue.



Thank you to VA Productions for helping this day go smoothly!

Berks County Commissioners

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Kevin S. Barnhardt, Vice Chair
Michael S. Rivera

Board of Directors

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Nicolas Camacho, Vice President
Jeffrey Auman, Treasurer
Courtenay Dillard, Secretary
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Wynton Butler
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Kevin Rudy
Josephine Torres-Boykins
Robert Williams
Thomas Xavios

Staff Members

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Laura Catalano, Digital Media Specialist
Susan Cawley, Fiscal Technician
Teresa Tieman Detweiler, Prevention Specialist
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Sara Liu, Fiscal Technician
Minna Lopez, Administrative Support Specialist
Kathleen F. Noll, Assistant Administrator
Paul Russell, IT Administrator
Sonia Santiago, Prevention Specialist
Nickie Seshan, Office Manager
Jaclyn Steed, Prevention Program Manager
Yvonne Stroman, Community Programs Specialist

Staff and Board as of 6/30/21



COCA spreading word

Community News Page 22
The COCA board members reported that they had a successful meeting...
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Volunteers give COCA shot in the arm

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In memory of... James Gallen

Passed away December 17, 2020

James served on the COCA board from 1995 - 2004. We thank Jim for his time and commitment to COCA over these years.

Join an upcoming event or training!
cocaberks.org/events

Connect with #COCABerks!

Get up-to-date news, statistics, videos, information on upcoming events, addiction resources and more.



facebook.com/COCABerks | twitter.com/COCABerks | instagram.com/COCABerks
youtube.com/COCABerksvideo | linkedin.com/company/council-on-chemical-abuse



**Tune into our monthly WEEU show every
3rd Monday of the month at 11 a.m.**