



Annual Report

2022-2023



Photos Top (l to r): Artist Leslie Ramos paints the SOS Berks mural; COCA Executive Director Kathleen F. Noll met with State Senator Judy Schwank in December; Eva Steiner, winner of the 2023 Pat Ganter Scholarship, displays her plaque. Bottom (l to r): COCA's mascot Courage celebrated Take Down Tobacco Day with Reading High School JROTC students in March; children created their own stress balls at the COCA table at the West Reading Playground on National Night Out in August 2022



May 2023 WEUU radio show.



Hundreds of people participated in the 2022 Berks Recovery Walk during Recovery Month in September

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.

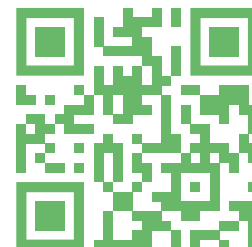
COCA is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors reflective of the local community, and serves as the coordinating agency for publicly supported drug and alcohol programming in Berks County, PA.

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.

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Learn more about us at
COCABerks.org



A Message From the Executive Director

Changing the Way We Think:

Innovations in Prevention, Treatment & Recovery

This year, the theme for COCA's annual report is innovation. Innovation is not only creating something new, but also something better than what we currently have. To provide the most effective drug and alcohol services possible, it is vital for us to continue to innovate. However, it is equally important to consider evidence and evaluate our new ideas and approaches. Over the past several decades, people who provide drug and alcohol services, as well as researchers, scientists, doctors, and people in recovery and their families, have contributed to the innovations we have seen in drug and alcohol services.

Kathleen F Noll

Prevention services have evolved over time, as approaches to preventing drug and alcohol use among youth have been evaluated, and new and innovative services have been developed. During the 1930s to 1960s, prevention messages were overly dramatized, often exaggerating the negative aspects of drug use.

The approach was frequently to provide "one-shot" presentations to young people to elicit fear about using drugs and alcohol. Research and evaluation have determined that scare tactics have little to no effect on a young person's decision to use alcohol and drugs. Today, prevention services are comprehensive, and youth programs are based on research and evidence that prove they are effective in preventing drug and alcohol use among young people.

Intervention practices have also advanced throughout the years. Some people think of an intervention as a confrontation with the individual using drugs. We have learned that this approach may be counterproductive. Innovations have led to the development of new, non-confrontational intervention techniques that are designed to build motivation for change and educate about substance use disorder.

Treatment for substance use disorder has also changed considerably. We now have validated client placement tools to recommend appropriate levels of treatment to people seeking services. Treatment is delivered using evidence-based protocols, and care is individualized and trauma informed. Additionally, while methadone has been used to treat opioid use disorder for decades, there are newer FDA approved medications to treat alcohol and opioid use disorders that have less restrictions on the way they are prescribed. This gives people easier access to medications and allows the prescribing physician to discuss options with the patient.

Recovery services have also grown. We now recognize that there are many pathways to recovery. The use of Certified Recovery Specialists to help those new to recovery find a path to sustained recovery has been growing steadily over the last several years. Recovery Centers that provide information, referrals and activities for people in recovery are found in more and more communities.

Innovations in drug and alcohol services have culminated in being able to provide effective prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services. However, the work is not done. We will continue to rely on innovation and research to insure people receive the best services available.

Opioid Settlement Funds

The Berks County Opioid Settlement funds are in place to address detrimental effects of the opioid/overdose crisis in Berks County and to help protect the community from such negative effects in the future. These funds are used to provide prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services related to Opioid Use Disorders (OUD) in communities and for all residents in Berks County with respect, dignity and equity, while supporting culturally appropriate services and programs.

The Berks County commissioners have contracted with COCA to administer the Opioid Settlement Funds. In September 2022, the first payment of \$538,130.62 was received. This is the first installment of just over \$13 million the county will receive over the next 18 years. This total could grow, as more lawsuits are pending.

This new funding source provides us with an opportunity to support new, innovative services and expand on existing, effective programs. Organizations applying for funds can review guidelines and propose services that address the needs of the community. Projects that have received partial or full funding include: Dannys Ride, which offers transportation to treatment and recovery services; expansion of medication assistant treatment (MAT) options to include more FDA approved medications; more support services for people in recovery and their families; and workforce development programs for people in recovery.

We look forward to supporting more new and innovative projects with these funds.

SOS Berks Opioid Coalition

Since 2016, COCA has helped lead the SOS Berks Opioid Coalition, which works to reduce opioid overdose deaths in Berks County. Among the projects undertaken in the 2022-23 fiscal year are:

- **The SOS Berks Mural Project** - We engaged an estimated 1,000 community members in helping us paint two recovery-themed murals.
- **A Recovery Simulation Event** - Nearly 80 people participated in this hands-on event, designed to help participants better understand the challenges faced by those in early recovery.
- **Community Outreach** - Provided Narcan distribution and treatment/recovery information in areas with high overdose rates.
- **The Response Magazine** - Published two issues of *Response Magazine*, with information about local efforts to address substance use disorder in Berks County.

[Visit sosberks.org to learn more](https://www.sosberks.org)

125 High School students from Berks County Avidium clubs helped paint the SOS Mural



Nearly 80 people attended the Recovery Simulation Event in April

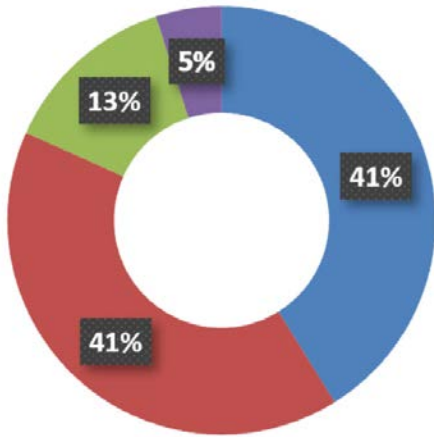


Packets with medication disposal bags and information on local resources were handed out at community events.



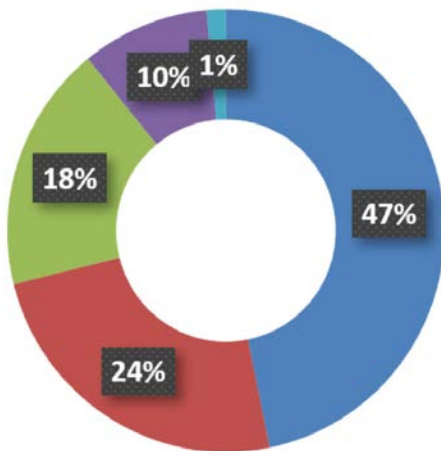
Fiscal Report

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



Revenues

● State Funds	\$3,698,219
● Federal Funds	\$3,647,071
● County Funds	\$1,199,575
● Other COCA Fees & Income	\$445,817
Total COCA Revenue	\$8,990,682



Expenditures

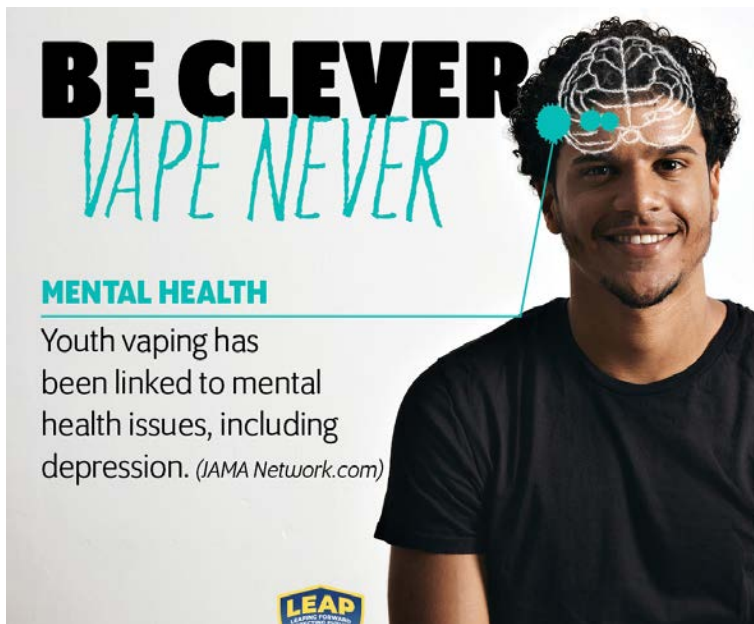
● Treatment Related Services	\$4,207,650
● Treatment	\$2,185,184
● Prevention	\$1,621,173
● Administration	\$849,725
● Intervention	\$126,950
Total COCA Expenditures	\$8,990,682

Chart excludes provider revenue, rent, client fees totaling \$1,453,680.

For more information regarding our 22-23 fiscal report, please visit cocaberks.org/annualreport

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

Prevention



A social media post from the Be Clever Vape Never Campaign

Anti-Vaping Campaign

People Reached: 133,221

In the spring we launched a media campaign to educate Berks County youth about the risks of vaping. The campaign was developed with the help of our LEAP Teen Prevention Coalition, a group of Berks County teens interested in substance use prevention. Working with a COCA prevention specialist, the teens recommended a media campaign to raise awareness about vaping facts, and came up with the slogan "Be Clever Vape Never."

Once the ideas for the campaign were solidified, Madj Marketing designed posters, social media posts and advertisements aimed at youth. In addition to a wide social media reach, we distributed over 500 posters to Berks County schools.

[Learn more at cocaberks.org/vapenever](http://cocaberks.org/vapenever)

Media & Communications

Social Media Posts **1,867**

Social Media Post Impressions **272,045**

The Response magazine - copies distributed to community **5,045**

Prevention Services

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Campaign **2,218**

Too Good For Drugs Evidence-Based Curriculum Participants **573**

Teens & Technology School Education 2-Session Participants **602**

Red Ribbons Distributed **48,484**

Information and Promotional Material Distributed **16,755**

LifeSkills Training Participants **214**

Medication Lock Boxes Distributed **507**

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



Pictured left: Materials from a Too Good for Drugs elementary school presentation.

Vaping Education

Youth Reached: 2,257

COCA continues to prioritize vaping education for youth, parents, and educators. Our Escape the Vape program engaged students of all grade levels in educational activities that promoted critical thinking skills and alternatives to managing stress and other emotions, and provided resources to students that needed assistance quitting vaping.

[Learn more at cocaberks.org/vaping](http://cocaberks.org/vaping)

Health Fair Events

People Reached: 7,098

COCA staff participated in 49 community events, including health fairs, back-to-school nights and National Night Out. At all these events, they distributed information on substance use prevention, treatment and recovery, and promoted healthy choices

Painting with A Purpose

People Reached: 30

In recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month in April, COCA partnered with Berks Teens and Albright College to host a unique two-day town hall event that offered college students the opportunity to “Paint with a Purpose.” Participants helped paint panels on the SOS Berks recovery-themed mural, while sharing their thoughts about social norms around alcohol, vaping and sexual health.



Students at Albright College discussed social norms during the Painting with a Purpose event



No Nicotine November Traveling Quit Kit Tour

In recognition of the Great American Smokeout on November 17, our prevention specialists hosted an innovative “No Nicotine November Traveling Quit Kit Tour.” In preparation for the tour, they assembled 500 quit kits consisting of a reusable bag filled with items people can reach for instead of a cigarette or vape. This included herbal tea, lollipops, mints, chewing gum, toothpicks, fidget toys, a magnet with tips for avoiding tobacco, and information about our free tobacco cessation classes. The kits proved popular, and all 500 were distributed during the two-week Traveling Quit Kit Tour, with our prevention specialists traveling to seven Reading area locations, including colleges and health centers.



Intervention, Treatment & Treatment Related Services

Intervention Services & Programs

SOS Berks 8th & Penn Outreach	100
Narcan® Kits Distributed	2,703
Berks County Hotline Calls	149
SAP Assessments	1,179
Medication Assistance Jail Program Treatment Admissions	232
Warm Handoff Interventions	909
Marijuana Diversion Program Completions	183
Urine Specimens Tested	25,493

Narcan Distribution

Narcan kits distributed: 2703

When it comes to opioid overdoses, Narcan® is the medication that can save lives in minutes. When administered to an individual experiencing an overdose, Narcan® blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing. Therefore, if more people carry Narcan®, more overdose deaths can be prevented. COCA continues to increase Narcan® distribution in Berks County each year. A total of 2,703 Narcan® kits were distributed in the 2022/2023 fiscal year. The majority of these went directly to individual community members who requested kits through COCA's website or at health fairs or presentations. Other kits were re-distributed by treatment providers, agencies, and outreach partners, and some were provided to employers, schools and law enforcement for emergency response.

Opioid overdose reversal kits

Kits consist of a canvas bag containing Narcan® nasal spray, CPR supplies and a bilingual booklet with instructions and treatment resources. Kits are available free to anyone who lives or works in Berks County.



Warm Handoff

Individuals who Received Services: 909

The Berks County Warm Handoff (WHO) Program was created in 2015 in response to a need to immediately connect overdose survivors who enter hospitals to drug and alcohol treatment services. The program began as a collaboration between Reading Hospital Tower Health, COCA, and Treatment Access and Services Center.

The program's goal was to ensure that overdose survivors would be seen by a Certified Recovery Specialist (CRS) before discharge. Originally, the CRS was on call, not onsite. Later, CRS staff were added 24/7 at the emergency care unit (ECU), so that vital drug and alcohol services were always available.

The best measurement of the program's success is the fact that ECU patients at Reading Hospital now can be connected to treatment at the time of a substance use related medical crisis. Patients have the opportunity to make a supported transition to drug and alcohol treatment and begin their journey to recovery.

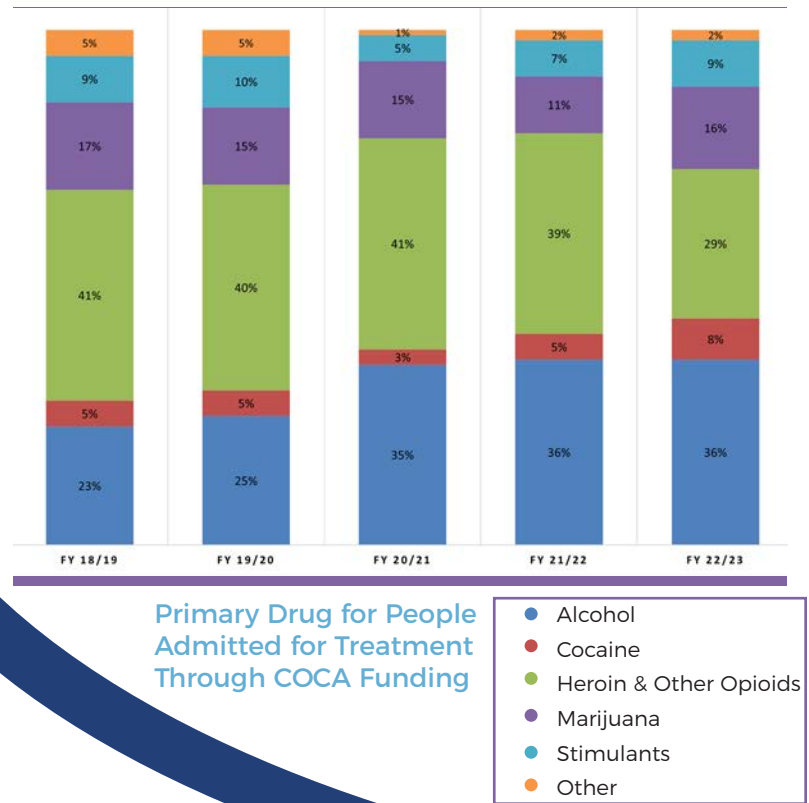
Harm Reduction Initiatives

COCA is committed to finding innovative ways to reach people struggling with substance use disorder, and provide them with resources and interventions that may help reduce risks associated with substance use. While we always want the best outcomes for everyone, we also believe in meeting people where they are in their journeys. This sometimes means an individual may not be ready for making changes like treatment and recovery. Our hope is that people will take precautions and use evidence-based interventions and safety measures if using illicit drugs.

COCA has increased its focus on harm reduction efforts in the 2022/2023 fiscal year. We are consistently looking for new ways to expand Narcan® outreach into the community. We know that easy access to Narcan® is one way to combat the high rates of opioid overdose deaths. COCA provides Narcan® free upon request to all residents and businesses in Berks County.

Another evidence-based intervention that COCA has implemented this year is to provide drug checking strips. These are small, individually packaged strips that allow people to detect deadly substances like fentanyl and xylazine in the drug supply. Knowing what is in the supply allows people to make real-time decisions about how best to stay safe.

As leaders in Berks County in the field of substance use and addiction, COCA recognizes the importance of harm reduction to help save lives. COCA hired a Harm Reduction Coordinator in June 2023 to expand these initiatives.



606 Individuals

Received Pre-Treatment Services at Berks County Jail

Treatment Services

Individuals Funded for Treatment: 1,012

In the course of treatment, an individual may require admission to several levels of care (i.e. detoxification followed by residential treatment). A total of 1,012 individuals were funded for 1,122 treatment episodes in fiscal year 2022/23, 242 episodes were for residential levels of care (i.e. withdrawal management, residential treatment and halfway house) and 880 episodes were for outpatient levels of care (i.e. intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization and medication-assisted treatment).

Treatment Access

Requests to COCA: 1,482

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.

Serving Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Recovery

In March of 2021, the Reading Hospital began the Soft Landing program to serve pregnant and postpartum women with opiate or stimulant use. When the initial funding through the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs ended in October 2022, the Council on Chemical Abuse began supporting the program. Eligibility was then expanded to include those with any substance use. Soft Landing provides care coordination, therapy, educational and support groups, and assistance with childcare and transportation for medical appointments. Care Coordinators connect participants with resources including medical care, substance use treatment, recovery supports, parenting educators, and housing. The goal of the program is to provide the support needed to create the best possible outcome for mom and baby. Program staff includes a therapist and two Care Coordinators. Services are provided in both English and Spanish. Soft Landing has served 106 women, 49 of whom joined since COCA began funding the program. Seventy-six babies have been born to moms enrolled in the program, and 83% of them went home from the hospital with their mother. See more statistics below.

Baby destination at discharge	
Foster care	3
Moved out of area/unable to obtain info	5
Chose adoption	2
With family/kinship care	3
With mom	63
Total	76

Type of substance use disorder	
Alcohol Use Disorder	3
Marijuana Use Disorder	15
Opioid Use Disorder	46
Polysubstance Use Disorder	21
Stimulant Use Disorder	21

Recovery

Individuals who received Recovery Housing Services **250**

Individuals who received Case Management Services **1,047**

Individuals who received Treatment Follow-Up Contacts **516**

258 Individuals

Attended Recovery Support Services

34,710 Bed Days

Provided to individuals in recovery housing

Hundreds of people participated in the Berks Recovery Walk in September 2022 during Recovery Month



Berks County Commissioners

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Michael S. Rivera, Vice Chair
Lucine E. Sihelnik

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Thomas Xavios

Staff Members

Kathleen F. Noll, Executive Director
Deborah Baer, Billing Technician
Laura Catalano, Communications Coordinator
Yomary Castro, Chief Fiscal Officer
Susan Cawley, Fiscal Technician
Nicole Charlanza, Harm Reduction Coordinator
Teresa Tieman Detweiler, Prevention Specialist
Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, Director of
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Bernice K. Hines Corbit, Case Management
Supervisor
Alicia Kline, Prevention Program Supervisor
Francheska Lantigua, Case Management Specialist
Sara Liu, Fiscal Technician
Minna Lopez, Administrative Support Specialist
Paul Russell, IT Administrator
Sonia Santiago, Prevention Specialist
Nickie Seshan, Office Manager
Zoe Stankiewicz, Prevention Specialist
Jaclyn Steed, Assistant Administrator
Yvonne Stroman, Community Programs Specialist
DuShawn R. Ware, Prevention Specialist

All positions as of June 30, 2023

*Winners of the 2022 COCA Conference Awards (L to R)
Judge Eleni Geishauer, Beth Derr, Barbara Boland, Kim
Johnson, Lee Cruz, Dr. William Santoro, Judge Teresa
Johnson, & COCA Executive Director Kathleen Noll*

2022 Annual Conference

In November, COCA hosted over 200 people at its first all in-person conference since 2019, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Reading. The conference focused on the theme of Resilience, and included a keynote speech by Doug Tieman, former CEO of Caron Foundation (pictured below), as well as a panel discussion and workshops on Harm Reduction, Adolescents and Trauma, and Recovery Resilience.



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



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**Tune into our monthly WEEU & BCTV shows for updates on
prevention, treatment & recovery in Berks County**