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Lt. Gov. Hochul announces over \$5 million in opioid crisis funding

By: Gino Fanelli | February 25, 2019

Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul visited DePaul's National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Rochester area (NCADD-RA) Friday, Feb. 22 to announce a total of \$5.59 million in funding aimed at workforce development through the opioid crisis.



Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul.

The federal National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant funding awarded to the New York Department of Labor will be aimed at tackling the opioid epidemic from several different areas, including expanding employment opportunities to those impacted by the crisis, as well as addiction treatment services, alternative pain management services and therapy services.

At NCADD, the funding will help support a 2020-21 addictions counselor credentials training program.

"There's a lot of people, whether you're someone in recovery or someone who's not thought of a career in recovery services, and we need to get them connected through federal resources to these jobs," Hochul said. "The kind of jobs we're talking about are training participants to receive certification in recovery coaching, peer training navigators, chemical dependency, life coaches, mental health technicians, basic life support and paramedics."

A major portion of the funding will be aimed at career opportunities for those that have been unemployed or underemployed as a result of their own addiction. As a public health emergency, the opioid crisis is typically thought of in terms of loss of life. In Monroe County, 166 people died as a result of heroin overdoses in 2018, out of a total of 1,133 reported overdoses, according to the Monroe County Heroin Task Force. But there is also an economic impact of the crisis. According to a report by the American Action Forum, New York lost 3.1 billion work hours across 225,900 workers between 1999 and 2015 as a direct result of opioid abuse. That was estimated to bring a total of \$179.4 billion in real GDP loss across that time frame.

"I don't think I know a single family that hasn't been touched by the heroin and opioid crisis, including my own," Hochul said. "The governor and I have been working diligently on this. We formed a taskforce three years ago; we've been going around the state and we've been trying to find different ways to really get to the bottom of this."

The Department of Labor will be partnering with local workforce development boards covering 21 out of 62 New York State counties. Over \$500,000 will be granted to the Rochester area as part of the program.

NCADD-RA does not provide direct treatment for addicts, but instead serves as an education and training body for future counselors and addiction specialists. Counselors range from addicts in recovery to people simply seeing the impact heroin on their community. To receive credentials, 360 hours of education over 16 months is required. About 30 people are in training at NCADD-RA currently.

"These are some of the most compassionate people I've met," said NCADD-RA director Jennifer Faringer. "I say that each year, but I swear, each year, the classes get even more impactful, and it's wonderful to go around to each and every treatment provider in our community and see our graduates who are now running programs, who are now helping to fill the huge vacuum."

gfaneli@bridgetowermedia.com/(585) 653-4022