



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present

The Expansion of Operation Helping Hand and Lessons Learned - Part I

November 4, 2020
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

WEBINAR

Program Summary

Operation Helping Hand (OHH) is innovative prosecutor-led program developed in 2016 by then Bergen County Prosecutor Gurbir Grewal. Through OHH, law enforcement actively links individuals with substance use disorders to treatment and/or recovery services. Under the original OHH model, law enforcement officers who arrested users purchasing heroin or other narcotics at open-air drug markets would immediately offer to connect those individuals to care. The charges were not dropped if the user accepted help, but every effort was made to place the user on the path to recovery. OHH also includes models that involve outreach and connection to services without any arrest component. In 2018, under the direction of Attorney General Grewal, the Department of Law & Public Safety widened OHH to Union, Morris, Passaic, and Sussex Counties. Funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention allowed OHH to expand to 17 counties and a combination of 2.2 million dollars of State funding and an additional one million dollars from the CDC expanded OHH to all New Jersey counties in 2019.

This program is the first of a two part series on the lessons learned from the expansion of Operation Helping Hand. This panel of prosecutors and law enforcement officers will offer insight into how Operation Helping Hand has expanded from its 2016 start in Bergen County to all 21 counties in 2019, as well as lessons learned from the expansion that are unique to each of their counties.

Eligibility

Registration for this program is limited to LPS attorneys in the Division of Criminal Justice, the Division of Law, and the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, assistant prosecutors and selected attorneys in the Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Health who have been invited to attend.

Faculty

Scott A. Coffina is the Burlington County Prosecutor. Prior to becoming the Burlington County Prosecutor, he served as the Senior Deputy Chief Counsel to Governor Chris Christie. Before joining the Christie administration, Prosecutor Coffina was a partner in the White Collar Defense and Corporate Investigations Practice Group at Drinker Biddle & Reath, LLP. His practice focused on representing corporate, university and individual clients in internal investigations, False Claims Act litigation, political-legal controversies, and other civil, criminal or regulatory enforcement actions. He was also a partner at Montgomery McCracken in Philadelphia and began his legal career as an associate at Wiley Rein in Washington, DC.

Prosecutor Coffina has served as an Assistant United States Attorney in Philadelphia. He was also an Associate Counsel to President George W. Bush, advising White House and administration officials on a wide range of legal matters, representing the interests of the President in Congressional oversight investigations and evaluating candidates for judicial appointments in the District of Columbia and Eleventh Circuits. He previously served in the White House Office of Political Affairs under President Ronald Reagan.

Prosecutor Coffina holds an undergraduate degree from Cornell University and a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Lyndsay V. Ruotolo is the Acting Union County Prosecutor. She was previously an Assistant United States Attorney in the Violent Crimes Enforcement Unit. She handled the office's Violent Crime Initiative, conducted long-term investigations and coordinated the efforts of law enforcement officers from various federal and local agencies to identify and proactively prosecute those responsible for the commission of violent crimes in and around the City of Newark. She also managed a caseload of prosecutions, and carjacking, drug distribution, robbery, and weapons offenses investigations.

Prior to joining the USAO, Ruotolo was an Assistant Prosecutor and Special Deputy Attorney General in the Union County Prosecutor's Office. During her previous tenure at the UCPO, Ruotolo was one of four attorneys assigned to the Guns, Gangs, Drugs, and Violent Crimes Task Force (now the Narcotics Strike Force). She also spearheaded Union County's first Operation Helping Hand, a coordinated effort by law enforcement and service providers to offer addiction intervention to those struggling with substance abuse.

Before becoming a prosecutor, Ruotolo was an associate at the law firm of McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP. She is a certified trial attorney. Ruotolo holds a bachelor's degree with honors from New York University, and a J.D. with honors from New York Law School. She clerked for the Honorable Ellen L. Koblitz, Judge of the Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division.

Melissa O'Mara is an Assistant Prosecutor in Burlington County. She is assigned to the grand jury/screening unit and also oversees the Straight to Treatment program, Operation Helping Hand, the Municipal Court Diversion Initiative and other recovery programs implemented by the BCPO. She is an active member and vice-chair of Burlington County's LACADA and works closely with the Sheriff's Office Hope One Mobile Response Unit.

Assistant Prosecutor O'Mara is in long-term abstinence based recovery from drugs and alcohol since August 30, 2011. As an attorney and addiction recovery advocate, AP O'Mara is dedicated

to finding solutions to the drug use crisis. Her objective is to use the criminal justice process to hold offenders responsible while also supporting rehabilitation. She believes that a holistic, collaborative, evidence based approach benefits the individual, protects the community, and enables offenders to reintegrate into a law abiding and fulfilling life in recovery.

Prior to becoming an attorney, AP O'Mara worked on national legislation and campaigns surrounding addiction. She is also a recovery coach. AP O'Mara holds an undergraduate degree from Centenary University and a J.D. from the New England Law School in Boston, Massachusetts.

Lieutenant Joseph G. Landis is a Community Outreach Coordinator in the Community Outreach Unit of the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office. The unit is committed to ongoing and proactive communication between the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office and schools, neighborhoods, businesses and community based organizations within the county and southern New Jersey. The unit fosters the CMCPD's goal of building stronger working relationships between law enforcement and community residents by maintaining the trust of citizens and sustaining positive relationships based upon open communication, focus, respect and equality. The community outreach program presents programs on drug awareness and prevention, gang awareness, sexting, bullying, cyber bullying, general internet safety, financial crimes, domestic violence, victim advocacy, human trafficking, child abuse and sexual assault to students and school staff, community organizations, law enforcement professionals, and members of the public.

Lieutenant Landis has collaborated with many community prevention, recovery and faith based agencies to promote the CMCPD's mission. One of Lieutenant Landis' recent initiatives was "Operation Helping Handbags", a program developed to address the supply shortages caused by COVID-19. Operation Helping Hand state and federal grant monies funded bags of essential supplies that were delivered to Oxford and Sober Living homes and recovery meetings in Cape May County by the Hope One of Cape May County Community Outreach Vehicle. Delivering these supplies to locations where users without technology access could attend in-person recovery meetings provided essential support to some of the county's most vulnerable residents, many of who are unemployed and battling addiction.

CLE Credit

NJ CLE Credit: This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 1.2 hours of Alternative Verifiable Learning Format (AVF) total CLE credit. Of these, 0.0 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/professionalism.

Registration

Those who are eligible to apply should use the Zoom Webinar registration link in the Program Announcement email.

Students must download Zoom before the webinar in order for the AGAI to record polling responses that are required for attendance verification and CLE credit.

To download Zoom, LPS employees should search for Zoom Meeting Software in the LPS software center and click install.

The AGAI will be unable to verify attendance or grant CLE credit to students who have not downloaded Zoom before the webinar.