



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present

The Expansion of Operation Helping Hand and Lessons Learned - Part 2

November 18, 2020
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 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 second of a two-part series and the sequel to *The Expansion of Operation Helping Hand and Lessons Learned, Part 1*. 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. Registrants will receive the course materials prior to the program date.

Faculty

Bradley D. Billhimer is the Ocean County Prosecutor. He has been a leader in the fight to curb opioid abuse and has worked diligently to stem the rising tide of opioid related fatal overdoses. Prosecutor Billhimer is always looking for new and innovative ways make an impact in this area. Before his appointment as Ocean County Prosecutor, he was in private practice, with a focus on criminal defense litigation in superior and municipal courts. He was also a partner in the Law Offices of Mohel & Billhimer in Toms River and an associate with the Law Offices of S. Karl Mohel. While in the private sector, Prosecutor Billhimer served two consecutive terms on the Supreme Court of New Jersey's District IIIA Ethics Committee, as well as the Supreme Court of New Jersey Committee on Character for applicants to the New Jersey State Bar. He is a former member of the Judicial and Prosecutorial Appointment Committee for the Ocean County Bar Association. Prosecutor Billhimer has served as an Adjunct Professor of criminal law and criminal procedure at Ocean County College.

Prosecutor Billhimer began his public service in Washington, D.C. as an intern for former United States Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ). He was also a Law Clerk to the Honorable Barbara Ann Villano, J.S.C. (now retired) in Ocean County. Prosecutor Billhimer holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and a J.D. from Widener University School of Law in Wilmington, Delaware, where he was the recipient of the Dean Arthur A. Weeks Outstanding Service Award for his graduating class.

Jennifer Webb-McRae is the Cumberland County Prosecutor. She is responsible for overseeing a 110-person office that prosecutes indictable crimes throughout the county. She has expanded the office's grants, which include the Child Advocacy Center, Justice Assistance Grants, OJJDP Safe & Thriving Communities (CC THRIVE), Operation Helping Hand, Overdose Data to Action, Body Armor Replacement, Megan's Law, Child Advocacy Treatment, Multi-Jurisdictional Gangs, Guns & Narcotics, SANE/SART, Victim Witness Advocacy (VOCA), & Stop Violence Against Women (VAWA). Prosecutor Webb-McRae believes that while prosecuting crimes and keeping Cumberland County residents safe is her primary responsibility, helping people make positive choices is equally important. She is proud of facilitating the Cumberland County Law Enforcement Community Engagement Series, which hosts public sessions covering topics such as Use of Force; Use of Force Investigations; Law Enforcement Hiring Practices; Incarceration/Re-Entry/Expungement; Police Citizen Encounters; and Internal Affairs and Critical Incidents. Prosecutor Webb-McRae's motto for her work is "I will go anywhere, at any time to help the citizens of Cumberland County make healthy, positive choices."

Before her appointment as Cumberland County Prosecutor, she was in private practice, concentrating in criminal and municipal court defense, business and real estate and wills and estates. She served as Child Support Attorney for the Cumberland County Welfare Board, Solicitor for the Fairfield Township Land Use Board and Public Defender for Maurice River Township. Prosecutor Webb-McRae also served as an Assistant Deputy Public Defender for the State of New Jersey. Prosecutor Webb-McRae holds an undergraduate degree from Glassboro State University and a J.D. from Rutgers – Camden School of Law. She is also a graduate of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers College in Macon, Georgia.

Danielle LoRusso is NJ CARES' first Operation Helping Hand Peer-to-Peer Learning Coordinator. She provides support to all New Jersey county OHH programs and trains law enforcement and OHH partners in understanding and addressing addiction and on the best practices for implementing OHH. She began her employment with NJ CARES as a county coordinator for OHH, providing individualized assistance to county OHH programs throughout the State.

Before joining NJ CARES, Ms. LoRusso was a Sergeant in the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office. During the last three years of her career, she developed the prosecutor's new Community Relations Unit, through which she implemented and administered Operation Helping Hand as the unit's first supervisor. Prior to supervising the Community Relations Unit, Ms. LoRusso worked in undercover narcotics, including assignment to the Camden Office of the DEA. She was the first female Administrative Sergeant/Commander of the Gangs, Guns and Narcotics Task Force and was a negotiator with the Gloucester County Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). Ms. Lo Russo holds an Associate's Degree from Gloucester County College.

Matthew Rudd is a Special Agent for Strategic Planning & Programs in the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office. He responds to emerging needs in the county that impact crime and public safety, implements special projects, and identifies new opportunities to promote the mission of the CCPO. Mr. Rudd's community justice engagement includes promoting gun safety and violence awareness and other educational events such as the Hometown Security Initiative and women's safety workshops, and implementing innovative grant projects including Operation Helping Hand/Recovery On Wheels, Justice Assistance Grants, and CC THRIVE, a gang and gun violence prevention initiative.

Mr. Rudd was previously the Director of Coalitions & Communications for the Southwest Council, a prevention, treatment, and recovery agency serving Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem Counties. He oversaw regional and community based coalitions and worked in strategic planning and development. He also coordinated agency communications including its website/social media accounts and multi-media campaigns designed to promote and raise awareness of agency services. Mr. Rudd has served in a variety of administrative and pastoral roles with Living Faith Alliance Church in Vineland, NJ. He oversaw the annual budget, was responsible for media, communications, and community engagement and worked on local and global projects in Latin America and Central Asia. Mr. Rudd earned a degree in psychology and business administration from Houghton College and is an MBA student at Wilmington University.

Sgt. Amanda Ray-DiGregorio is a Detective with the Salem County Prosecutor's Office and the Operation Helping Hand Project lead for the SCPO's Operation Helping Hand Program/Salem

County RESCUE. Sgt. Ray-DiGregorio was instrumental in the creation of RESCUE, a team of law enforcement officers and recovery coaches who perform proactive community outreach and engagement to address the opioid epidemic. RESCUE's outreach expanded under Operation Helping Hand, with funding provided to the SCPO by the Office of the Attorney General. The expansion included operating a recovery resource center and increasing roving operations with a mobile van. Sgt. Ray-DiGregorio has worked in every division and/or unit within the SCPO, in addition to serving in the Salem City Police Department's Detective Unit and as a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Agency. She is the Salem County Community Partnership Liaison and a member of the Mannington Municipal Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse.

Kelsey Casper works with Salem County RESCUE to educate individuals and families on available resources and place individuals into treatment if they choose that path to recovery. She is also a recovery coach at Southwest Council and a Case Manager for Cumberland County's Recovery on Wheels. Ms. Casper is certified in Mental Health First Aid and as a New Jersey Peer Recovery Specialist. She is a senior in the social work program at Stockton University.

Tori Haslett is a CCAR Recovery Coach and the Grant Team Leader for the Salem County Prosecutor's Office. She oversees the RESCUE team, a group of law enforcement officers, recovery coaches, and EMTs who proactively go out into the community to offer resources and act as a conduit for getting individuals into recovery. Collecting, organizing and tracking data are among her central responsibilities. Ms. Haslett compiled a list of high-risk individuals who struggle with substance use disorder by reviewing naloxone deployments in Salem County and reaching out to law enforcement and community members. The RESCUE team meets these individuals where they are located, with the objective of placing them into treatment. Ms. Haslett also maintains and oversees the Recovery Resource Center, where people struggling with substance use disorders can meet with a recovery coach and an EMT who will assist them with treatment. Ms. Haslett has organized and participated in RESCUE's community outreach efforts, including proactive roving and organized round-up efforts. Ms. Haslett was previously the SCPO Grant Bookkeeper. She started her career at the SCPO as an intern, while a student at Widener University.

Pamela Holmes works at Salem County RESCUE's recovery center, maintaining the schedule and demonstrating best practices in Narcan administration. She is a teacher at the Salem County EMS Academy and a certified instructor in EMT-1, CPR, First Aid, and Stop the Bleed. She is also the Salem County Deputy EMS Coordinator and Captain of the Pedricktown Ambulance Squad.

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 1.5 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 who are registered will receive a confirmation email with a link to access the program.

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.

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