

Making Positive Change: First Responders & Behavioral Health

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Mayor's Council of Public Health & Drug Control Policy

Huntington, WV

Huntington, West Virginia

(Often referred to as the epicenter of the opioid epidemic in the country)

- ▶ Around 81 million prescription painkillers have been shipped over eight years (2006-2014) to the local population of 91K people in Cabell County
- ▶ 2010-2011- overdoses began to explode as product changed from pills to heroin
- ▶ 2017 remains current peak for Cabell County; 1831 nonfatal overdoses in the county, 202 overdose deaths
- ▶ 2018-2020 brought a sharp decline due to innovative programs such as PROACT and QRT

COVID 19

Brought Isolation, Fear & Barriers

- ▶ In 2021, there were 1,067 emergency responses to suspected overdoses in the County – significantly higher than each of the previous three years – with at least 158 deaths
- ▶ In 2022 to date, suspected overdoses have prompted at least 509 responses and 685 emergency room visits, according to preliminary data from the state Department of Health and Human Resources' Office of Drug
- ▶ Constantly changing product on the street: pills > heroin > fentanyl > methamphetamines

Effects on First Responders

- ▶ First responders handle overdose calls, responding to several calls a day and administering Naloxone to the same patients several times a week
 - ▶ Such even have significantly risen over the past decade
 - ▶ In some instances, FR's are reviving friends & classmates
- ▶ Evidence shows that dealing with this challenge - along with the already stressful work environment - affects empathy and stress levels, as well as job satisfaction and soft skills - impacting how effectively they can respond
- ▶ Effects are compounded by a dwindling workforce, many unfilled positions

The Compass Program

A comprehensive program designed to ensure that every first responder is equipped with the resources and support necessary to build personal resiliency and to cultivate a culture of wellness within their department and across the community as a whole

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

**City of
Huntington**

The Fire & Police Departments in Huntington, WV

- ▶ Currently, there are 87 firefighters & 91 police officers in Huntington
- ▶ Firefighters in Huntington saw a significant increase **(+26.7%)** (2015 - 2016) in their call volume
- ▶ During 2017 many firefighters experienced an average of five overdose deaths per month
- ▶ An independent evaluation found that **first responders in Huntington have significantly higher stress, PTSD, and burnout than the general population**



The onset of COVID-19 exacerbated existing compassion fatigue, occupational stress & trauma

- ▶ COVID-19 presented three major challenges to first responders
 - ▶ **Environmental Effects** - Changes in the operational environment, available resources, work conditions, or the level or type of demand for services
 - ▶ **Direct Effects** - Threats to personnel from COVID-19-related illness, including absenteeism, stress, and quarantines
 - ▶ **Indirect Effects** - Impacts on operations due to the combination of environmental and direct effects. These include changes to how services are delivered, training slow-downs, or increased healthcare costs



What we thought
that we knew

Drug Overdose
Deaths

Because of our surveys, focus groups, and relationships within each department, Compass identified that the triggers for occupational stress, trauma, and compassion fatigue were much broader

Broadening our understanding of the problem

COVID-19

Relationships and
Marriage

Training

Leadership

Lack of Personnel

Work Environment

Community
Perception

Personal Finances

What we know
now

Compass provides mental and physical wellness services targeted at building resiliency and improving overall wellness

Mental fitness services



Behavioral Health
Education



Referrals to Vetted
Providers



Coaching Sessions



Training



Critical Incident
Stress Debriefings



Mental Health
Check Ins

Physical fitness services



Chiropractic
Services



Acupuncture



Massage Therapy



Nutrition
Consultations



Body Composition
Measurements



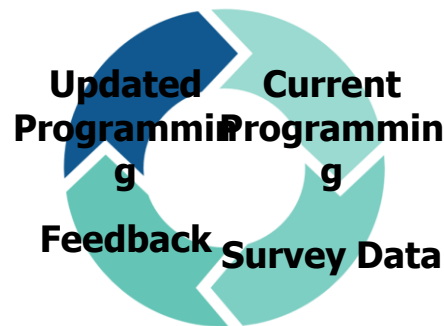
Coaching/Workout
Programs

Programming is developed and delivered by one mental and one physical wellness coach, supported by ad-hoc specialists

Two coaches directly engage with first responders to build relationships, increase engagement, and establish feedback loops to ensure programming is aligned with first responders' preferences and needs

They also attend activities delivered by experts who come to the Compass Center to provide services like Yoga, Jujitsu, Chiropractic and Therapeutic Massage

Subject matter experts provide training on topics identified through feedback and data



Compass also partners with Marshall University and specialized providers to provide an enhanced portfolio of services



Data Collection and Advisory

The Advisory Team has a board member from Marshall Health, who provided Compass with data collection and interpretation guidance

Exercise Physiology Lab

Metabolic and body composition testing gives us specific and accurate measurements to ensure physical wellness programming is tailored to each first responder



Other partners



Financial Training



Cognitive
Behavioral
Therapy



Trainers



Couples Therapy



Department of
Veterans Affairs
Veteran Services



Donors

Compass Program Impact





25%

**Percent of first responders
Participated in the program in Q1
2021**



48%

**Percent of first responders
Participated in the program in Q2
2022**

Based on an independent evaluation, Compass was shown to increase job satisfaction and improve soft skills



First responders that utilized Compass report **2X Higher Job Satisfaction** than those who do not



First responders that utilized Compass report being **20% more satisfied** in their ability to manage relationships, solve problems, and acknowledge and discuss mental and physical issues



There are positive effects of Compass program use so far, mainly related to increased ability to deal with challenging situations



The more Compass resources they use, the **more satisfied** they are with their soft skills



Firefighters who frequently use Compass **eat healthier**



The team has also implemented three departmental policies with three more forthcoming to normalize mental/physical wellness in department culture

Future Policies



HFD Critical Incident Policy

Includes Mental Fitness Coach in post-critical incident process. Optional check-ins provided by Coach.



HPD Critical Incident Policy

Includes Mental Fitness Coach in post-critical incident process. Optional check-ins provided by Coach.



HFD Hour for Wellness Policy

Provides on-duty fire personnel with one-hour during their 24-hour shift to use the Compass Center.



HPD Wellness Policy

Will allow on-duty police officers to use the Compass Center during their work day.



HFD Mental Health Check-In

Every member of the department will complete one mental health check-in with the mental fitness coach annually.



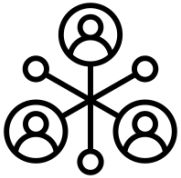
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The Future of Compass



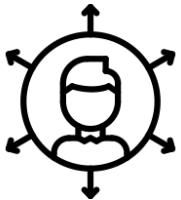
Compass learned that having the right people, in the right role, following the right process, is the recipe for success



Assemble a **working group of stakeholders** who are respected, credible, and influential. This group should be a "safe place" where members can discuss issues candidly and in confidence



Conduct focus groups with the target population to help identify and inform intervention strategies. Update frequently enough to identify trends and iterate intervention strategies accordingly



When hiring Coaches, they must understand the **necessary soft skills** to align with the workplace culture of the departments. Approach engagements by listening first, without an agenda. City leadership should support the coaches and give them time to build these relationships

The Compass model can be applied to different environments and yield meaningful results



Healthcare Professionals

In a survey, **64% of nurses** reported looking to leave the healthcare profession. Half of the nurses surveyed have experienced feelings of trauma, extreme stress, or PTSD [1]



Teachers

25% of teachers report having considered leaving their profession, which is considerably more than in non-pandemic years [2]



Managers

6 out of 10 managers report that their mental health has been hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic [3]

***For more information on Compass, please visit
compasshuntington.com***

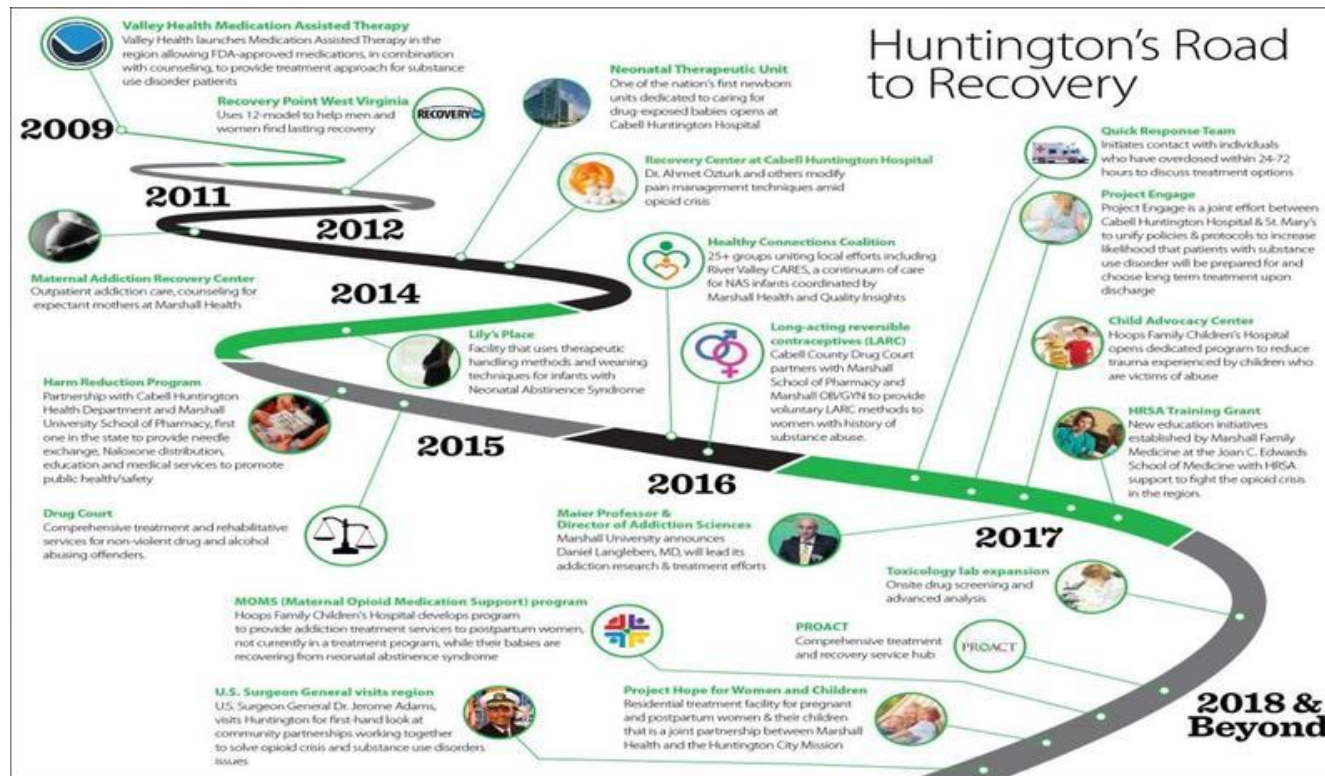
***or contact Austin Sanders, Program Manager at
sandersa@huntingtonwv.gov***



First Responders & Behavioral Health Leaders

- ▶ Unite our communities, we are all in this together
- ▶ Think outside the box AND our comfort zone
- ▶ Listen to those on the front lines, the game has changed
- ▶ Provide necessary and changing education
- ▶ Visit each others space.....ride-alongs
- ▶ Work to stop the stigma of substance use disorder (it is not a moral failure)
- ▶ Stay positive, compassionate and kind.....it's free

Community Partnerships Lead to Good Things.....

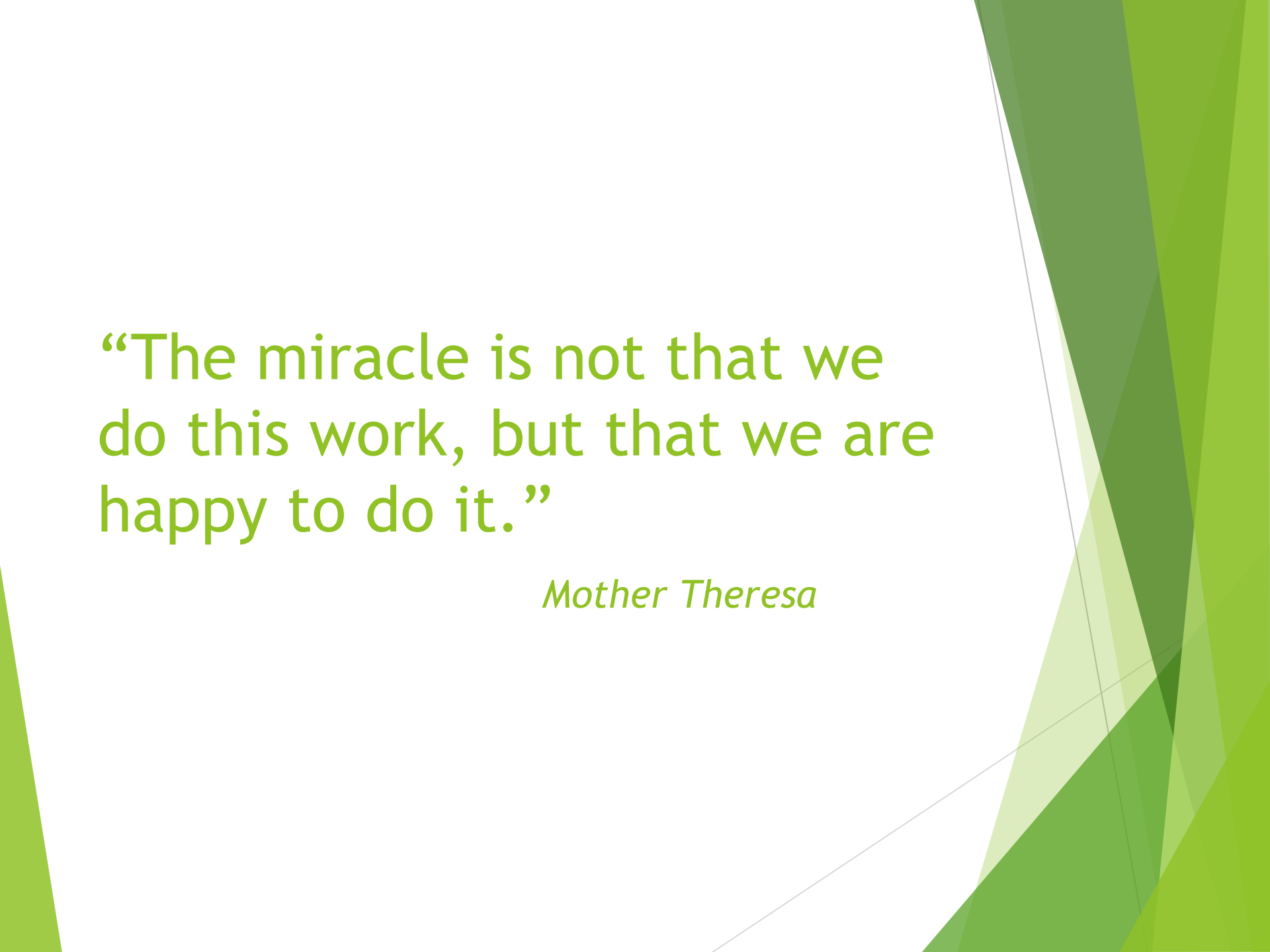


Needs for Expansion & Replication

- ▶ Quick Response Team (QRT)
 - ▶ 30% of those engaged seek treatment
 - ▶ Beginning MAT in the field
- ▶ PROACT (Provider Response Organization for Addiction Care & Treatment)
- ▶ Project Engage
- ▶ MOMS (Maternal Opioid Medication Support)
- ▶ Project Hope for Women and Children

Filling in the Gaps

- ▶ Shared data to find those who have fallen out of care to reengage
- ▶ QRT follow-up teams
- ▶ Mobile Crisis Units
- ▶ Easier access to telehealth
- ▶ Positive stories of recovery
- ▶ Highlight individuals making a difference
- ▶ Pay incentives for first responders and behavioral health workers

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

“The miracle is not that we
do this work, but that we are
happy to do it.”

Mother Theresa

For Your Information

- ▶ <https://www.wvpublic.org/news/2019-06-27/huntingtons-path-to-recovery-in-a-document>
- ▶ https://jcesom.marshall.edu/media/58477/2020_cabell-county-resiliency-plan_final.pdf
- ▶ QRT Coordinator - Connie Priddy
connie.Priddy@ccems.org
- ▶ Jan Rader raderj@huntingtonwv.gov
- ▶ (Building the City of Solutions -Evaluating the Addiction Crisis Response in Huntington/Cabell County WV
https://jcesom.marshall.edu/media/60170/ccocr_finalreport_full2.pdf

Questions?