



**General Meeting**  
**September 27, 2023**  
**Hybrid Meeting, TRACTOR Food and Farms**

*Task Force Vision: Creating a community free of substance misuse behaviors with a focus on youth.*

**Attendees:** Emily Kujawa (WNC Health Network), Ashley Cooper, Bryan Creech (Vaya Health), Andrea Howell (Nurse, SU focus), Christy Harrell (NC Works Office, Mayland Community College), Lisa Shultz (SEARCH), Morgan Peterson (Yancey County Health Department), Kayla Rice (MAHEC), Mechelle Akers (Pharmacist), Mike Akers (Recovery Community), Janna McJunkin (RHA), Glenn Field (NCDHHS), Ashley Neisser (Blue Ridge Regional Hospital), Linc Vance (Freedom Life), Malinda Shepherd (Yancey DSS), Dan Barron (Guardian Ad Litem), Wendy Duncan (Mitchell County Health Department), Tyler Dellinger (Mitchell/Avery Probation), Brandi Renfro (Yancey/Madison Probation)  
**Staff:** Jacquie Lopez (PATH), Cassie Floan (PATH), Jessica Zucchini (PATH), Tara Wright (PATH), Elizabeth Stephens (PATH).

**Community Learning Process Update, Ashley Cooper and Emily Kujawa**

- People across Mitchell and Yancey counties are engaged in a local community learning process that aims to better understand the current situation around substance use in Mitchell and Yancey County and we want to invite you to participate. The process has 3 phases: 1) Collecting experiences, 2) Reviewing and learning from those experiences at sensemaking gatherings where we also identify possible actions, and 3) Taking action and reflecting on what we are doing.
- If you or someone you know has personal experience with substance use, through your own use or because you love, work with, or have helped or supported someone who uses drugs, please consider sharing your experience. You can share your experience and answer a few questions about your experience at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/M-Y-Experience>.
- In November, people from across the two counties will gather in “sensemaking sessions” to review the experiences shared, be in conversation to discover insight, explore possible ways to move forward, and make suggestions to support decisions about how funds and resources are used. If you would like to attend one of these sensemaking sessions, please sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/M-Y-Sensemaking>.
- The insights gained from the sensemaking sessions will help inform Mitchell and Yancey Counties’ decisions around the use of opioid settlement funds, as well as inform the future work of the task force.

**Re-entry Work Opportunities, Christy Harrell**

- The NC Works office at Mayland Community College has received a new grant for substance use through the American Rescue Plan Act. Funding is available for on-the-job training, housing assistance, car repair, and other needs for adults and youth with a history of substance misuse.
- The program is currently assisting four clients with career internships at organizations such as Freedom Life and MCHP and has the capacity to support more internships.

- Employers who hire individuals in this program are eligible for a tax credit as well as a refund of 50 to 70% of the employee's wages for the first year of employment.
- For more information, please contact Christy Harrell at [charrell@mayland.edu](mailto:charrell@mayland.edu)

#### **Psychological First Aid Training, Jessica Zucchini**

- In a collaboration between PATH and MCHP, a full day training is being offered to community members in Psychological First Aid. Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach to help children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of disaster.
- To indicate interest for a future training, please fill out the form here: <https://forms.gle/eo4rgaz2LWQnn3xp6>

#### **Gas Station Heroin Trends, Andrea Howell**

- A substance called tianeptine, commonly referred to as 'gas station heroin', is being sold over the counter at gas stations. The substance binds with opiate receptors in the brain and is highly addictive. Those using the substance may develop a dependency and need to take other opioids to avoid withdrawal symptoms.
- The substance is classified as a supplement and marketed as a nootropic. Street names for the substance include: Za Za, Za Za Red, Za Za White, Coazl, Pegasus, and Tianna.
- We are asking for support in screening for this substance in our community. As you visit local gas stations in your daily life, we ask that you look for any product being sold as a "nootropic" and report what you find using this form: <https://forms.gle/PezgiqPp5F7FaX9UA>
- We would like to educate vendors, youth, and parents who are not aware of the risks of this substance. A task force member suggested sharing information during the Crush the Crisis drug take-back event on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Coalition Satisfaction Survey, Jessica Zucchini**

- If you have not already filled out a coalition satisfaction survey, we would appreciate you taking the time to fill one out here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/V3CBKC7>

#### **Agency Updates**

- Glenn Field, NC DHHS: At a community recovery event in Greensboro, NC, held this coming March, a presentation will be given to advocate for widespread training for peer support professionals in using fentanyl and xylazine test strips in their work. They will also advocate for dedicated funding for test strips.
- Janna McJunkin, RHA Behavioral Crisis Center: The RHA crisis center provides crisis care seven days a week from 8 AM to 8 PM and hopes to expand to 24/7 in the near future. The facility has eight beds for crisis evaluation for those experiencing a mental health, IDD, or substance use crisis. The center links patients to stabilization care through the Neil Dobbins Center and follow-up care through Peer Bridge. The center also has a crisis line staffed by licensed clinicians.
- Jessica Zucchini: An update from Jessica Williams of the Hope House and Never2Scarred ministries- the program has graduated eight women and has three more soon to graduate. The program has several volunteer opportunities: they need a volunteer coordinator (unpaid position) and individuals who can come and spend time with the women (doing activities or crafts, having conversations, etc.) To volunteer with Never2Scarred, sign up using this form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZdaFQgZXV7K0p6dC2bJcLt0qcacYioNUUfSrB8Y2dzKSA/viewform>