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| Kentucky United We Stand, Divided We Fall |

Commonwealth of KentuckyCabinet for Health and Family Services  |

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| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** |

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| Partners in harm reduction highlight collaborative work in Kentucky**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (October 17, 2019) - The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) held a networking event, “Helping Us Build,” at the Kentucky History Center this week.  It was an effort to increase collaboration and efficiency in the delivery of harm reduction services.“We needed to find how could we collaborate further and find additional synergy between all the good work that is being done,” explained Dr. Connie White, Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Affairs in the Kentucky Department for Public Health.“A lot of these programs do not necessarily overlap but some have consistent themes. We want to make sure the citizens of Kentucky continue to get the most out of the funding coming into the state.”Eight grant recipients presented on their work, including the Kentucky Department for Public Health, the Kentucky Income Reinvestment Program (KIRP), Kentucky Finding Cases, the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE), HEALing Communities, KeYTREAT, CARE2HOPE and the Kentucky Injury Prevention Research Center.“They are all different programs but at the same time, they are in some of the same spaces, those high risk communities and vulnerable counties,” said Dr. Ardis Hoven, Medical Director for the KIRP Harm Reduction Initiative. “There are opportunities for collaboration by just knowing what is going on.”Local health departments, community-based organizations, and recovery/treatment centers participated in sharing information and exchanging ideas.    Kentucky continues to be at the forefront of efforts to expand harm reduction services. As of October 15, there are 65 Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) in 58 counties across the Commonwealth.“We now have more SSPs in Kentucky than any other state in the nation,” White said. “This is a huge milestone because you need approval from the board of health, the city and county governments. It is that local community buy-in. They understand how important it is for the health of their citizens.”SSPs are community-based programs designed to decrease the spread of infectious disease. They also provide a link to critical services, such as treatment for Substance Use Disorder, overdose prevention education and screening for HIV and viral hepatitis.“We know people who use an SSP are five times more likely to go to treatment,” White added. “It is a way we are going to make citizens of our state healthier.”Earlier this year, CHFS and the University of Kentucky established the Kentucky Income Reinvestment Program (KIRP) through collaborations with existing Ryan White HIV/AIDS funded programs and harm reduction programs at local health departments.“We are reinvesting funds back in the provision of care for HIV patients or patients at risk of acquiring the virus,” Hoven said. “We are looking at stabilizing and improving SSPs and providing more funding for manpower, which is a huge restriction.”The Cabinet is looking to reduce the prevalence of Hepatitis C, HIV, Hepatitis A and Substance Use Disorder through harm reduction and referral to evidence-based treatment programs.  “Harm reduction encompasses more than improving health and lessening the harmful effects of drug use,” explained Dr. Katherine Marks, Project Director for the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE).“It is also a critical opportunity to promote the dignity of individuals and their opportunities to access prevention and treatment services,” she added.The Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE) is working with the Department for Public Health and the Kentucky Pharmacists Association to distribute naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal medication.So far in 2019, more than 19,000 kits have been sent to emergency departments, pharmacies, treatment programs and local health departments through the KORE funding alone.“We are proud to be partners in this Helping Us Build networking event, which helps to coordinate and strengthen harm reduction efforts statewide,” Marks concluded. “This ongoing work underscores our guiding principle that together we are stronger than opioids.”For video of the event, [click here](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__lnks.gd_l_eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAxOTEwMTcuMTE2NTUyNzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3N0cmVhbWFibGUuY29tLzlxYnh5In0.es8lQ6szqmY-2DkIRL6MVSZ3lWSdiUz6kuI2ZLD3CXmo4_br_70292958672-2Dl&d=DwMFAA&c=jvUANN7rYqzaQJvTqI-69lgi41yDEZ3CXTgIEaHlx7c&r=_kWkJVusdm_EnpTCZqlbOg&m=G_xK_aRek5___LNdAuRtBqBRJLJ1BbzEoFdUkT2cncc&s=NxrZe1yfv6P0t1nhVRMjJ_id-M4iWT4Eebh0fvlfGCM&e=).Additional information is available at [http://chfs.ky.gov/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__lnks.gd_l_eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAxOTEwMTcuMTE2NTUyNzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwOi8vY2hmcy5reS5nb3YvIn0.sFdmwS-5Fe5TvNu4s8ttoDYFFSFl11J9yngSR3S4dl-2DXs_br_70292958672-2Dl&d=DwMFAA&c=jvUANN7rYqzaQJvTqI-69lgi41yDEZ3CXTgIEaHlx7c&r=_kWkJVusdm_EnpTCZqlbOg&m=G_xK_aRek5___LNdAuRtBqBRJLJ1BbzEoFdUkT2cncc&s=SDTezMwpyciOR_xj8TDCswP0WfF_tTKROyr5wdyjiHk&e=).###The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians. |

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