University of Maryland Extension Awarded $1M to Combat the Opioid Epidemic

UME to expand training and build capacity for rural Maryland to manage behavioral health crises.

COLLEGE PARK, Md. (PRWEB) October 10, 2019 -- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Maryland ranks in the top five in the nation for opioid-related overdose death rates with the largest increase attributed to cases involving synthetic opioids (mainly fentanyl). University of Maryland Extension faculty and partners have been awarded a grant of over $1M to build capacity within rural communities to help deal with the growing opioid issues throughout the state.

The Rural Opioids Technical Assistance Grant, awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), funds an effort to utilize the successful Extension education model to deliver training to the rural Maryland communities struggling with mental and behavioral health issues.

“One of the things we noted while conducting a needs assessment was gaps in understanding the opioid crisis and available resources to help or get information,” said Dr. Jinhee Kim, Professor and Family & Consumer Sciences Program Leader with the University of Maryland Extension and principal investigator on the grant.

“The overarching goal of this grant is to strengthen the understanding of the epidemic and prevention strategies in rural Maryland and to provide technical assistance with cutting-edge research,” said Ali Hurtado, Co-Principal Investigator and Assistant Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland.

Partnering with the Center for Substance Abuse Research, the UMD School of Public Health, MayaTech, and the Maryland Rural Health Association, Extension educators will deliver evidence-based training programs to local residents that will help strengthen the ability of rural communities to recognize, understand, and respond to opioid misuse and other behavioral health issues.

Over the next two years, UME will train 120 educators in the evidence-based program Mental Health First Aid. That curriculum will also be delivered to 500 community leaders and service providers within the identified rural regions. Several organizations, including the Rural Maryland Council, the Mental Health Association of Maryland, the Maryland Association of Conservation Districts, and the Maryland Department of Agriculture, have already made commitments to work with UMD Extension and partners to assist in the program’s delivery.

“The misuse and opioid addiction is a national public health concern that kills over 130 people every day nationwide,” said Hurtado. “Our study team will collaborate with local partners that have the expertise and are trusted in the community.”

“Ideally, increasing their capacity will help them acknowledge, be aware, and understand the mental and behavioral health issues impacting their community,” said Kim. “You don’t have to be dealing with someone who has an opioid issue to gain resources and knowledge from this training – it trains people to assist anyone with a mental or behavioral health issue.”

A second goal of the project is to deliver a proven prevention program, the Botvin LifeSkills curriculum, to middle-school aged children as well, thereby decreasing youth susceptibility to substance abuse. Training will
be provided for 40 educators throughout the next two years, and the program will be provided for 650 students, as well as parents or caregivers.

The team will also increase community capacity for combating the opioid epidemic in rural Maryland by creating an advisory group on Rural Maryland Opioid Issues and creating a virtual network of Extension and community educators, partners, and local practitioners. Six virtual trainings will be available for educators and practitioners, and eight webinars will be produced for individuals, families and communities, all available through an online platform.

“Extension’s role is very important because we are a trusted source of health and wellness information within our communities,” said Kim. “Great work has been, and is being done in the opioid crisis here in Maryland, and we’re helping and supporting those programs by building out the capacity of rural Maryland for a comprehensive approach.”

For more information, contact Laura Wormuth, Communications Coordinator, at 301-405-6869 or lwormuth@umd.edu.
Contact Information
Laura Wormuth
University Of Maryland
http://extension.umd.edu
+1 301-405-6869

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.