Case Study: Twinsburg Public Library

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC and the Public Library Association have conducted research into how public libraries are supporting their communities through the opioid crisis, and how libraries are partnering with organizations to meet local needs. This profile was created through interviews with nine individuals: three staff members at the Twinsburg Public Library, two staff members at the Summit County Community Partnership, a library board member, and three community members who benefited from the opioid response activities. Their thoughts and experiences may not be generalizable to all of the staff of the library or their partners.

This is one of eight research-based case studies highlighting varying opioid response efforts across eight locations in the US. Additional information about the project can be found online at oc.lc/opioid-crisis.

Community and Library Overview

Twinsburg Public Library (TPL), located in Ohio's Summit County, has a service population of 24,453 and operates with one central location. It has an operating budget of $2,824,757 with 12 librarian staff and 36.42 other staff, totaling 48.42 personnel. On average there are approximately 325,000 visits per year.[1]

Twinsburg is comprised of approximately three-quarters White populations (76%), followed by 14% Black or African American populations, and 6% Asian populations. Ninety-six percent of its population has at least a high school diploma, and almost half (46%) of its residents have a bachelor's degree.[2]

The median household income in Twinsburg is $75,365, and 6.7% of the population are living in poverty.[3] Summit County's unemployment rate is 4.4%,[4] and 2.8% of the population does not have health insurance.[5]

Summit County has an opioid prescribing rate of 61.8,[6] which is the number of retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 people. The general drug overdose death rate for Summit County was 754 per 100,000 people from 2015 through 2017.[7] From 2009 through 2016, there was a 277% increase in the number of yearly overdose-related fatalities.[8]

1 LOCATION

SERVICE POPULATION, 24,453

UNINSUMED RATE, 2.8%

OPIOID PRESCRIBING RATE, 61.8 (per 100 people)

"Case Study: Twinsburg Public Library," by the Public Library Association, WebJunction, and OCLC. In *Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with Their Communities: Case Studies*, https://doi.org/10.25333/cx18-1p87, CC BY 4.0.

Twinsburg Public Library's Opioid Response

To address the concerns connected to the opioid crisis in Twinsburg, the library has engaged in a variety of opioid response activities with their community partners.

COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

Before beginning opioid response activities, TPL conducted an informal community needs survey to understand how to best serve their patrons. The anonymous survey was available in the library, on the library's website, and through Facebook and Instagram. From the responses, the library learned some of the community needs included recovery support groups and opportunities for counseling.

DETERRA BAG DISTRIBUTION

TPL serves as a Deterra bag distribution site for its community. The Deterra® Drug Deactivation System is a drug disposal pouch for unneeded prescription and over-the-counter medications. People can dispose of these medications in a safe and environmentally friendly way in the privacy of their own home. The library's community partner in this endeavor is Summit County Community Partnership, and they provide the library with the bags for free so any patron can pick them up at no charge. This partner also works on broader community education related to the safe usage, secure storage and removal of medication.

Deterra disposal bag
Photo credit: Twinsburg Public Library

SELF-MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY TRAINING (SMART)

The community survey indicated a need for more recovery services, so the library decided to host and facilitate SMART meetings for their community for any patron seeking support for substance use disorder. The meetings are offered once per month, are anonymous, and sign-up is not required. Any patron dealing with issues related to misuse of substances like alcohol or opioids can attend. There is online training required to become a meeting facilitator, but no additional certifications or prior education are required, making this a relatively low-cost program to implement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE PUBLIC

The library also offers educational events for the public on topics of mental illness and substance use disorder. For example, they plan to host a speaker from Summa Health, a local health system, to discuss "What is Addiction?"

WORKSHOPS ON SUBSTANCE USE FOR LIBRARY STAFF

TPL partnered with the local police department to offer training to library staff to be able to recognize different substances and how to respond if they come across them on site.

Information for all of the public programs is shared through the local newspaper, social media, flyers, and word of mouth. Their partner, Summit County Community Partnership, also advertises the availability of Deterra bags via social media, and have shared information through national media outlets such as USA Today, and hosted a roll-out event on International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, 2016.

Partnering for Success

The library staff working on the opioid response activities were proactive in making new partnerships to support the work. For example, a staff member attended a Summit County Community Partnership networking event

"In the library world, we tend to be very introverted. You've got to get over that because you've got to go knock on doors, introduce yourself, and get partnerships solidified. I had to talk to people I had never spoken to before, and I had to talk to people who were very much more knowledgeable than I was. It can be intimidating. But you need to do it because that's how you get started. Everything I have at the library that I was able to give my patrons, I got from someone else."

—Twinsburg Public Library Manager

and learned about Deterra bags. The library's research into why the opioid crisis was such a problem in Summit County identified leftover medications in homes as a contributing factor. As a result, a library staff member approached Summit County Community Partnership about the possibility of TPL serving as a Deterra bag distribution site.

A staff member of the Summit County Community Partnership shared why they are especially excited to partner with the library, "The library is a part of the fabric of the community and they serve and interact with, and are contacted by, a very diverse group of residents. By working with them, we can reach out in probably the most effective way to the diverse residents of the community. It's a great, great partnership."

In addition, the library has connected with other local and national organizations, such as Summa Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in implementing their educational events and to administer the SMART meetings. Library staff commented that the new organizations they are working with are very excited to be involved because of the library's ability to support them in community outreach.

Funding

Most of the TPL's opioid response activities have been provided in-kind. For example, Summit County Community Partnership provides the Deterra bags to the library for free. Speakers for educational events have also presented for free. The library dedicated a small budget to promote participation in the community needs survey on Facebook. The library also has one staff member dedicated to community outreach activities, which includes the opioid response.

Local Conditions Leading Up to the Library's Response

Local factors and conditions that led to TPL's response to the opioid crisis with their community partners include:

- Prompting from the state lobbying organization, the Ohio Library Coucil, and state officials on an expectation for libraries to be involved in responding to the state's opioid crisis. The state's attorney general encouraged all libraries in Ohio to help respond to the opioid crisis in their community as it is an "all hands on deck" situation.
- Ohio experiencing some of the most severe impacts of the opioid crisis. For example, in 2017, Ohio had the second highest drug overdose death rate in the US. There were 4,293 deaths, totaling a rate 2.7 times higher than the US average.[9]

Reactions and Experiences of Library Staff, Board, and Community Members

Overall the reactions and experiences of TPL staff, their community partners, the media, and the community as a whole are supportive of TPL's opioid response activities.

LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

The majority of the library staff have expressed support of the library's activities, particularly those working on the frontline who directly interact with patrons and see these issues and needs daily. The board was also very open and trusting of library leadership and supports the current approach.

"Everyone loves the Deterra bags. They love being able to come and get those and not worrying about making long trips out to dispose of their medication. People who are environmentally friendly-minded also love the Deterra bags because these are medicines that are not going into the water supply."

—Twinsburg Public Library Manager

MEDIA

The local newspaper has been supportive in raising awareness about TPL's work, but larger papers such as those in Cleveland and Akron have not taken an interest in publicizing the activities. NPR published a story about the Deterra bag distribution happening at the library, along with other opioid response activities at Ohio libraries.[10]

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

One frontline library staff member shared the enthusiasm she has experienced from the public, "I'm surprised at how much of an overwhelmingly positive response we got. We were kind of holding our breath, ready to defend this thing, but then a lot of the community is like, 'Oh, no. We love it'—especially the Deterra bags. Everyone who has come to SMART Recovery, and even those who have heard about SMART Recovery, have said they are really grateful that the library's offering it."

Community members who used the bags expressed how grateful they were to have an option to get rid of their and their family members' unused medications in an environmentally sound way, "My brother passed last year, and I had a number of his medications from previous years and didn't know what to do with them. This was a great way to dispose of them properly."

The library did experience some pushback when a patron tore down a flyer promoting participation in the community needs survey and complained to staff. The individual felt that the topic was inappropriate and that it should not be happening at the library. No other negative feedback outside this event has occurred.

LIBRARY STAFF AND BOARD

The main community partner in these efforts, Summit County Community Partnership, expressed gratitude and excitement for their new partnership with TPL because of the diverse reach the library has in the community, and because of the new partnerships that have formed as a result. Prior to the library reaching out, the organization hadn't considered libraries as an implementation partner. Other organizations in the community, particularly schools, health organizations, and the police department, have also expressed appreciation for the opioid response work that TPL has taken on.

Outcomes of the Library's Response

Positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of TPL's opioid programming include:

- distribution of over 700 Deterra bags, which can dispose of the equivalent of 31,500 pills if filled to capacity
- about 25% of these bags were used to dispose of opioid medications
- additional libraries offering Deterra bags to the public
- over 20 individuals reached by SMART programming

Though TPL does not formally track Deterra bag usage, their partner does. Summit County Community Partnership provides a postcard with the bags that asks for patrons to fill out information on what they are disposing of, how much, their zip code, if they normally clean out their medicine cabinet, and any other comments they wish to provide.

In addition, TPL and Summit County Community Partnership hosted a meeting for surrounding libraries to learn about how TPL is distributing these bags. As a result, additional libraries began distributing bags in their communities, including the Akron Summit public library system, and the Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, and Stow-Munroe Falls public libraries.

The SMART program is anonymous and informal feedback is gathered about participants, but there are iterative feedback processes in place where the facilitator asks the participants how the program is going and what can be improved.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

"We're always looking for new sites but we had not thought about the library. When Twinsburg came forward, we thought, 'What a great idea.' It was because of Twinsburg that we were able to reach out to the Akron Summit County Library, which is a much larger library system, and connect with them so that we could get even more pouches distributed within the community."

—Community Partner Director

Several factors contributed to the success of TPL's opioid response activities, including:

- proactive library staff driving new partnership development
- Summit County Community Partnership and other partners ready to collaborate
- community needs survey

Promotional Flyer for SMART Events.
Photo courtesy of Twinsburg Public Library

Challenges, Needs, and Opportunities

Through the course of developing and implementing the opioid response activities, TPL experienced challenges, needs, and identified opportunities for the work moving forward.

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

- TPL needs to increase the response rate to the community needs survey.
- The community does not realize or accept there are social issues present like poverty and addiction.

- Spreading awareness to the community that the library offers resources other than books would help garner support of the library's opioid response activities.
- More funding is necessary to build capacity for both marketing of the work (including future community surveys and advertising for the Deterra bags and SMART Recovery) and more staff is required to be able to offer SMART Recovery more than once per month.

OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following are ongoing and future needs to support efforts to best address the opioid crisis:

- **Get big name or well-known local organizations to support** and sign-on to the work to use their credibility to help spread awareness.
- **Hire staff who are passionate and driven** to lead the work forward.
- **Assess community needs** before developing programming.
- **Be aware of language when communicating** social issues to encourage full participation with topics that have stigma.
- **Do not let fear of negative responses stop you** from bold or new programming.
- **Join a coalition** if one is available in the community to come at the problem from multiple angles.

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The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this case study do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

NOTES

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