

NEWS RELEASE

For more information:  
Cynthia Vignos  
United Way of Greater Stark County  
Vice President, Marketing and Strategic Communication  
Office: 330-491-9954  
[cynthia.vignos@uwstark.org](mailto:cynthia.vignos@uwstark.org)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**United Way of Greater Stark County hosts Fall Advocacy Day to address opiate crisis**

*(Canton, OH) October 6, 2016* – On September 30, 2016, United Way of Greater Stark County convened community partners, social service agencies, as well as Federal, State and Local representatives to discuss the opiate crisis, what is currently being done and how to improve and expand current efforts to treat those suffering from addiction.

Significant attention was given to House Bill 110 (Good Samaritan Law), which became effective September 13, 2016. This law grants immunity to an individual who has overdosed on heroin, as long as they enter treatment within 30 days. It also protects a friend or family member who calls for emergency medical assistance for the heroin user. However, the current law does not provide immunity for paraphernalia charges.

Problems addressed focused around the lack of spaces available to treat the amount of people wanting to seek treatment. The solution suggested was to update the IMD Exclusion rule which limits the amount of patients that a doctor can treat using medically-assisted treatment. For one of United Way's partner agencies, this means that they may have a waiting list that amounts to 30% of their available beds. Currently, the lack of treatment placement options could result in the unintended consequence of someone calling emergency services but not fulfilling the treatment requirement in time because they simply were not able to gain access in the allotted 30-day window of immunity.

The group also discussed current laws that do not limit how many patients to whom a doctor can prescribe potentially addicting pain medication. However, the laws do limit the number of patients that a doctor can treat to overcome that addiction.

United Way and partner agencies sought to thank our federal legislators for passing CARA and our state legislators for passing the Good Samaritan law. However, there are still ways to improve the Good Samaritan law. United Way asked our state legislators to consider amending the Good Samaritan law to allow for those wait-listed for treatment. 37 states now have "Good Samaritan" laws.

For additional information regarding United Way's public policy efforts or opiate crisis advocacy, please email [nicole.thompson@uwstark.org](mailto:nicole.thompson@uwstark.org) or call 330-491-9972.

**About United Way**

United Way of Greater Stark County believes in creating long-lasting change in the three important impact areas of focus, Education, Income and Health. The agency collaborates, convenes, and partners to support programs and initiatives that break the cycle of poverty, promote a healthy community where children are successful from kindergarten through graduation to a career, and where families have the tools, skills, and support they need to become financially independent. For more information about United Way of Greater Stark County visit [www.uwstark.org](http://www.uwstark.org). Headquarters are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. Dial (330) 491-0445 to reach the offices.

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