An opioid epidemic … these words reverberate nationwide, statewide and in our back yards. Opioid abuse is non-discriminatory, affecting people of all ages; racial, ethnic, sexual and gender minorities; socio-economic classes and geographic areas. This newsletter article is the first of several that will examine this issue as it relates to older adults, those living with disabilities and their caregivers. But first let us understand the basics.

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FROM USE TO ABUSE
Continued from Front

What are opioid medications?
Opioids are synthetic and non-synthetic chemical compounds combined to make medications, whether legally or illegally attained, that interact with opioid receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain. Opioids have been proven to relieve pain while producing a heightened sense of being: a drug-induced euphoria. Some of the more familiar prescribed medications include: Oxycodone (trade names include OxyContin and Percocet), Hydrocodone (trade names include Vicodin and Lortab), Codeine, Morphine, Heroin and Fentanyl. Those who have prolonged use of these medications can develop a tolerance for the medication that, if not closely monitored, can increase the desire for one to take additional doses of the medication to achieve the same effect. Going without an opioid after extended use can cause extreme withdrawal symptoms, increasing one’s desire to regain that “high.” Many times, this is where the addiction cycle begins.

Tracing the history of use/abuse
To find the origins of this national epidemic, one can go back to Hippocrates, the “Father of Medicine” who acknowledged the euphoric effects of the opium poppy. It soon became recognized as a sedative for those experiencing pain associated with diseases or surgical procedures. As time passed, the concoction of opioids became stronger and more effective and by the time the Civil War occurred a purified morphine was the drug of choice as injured soldiers were treated with it to alleviate pain and be able to endure surgeries and amputations that became all too common. Soldiers became addicted to the effects of morphine and its effects became known as the “Soldier’s Disease.” **

In the early 1900s, complaints of not addressing pain became a huge outcry and addressing the unnecessary need for anyone to be in pain catapulted the use of opioid medication to unprecedented heights. In an attempt to manage pain, the use/abuse of the opioid medications became unmanageable. In the latter part of the 1990s, new standards for pain management,
incorporating pain as the “fifth vital sign,” were issued by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). **

Ways to ingest opioids (smoking, injection, pills) have made use more easily attainable. Because the cost of illegally secured drugs is lower, the individual will spend less to feel the high they seek. A fundamental reason why the addiction cycle continues is that the user will become very ill without the drug and will do almost anything to resume the feeling of euphoria.

The Hidden User/Abuser
When one thinks of the stereotypical drug user, the associated visual is usually not an older adult or someone living with a disability. In fact, it may be hard for one to see reasons why this could occur. For example, someone is living with the chronic pain caused by muscular dystrophy, or severe arthritis; another may be experiencing injuries resulting from a car accident or a sports-related injury; or a person may be experiencing the emotional pain of losing a child, or spouse, or partner prematurely.

In situations like those shared above, there may also be someone designated, through love or duty, to be their caregiver. The emotional, physical, mental and financial strains of caregiving are also precursors to people finding ways to cope – all too often turning to substance use/abuse.

PCIL and the Mercer County ADRC will be addressing the concerns listed in this article. In the next issue we will explore in more detail the impact of opioids and offer some avenues where treatment can occur. In October of 2017, the federal department of Health and Human Services declared that a nationwide public emergency exists due to the opioid crisis. As a result the Administration for Community Living (ACL) gathered representatives from the aging and disability networks to set an agenda to address this concern. An immediate outcome included the mandate to educate people of all ages about this particular concern. To that end, this article is the first of several that will follow.

If you have found yourself in a situation where addiction to an opioid is a problem, do not hesitate to reach out to adrc@mercercounty.org or 609-989-6663 to find out where to get help. Additionally, the Progressive Center for Independent Living at 609-581-4500 can also help to direct your concern.

For immediate access to someone who can suggest some local resources, call the Mercer County Addictions Office at 609-989-6897.

If you want to react to this article or make any suggestions, email adrc@mercercounty.org. We’d like to hear from you!

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Hi, my name is Natalie Joye, and I am a student of Allentown High School in 2017, and I also belong to APC Youth Crossroads Center, at Young Adult, APC.

On this day that we celebrate both kids and adults with developmental disabilities and special needs, I would like to recognize my sleep-away camp organization called Camp Pals. This camp is for everybody with Down syndrome.

I would like to thank everybody that worked so hard to make this wonderful camp happen.

We’re just so grateful for all of the friends and organizers that really run the camp so well. I would like to give a special thank you to the Newberry family, and the directors of Camp Pals Georgetown; Scott Gerson, and Andrea Greenfield, and of course the head counselor from last year’s Camp Pals Columbus, (my twin brother and best friend in the world) Ryan Joye, for making this camp fun with loads of activities such as karaoke, basketball, swimming etc. happen.

We’re just so grateful to have them; they are like a family to me. They’ve always been there for me when I needed them. Whenever I was just upset or hurt, they comforted and supported me in everyday life, so I’d like to thank all of them, for making this camp fun, for all people with developmental disabilities. They are just wonderful people.

And one more thing, I would like to give a shout out to my head counselor, Kathleen Marie, (from Camp Pals Poconos). I love you girl, you rocked helping out with the dancing with broken toes with the campers, and the Olympics, and you did so great with the hairstyles for the semi-formal dance. I’m just so thankful; I just cannot believe that there is nobody ever like her. I never had such an even nicer head counselor like no other than like you. Nobody could ever replace you. You rocked!!!!!!!!!

God does not make mistakes, I am wonderfully, and beautifully made. I bring joy to the world, and not just because, my last name is Joye, but because I am a Child of god. ( and, whooo, whooo, Happy World down syndrome day people!!!!!!).
So winter has extended its reach much further than in recent years and we have all been dealing with freezing temperatures and snow much more than we’d like, but Spring is here and temperatures are climbing. Despite the deep freeze the Community Connections Recreation Program has had some fun activities and continues to see old friends as well as new faces.

We hosted a Pizza & Game Night in January at Project Freedom of Lawrenceville and went to see the world-famous Harlem Globetrotters at Cure Insurance Arena. We were scheduled to have a concert at St. Gregory the Great church in observance of World Down Syndrome Day in March, but Mother Nature saw fit to dump some spring snow on us that day! Despite the setback the concert took place on the 13th of April. The event was a collaboration between PCIL, The Arc Mercer, who had performers from their music and drama programs featured during the show, and Respect Life Ministries. There was a great turnout with more than 150 people total, as well as, a large number of volunteers on hand to help setup, clean up, provide refreshments, and be part of the performances. The audience was composed not only of people with disabilities but large amounts of friends and family, as well as folks from the community who came to show support and enjoy the show!

If you, a loved one, or a friend wants to get involved as a participant or volunteer please contact us. The more we work together, the more successful we will all be, and the more we’ll get to know the communities we share. As the weather continues to improve we have lots of great events to look forward to so keep your eyes peeled for those yellow flyers!
PIZZA & GAME NIGHT

PCIL consumers enjoying pizza and game night at Project Freedom of Lawrenceville.
One of the biggest challenges for individuals with disabilities is access to reliable transportation. For those who are not able to drive independently, which so many of us rely on for almost all facets of our lives, there are only a few readily available options. In New Jersey, the public transportation systems have done much to be accessible including the Access Link service for those who can’t use the standard fixed route options. Still, there are many places in NJ that are out of the service area for any NJ Transit services, including Hunterdon County, where many individuals with important transportation needs have severely limited options for disability and paratransit services.

In an effort to allow clients to achieve their goals and continue to develop independence, PCIL’s Support Coordination team has taken on the task of researching reliable transportation companies in Mercer and Hunterdon counties and assisting them to become a DDD registered Community Provider. This is so individuals we serve can use their DDD budgets to pay for their transportation needs. It is great that the state of NJ has provided this means of funding, but without companies willing to accept it, individuals are still left behind the barrier of accessible transportation. During our research, we were thrilled to find Cornerstone Transportation, a family-owned and operated transportation service located in Annandale, Hunterdon County. Pam Paquette, Owner and Director of Cornerstone, is a retired Special Education teacher who values integrity and respect when hiring her employees and providing services to the community. Those we serve have used Cornerstone to gain access to transportation for employment and continuing education. Cornerstone’s commitment to the community and our individuals can be seen time and time again. For example, they continued services with one individual for months despite delays in receiving their service payment from NJ’s new Fiscal Intermediary. Without this company, some of the individuals we serve would have no way of continuing their education, gaining skills in their field, or maintain competitive employment. I spoke to Pam about her decision to become a provider of service through the NJ DDD and she had this to say: “It is our joy to serve Hunterdon County. I have lived here for 30 years, raised nine children; it is a joy to give back”.

The purpose of this article is not to promote Cornerstone Transportation, although they

Education teacher who values integrity and respect when hiring her employees and providing services to the community. Those we serve have used Cornerstone to gain access to transportation for employment and continuing education. Cornerstone’s commitment to the community and our individuals can be seen time and time again. For example, they continued services with one individual for months despite delays in receiving their service payment from NJ’s new Fiscal Intermediary. Without this company, some of the individuals we serve would have no way of continuing their education, gaining skills in their field, or maintain competitive employment. I spoke to Pam about her decision to become a provider of service through the NJ DDD and she had this to say: “It is our joy to serve Hunterdon County. I have lived here for 30 years, raised nine children; it is a joy to give back”.

The purpose of this article is not to promote Cornerstone Transportation, although they

Pam Paquette, owner and director of Cornerstone Transportation poses by one of her company’s taxis.

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CORNERSTONE OF THE COMMUNITY

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have proven to be a reliable, good quality service run by compassionate, community-oriented people. The point is to show others the example that Cornerstone is providing in the hopes that more local businesses in our communities follow suit. People with disabilities have the same needs we all do, they live in the same towns and neighborhoods, go to the same schools, and work at the same jobs.

If you have a business or offer a service, have you considered meeting the needs of someone with a disability? It would not be an act of charity, and it would not mean massive changes to the way you operate. It would simply be serving members of your community, which is not only smart business but is also most likely what you set out to do in the first place.

DRIVER’S EDUCATION PREP COURSE

By Renee Pfaff

Coming Soon... Driver’s Education Preparatory Course

PCIL has recently been granted the opportunity to conduct a driver’s education preparatory course for students ages 16 & 17. This 12 session course has been developed to occur prior to receiving, or in conjunction with the student’s Health and Phys-Ed program within their high school. The Driver’s Ed Prep Course consists of the review of the NJ driver manual along with additional supplemental materials and activities taught using several learning modalities within a small group of 3-6 students.

The program will incorporate lessons on effective study strategies to help retain information; how to request accommodations; and how to decrease testing anxiety. Once the student completes our pre-course, they will be better prepared to participate in their school program and more self-assured in their abilities when taking the driver’s permit test. The Driver’s Ed Prep Course serves as an additional review prior to taking the final driver’s written exam.

The main benefit of this course is giving students a greater opportunity to participate successfully in their class since they will be comfortable with the concepts and knowledgeable of the driving concepts, thus reducing test anxiety. Additionally, the student will have the opportunity to complete the written exam in their school using the accommodations made available through their IEP and be more confident advocating for these accommodations.

If you or someone you know can benefit from this preparatory course, please contact PCIL and request to speak with Renee Pfaff for more information.
Hey High School Students!
Are you interested in receiving training to help you obtain employment?

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has a provision that focuses on students and youth with disabilities starting at the age of 14. What this means is that, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is utilizing funding to agencies, like PCIL, to provide training and other services to this population that are necessary for them to achieve competitive and integrated employment. DVRS refers to these services that are available to students while still in high school as WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services. The five components WIOA focuses on include:

1. Job exploration counseling;
2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include school- or community-based opportunities;
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs;
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
5. Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

**DVRS will not duplicate services the student’s high school provides, but rather supplement where needed**

PCIL is proud to announce that we are an approved vendor under DVRS and have the capability to provide services for each of the five components mentioned above. If you believe you can benefit from WIOA Pre-ETS, we recommend you contact the Pre-ETS counselors at DVRS: Valerie Kerrigan (Mercer Office) 609-292-2940 or Chris Kempski (Hunterdon Office) 908-704-3030 to start the referral process. You can also contact PCIL for more information.
MEET NEW PCIL STAFF

LISA ACTON

Hello, my name is Lisa Acton. I have worked in the Human Services Field for the last 16 years. I obtained my B.S. degree in Psychology from Rider University and I am currently working on obtaining my MBA with a concentration in Health Services from Strayer University. I enjoy working with individuals from different backgrounds and I especially enjoy helping people. I worked for the Arc of Mercer County as an Evaluator, a Job Coach, and a Supportive Living Counselor. These positions taught me how to work with many different people and agencies and also gave me a better understanding of the social work system. I am excited to be working for the Progressive Center as a Support Coordinator and also am excited for the opportunity to help individuals and their families obtain the help and services they need.

BRITTNEY MILLER

Hello, my name is Brittney Miller. I am a new support coordinator with PCIL. I graduated with a bachelors in social work. I have been doing support coordination for the past three years in Georgia and have 10 years of experience working with the DD population in various advocate positions. I truly enjoy assisting others and being able to build trusting relationships and helping in any way I can.

ALYESE PATTERSON

My name is Alyese Patterson and I have recently joined the PCIL team as a Support Coordinator. I graduated from Thomas Edison State College with a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice. I have an extensive history in the mental health field as well as in the Social Services field. I’m excited about this new journey with the PCIL organization and look forward to helping those we serve achieve their goals and be a part of their community.

PCIL welcomes Lisa Acton (Left), Brittney (Center), and Alyese (Right) as new support coordinators!
Across the country, older Americans – a rapidly growing population – are taking part in activities that promote wellness and social connection. They are sharing their wisdom and experience with future generations, and they are giving back to enrich their communities. They’re working and volunteering, mentoring and learning, leading and engaging.

For 55 years, Older Americans Month (OAM) has been observed to recognize older Americans and their contributions to our communities. Led by the Administration for Community Living’s Administration on Aging, (ACL and AoA) every May offers opportunity to hear from, support, and celebrate our nation’s elders. This year’s OAM theme, “Engage at Every Age,” emphasizes the importance of being active and involved, no
OLDER AMERICANS MONTH: 2018
ENGAGE AT EVERY AGE

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matter where you are in life. You are never too old (or too young) to participate in activities that can enrich your physical, mental, and emotion well-being.

It is becoming more apparent that remaining socially engaged can improve the quality of life for older adults. The Mercer County Office on Aging/ADRC encourages county residents to learn more about what is available in their local community through the senior center, community education programs through local hospital systems, the County library system, and by staying engaged!

For a special outdoor treat, head to Mercer County Park in West Windsor and spend some time at Grandparent’s Grove, accessible near the Boathouse and Marina area. The Mercer County Office on Aging and its Advisory Council take great pride in this special area where you can relax, reflect and re-energize.

For more information about older adults and their caregivers, the Mercer County Aging and Disability Resource Connection by calling 609-989-6661 or by emailing us at adrc@mercercounty.org.

Administrative Staff
Eileen E. Doremus, Executive Director
Kaitlyn Adlerman, Program Planner/ Monitor
Seyed Azhir, Senior Accountant
Juni Bolaños Jr., Support Staff

ADRC Staff
Monica Maldonado, Bilingual Community Service Aide
Tina Spoto, Health Insurance Benefits Clerk
Pam Mazzucca, PASP Consultant & Disability I & A Specialist
Denise Knighton, ADRC Receptionist

Nutrition Staff
Jenifer Williams, Nutrition Program Director
Gail Derry, Social Services Coordinator/ Administrative Assistant
Lisa Marion, Farmer’s Market Coordinator/Office Manager
Bailey Fritsch, SAMS Specialist/ Office Manager
Tim Dickson, Administrative Support
NEWS FROM MEDICARE: NEW CARDS COMING!

Medicare is mailing new Medicare cards to all people with Medicare starting in April 2018.

TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR NEW MEDICARE CARD

1. Your new card will automatically come to you. You don’t need to do anything as long as your address is up to date. If you need to update your address, visit your mySocial Security account.

2. Your new card will have a new Medicare Number that’s unique to you, instead of your Social Security Number. This will help to protect your identity.

3. Your Medicare coverage and benefits will stay the same.

4. Mailing takes time. Your card may arrive at a different time than your friend’s or neighbor’s card.

5. Your new card is paper, which is easier for many providers to use and copy.

6. Once you get your new Medicare card, destroy your old Medicare card and start using your new card right away.

7. If you’re in a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), your Medicare Advantage Plan ID card is your main card for Medicare—you should still keep and use it whenever you need care. However, you also may be asked to show your new Medicare card, so you should carry both cards.

8. Doctors, other health care providers and facilities know it’s coming and will ask for your new Medicare card when you need care, so carry it with you.

9. Only give your new Medicare number to doctors, pharmacists, other health care providers, your insurers, or people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf.

10. If you forget your new card, you, your doctor or other health care provider may be able to look up your Medicare Number online.

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NEWS FROM MEDICARE: NEW CARDS COMING!

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WATCH OUT FOR SCAMS

Medicare will never call you uninvited and ask you to give us personal or private information to get your new Medicare Number and card. Scam artists may try to get personal information (like your current Medicare Number) by contacting you about your new card. If someone asks you for your information, for money, or threatens to cancel your health benefits if you don’t share your personal information, hang up and call us at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). Learn more about the limited situations in which Medicare can call you.

HOW CAN I REPLACE MY MEDICARE CARD?

If your Medicare card is lost, stolen or damaged, you can ask Social Security for a new one.

• Your Medicare card will arrive in the mail in about 30 days.

• Social Security will mail your card to the address they have on file for you.

• If you need proof that you have Medicare sooner than 30 days, you can request a letter from Social Security. The letter will arrive in the mail in about 10 days.

• If you need proof immediately for your doctor or for a prescription, visit your local Social Security office.

HOW DO I CHANGE MY ADDRESS?

Medicare uses the name and address you have on file with Social Security. To change your name and/or address, visit your online my Social Security account.

Medicare is managed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Social Security works with CMS by enrolling people in Medicare.
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Exciting events on the horizon!

**MAY 30** - Trenton Thunder Vs. Reading Fighting Phillies, Arm & Hammer Park

**JUNE 15** - Performing Arts Showcase, St. Marks Church in Hamilton

**JUNE 19** - Annual PCIL Member Dinner at Project Freedom of Hamilton.

*Later this summer: The Annual PCIL Picnic and the Annual Softball Game.*

Don’t forget to renew your PCIL membership for event discounts.

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FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED