Ways for Faith Communities to Respond to the Heroin and Opioid Crisis
Prepared by: Diocesan Social Action Office and Catholic Commission of Wayne, Ashland, Medina

Encourage and/or host support groups of affected families and families who have lost a loved one. This movement is increasingly referred to as “Recovery Churches” that actively support recovery efforts. (One church support group model is “Living Free”, underway in Wooster area.)

Host or partner on a Mass and/or Community Prayer Service for families who have lost a loved one to addiction and overdose.

Gather donations for/assemble “Blessing Bags” for those in treatment to support their sobriety.

Include helpful information via bulletin blurbs and on bulletin boards, such as:
- Provide treatment referral numbers via ADAMHS Board, or Catholic Charities county offices for assessments
- Self-care suggestions and methods for those with family members in addiction
- Support group information particularly for heroin/opioid survivor families, along with relevant nearby listings for Nar-Anon (or Al-Anon)
- List good support websites, such as palgroup.org (Parents of Addicted Loved Ones).


Train ministry staff and outreach ministers, or host faith-community staff/ministry volunteer workshops, on responding to families of a loved one who is abusing drugs or becomes addicted.

Offer ongoing awareness-raising and education about addiction as a disease with roots in mental, behavioral health, genetics/physiology, and that addiction is not to be stigmatized as somehow a result of moral depravity, character flaws, or lack of willpower.

Consider offering family/children retreats and programs on family health, resilience, and anti-drug awareness that are open to nearby communities/neighborhoods and parishioners.

For more on raising awareness on this crisis and how to seek support, visit the Catholic Charities “Hope and Healing Beyond Heroin” page at www.ccdocle.org/social-action/hope-healing-beyond-heroin or the Greater Than Heroin initiative at www.greaterthanheroin.com.