



## NEWS RELEASE

Office of the Mayor  
111 North Main Street  
Bristol, CT 06010

Phone: 860-584-6250  
Fax: 860-584-3835

## CONTACT

Ellen Zoppo-Sassu, Mayor  
[mayorsoffice@bristolct.gov](mailto:mayorsoffice@bristolct.gov)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Bristol, CT, December 13, 2018** – Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu today announced the receipt of a grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) that will enable the City of Bristol to directly address the opioid crisis with a \$150,000 grant. The “How Can We Help?” recovery support services will be provided by Wheeler Clinic to Bristol residents from January 2019 to September 29, 2020.

“Despite only being in existence for less than a year, the Opioid Task Force has been working hard to raise awareness of this critical issue in our community,” Mayor Zoppo-Sassu said. “We’re grateful to the State of Connecticut for their support, and we look forward to working with Wheeler Clinic to provide this outreach and support for our residents dealing with crisis situations in their homes and families. Lack of access to recovery has been a number one priority of the Task Force, and I am so happy to see us get an early win of this, and be able to help as many Bristol families as possible.”

Susan Walkama, LCSW, President and CEO of Wheeler Clinic, echoes the sentiments about the strong collaborative relationship between Wheeler and the City of Bristol. “We know that effective supports in the community make a tremendous difference for a person living with an addiction,” Walkama said. “We’ve been a partner with the City in many of our community outreach efforts, and we are pleased to be able to offer our recovery coaches to individuals in recovery in their own homes.”

Marco Palmeri, MPH, RS, Director of the Bristol-Burlington Health District, will be the project leader for this effort. Mr. Palmeri has played an important part in this cooperative grant process, and his office will supervise the recovery peer coach, compile statistics, and prepare reports for the State. “2019 can be the beginning of an entirely new life for some Bristol residents who are able to take advantage of this program,” Palmeri said. “We’re very lucky to have this opportunity to reach more people with this intensive model.”

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu began the Opioid Task Force last year following a trend of overdoses in the community as well as other factors such as record numbers of opioid prescription trends. “What s

dynamic about this group is the different types of people who have come together to have this important community conversation,” stated Councilwoman Mary Fortier who is the Council liaison to the Task Force. “The group is comprised of city officials from Police, the Board of Education, Youth and Community Services, the Bristol –Burlington Health District, parents and family members affected by addiction, a variety of health care and social service providers, and individuals in recovery. By having all these people at the table, we are going to be able to make a very positive impact.”

The meetings are open to the public. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 17, 2019 at 6:30pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of City Hall.

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