

# SUMMARY REPORT

**EVENT:** Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum

**DATE:** 3.31.16

**LOCATION:** Brooklyn Borough Hall

**ACTIVITY:** Forum for individuals and family members on alcoholism/drug addiction

**COORDINATOR:** Stephanie Campbell

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FRIENDS OF  
**RECOVERY**  
New York

ONE COMMUNITY  
ONE VOICE

## About Our Event Activity...

### Executive Summary

The Brooklyn Community Recovery Center, Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams, The New York Recovery Community Coalition, The Brooklyn Recovery Group, and the Alumni Association of New York co-sponsored the FOR-NY Recovery Talks Community Listening Forum. It was the 9th in a series of local forums being held across New York State to provide community members the opportunity to share their personal experiences with legislators, law enforcement and other leaders in dealing with alcohol and drug addiction, the loss of a family member or friend, as well as recovery from addiction.

**Category** Public Policy

**Number of participants** Adults: 71 Children: 0

### Purpose

- Provide a safe space for individuals and families in recovery to voice their experiences around addiction, loss and recovery
- Help individuals and families overcome the stigma that prevents many people from seeking help
- Engage the community in a productive discussion with local leaders that allows for more effective policies on addiction/recovery

### Satisfaction Summary (Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent...)

Overall ease of event: 5

Overall satisfaction with outcome: 5

Value to Recovery Community: 5

Recommend Repeat of Event (Y/N): Y

## Highlights – Comments, Problems Encountered, Opportunities Identified

- We need to create spaces where people can heal spiritually and break the stigma around addiction.
- We've got to stop prescribing a pill for everything and let people heal organically.
- People feel trapped in a lifestyle of addiction – they need social networks that will help them develop healthy places to socialize and connect. Otherwise, recidivism will be the end result of treatment and criminal justice interventions.
- Methadone is a tool of wellness – we must remove the stigma around Medication Assisted Recovery and help people empower themselves to become self-sufficient.
- As a medical doctor, I've watched the transformation that occurs when people go to AA – they undergo a personality change. There is healing, connection and service that allows people to recover from what used to be a helpless and hopeless state of mind and body.
- I've trained 1,158 recovery coaches – they need jobs and clinics and places to do internships so that they can help others recover from addiction.
- As a CASAC trainer, I came into recovery back in 1983. Unfortunately I relapsed with prescription drugs and have overcome my guilt and shame by talking about my recovery.

*We need to learn how to talk to the medical community about addiction and ask if they understand the danger of prescribing drugs to people who are in recovery.*

*Willpower doesn't get you sober... try taking X-lax and see how much willpower you have.*

- We need to learn how to talk to the medical community about addiction and ask if they understand the danger of prescribing drugs to people who are in recovery. The medical community must understand that their ignorance around addiction is causing a great many people to relapse and sometimes die.
- Willpower doesn't get you sober... try taking X-lax and see how much willpower you have.
- Religion didn't get me sober – treatment got me sober – and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions got me sober.
- I'm a woman in recovery for 22 years and it was my faith that got me through – and other women who gave me strength to never give up.
- As a veteran who was prescribed medication for PTSD I now advocate for veterans. We need to treat our veterans as resources and listen to them – they are the hidden population.
- I've been in recovery since 1967 and spent time in prison where I needed resources that weren't available. Now I'm a recovery coach and by the grace of God, AA and the 12 Steps, I've been able to use my experience to help others.
- During my husband's battle with addiction, I felt like I didn't belong in my Jewish Orthodox Community.

## What We Discovered...

### Findings

- Veterans are afraid to be outed because they may lose their benefits
- There is much stigma around medication assisted treatment
- 12-step steps and traditions are being lost in the discussion of recovery
- Three-fold disease (physical, mental, spiritual) needs to be treated equally
- Peers are not being utilized in treatment settings
- Faith-based community is a critical part of recovery
- Co-occurring issues are impacting veterans at higher rates than non-military population
- Willpower not effective treatment for addiction
- Alcohol still number one issue faced in NYC emergency rooms
- Family supports are almost non-existent; family often experiences stigma from community

*“There is much stigma around medication assisted treatment”*

### Recommendations

- Advocacy is needed to around addiction/recovery community
- Veterans need to be treated with respect and be provide more peer support
- Peers must be integrated into all areas of treatment and recovery services/supports
- Multiple pathways must include all forms of recovery and must address co-occurring conditions
- Resources for addiction treatment/ recovery must include family component
- Education around disease concept must be made more available to fight stigma/discrimination
- Additional funding needed for drug courts and jails for individuals in recovery
- Health care providers must receive specific education
- Alcohol must be included regularly in policy addressing the current public health crisis of addiction

*“Multiple pathways must include all forms of recovery and must address co-occurring conditions”*

## Agenda and Participants

- 6:00 pm**      **Welcome:**      Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams  
Patricia Wooldridge, Director, Brooklyn Community Center  
Robert J. Lindsey, FOR-NY CEO
- 6:10 pm**      **Moderator:**      Shawnee Benton-Gibson, Executive Director, Spirit of a Woman (S.O.W.)  
**Panelists:** Lauren Schuster, Chief of Staff to Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal (D-67th District)  
New York Council member Robert Cornegy, 36th City Council District  
New York Council member Chaim M. Deutsch, 48th City Council District  
Steve Hanson, Associate Commissioner, Office of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Services (OASAS)  
Luke Bergmann, PhD MSW, Senior Director and Clinical Lead for Substance Use Services at New York City Health + Hospitals  
Chaplain Andrew Siolete, US Department of Veterans Affairs  
Executive Chief Vega, New York Police Department  
Joseph Madonia, Director, Brooklyn Treatment Court
- 6:20 pm**      **Speakers:**      Community Members
- 7:20 pm**      **Comments:**      Listening Panel Members
- 7:50 pm**      **Wrap-Up:**      Robert J. Lindsey, FOR-NY, CEO

## Co-Sponsors



Brooklyn  
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