

4-12-2016

Criminal Justice Faculty Expert Works with East Bridgewater Police on Initiative to Stem Opioid Epidemic, Shift to Treatment Model

Jill Rodrigues
Roger Williams University

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/weekatroger_featured_news

Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rodrigues, Jill, "Criminal Justice Faculty Expert Works with East Bridgewater Police on Initiative to Stem Opioid Epidemic, Shift to Treatment Model" (2016). *Featured News Story*. 604.
https://docs.rwu.edu/weekatroger_featured_news/604

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Week at Roger at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Featured News Story by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact mwu@rwu.edu.

Criminal Justice Faculty Expert Works with East Bridgewater Police on Initiative to Stem Opioid Epidemic, Shift to Treatment Model

Plymouth County, Mass., law enforcement officials enlist RWU Professor of Criminal Justice Sean Varano for assistance in developing new overdose-prevention methods



April 12, 2016 | By Jill Rodrigues '05

EAST BRIDGEWATER, MASS. – With the help of a criminal justice expert from Roger Williams University, the East Bridgewater Police Department is tackling the city’s opioid epidemic through a groundbreaking approach to law enforcement.

The East Bridgewater Police Department recently engaged RWU Associate Professor of Criminal Justice Sean Varano to provide technical assistance in guiding the launch of a new initiative to connect opioid addicts to treatment and services. It’s part of an ongoing collaboration with Varano and Stonehill College Professor of Criminology Pam Kelly to contribute their expert services to the Plymouth County Opiate Overdose Prevention Task Force – a coalition of the Plymouth County District Attorney, Plymouth County Sherriff, Brockton Police Department and East Bridgewater Police Department, among others – with whom they have been working for several years on substance abuse-reduction efforts in the City of Brockton.

Through a program called EB Hope, East Bridgewater law enforcement officials have coordinated with a local church to offer a monthly drop-in center for substance abusers and their family members to seek assistance in accessing resources and education on treatment programs. It's an entirely new paradigm for law enforcement officials, Varano says, to focus on intervention and prevention instead of incarceration for substance abuse.

"Law enforcement officials tend to view drug problems as crime problems that need to be eradicated, and the traditional model is to arrest and put the user away for a long time," says Varano, an expert in law enforcement policy and practice, evaluation research and criminal justice statistical analysis. "As the opioid problem has reached crisis level in Massachusetts, the policing community has been remarkably open to rethinking how they approach these problems."

For the EB Hope project, Varano and his colleague, Kelly, offer their expertise in law enforcement program design, collecting and analyzing data, and creating a framework for evaluating the outcomes in curbing fatal and non-fatal heroin overdoses.

"The EB Hope program offers the possibility of creating long-term change by addressing the addiction process at its core," Varano says. "It recognizes that drug addiction is a disease and cannot be policed by arrest-based strategies alone. An initiative like this, coupled with strong public policy focused on prevention, would address the issue from the top and the bottom, and potentially save many people's lives."