



The Healing Network  
OF WALKER COUNTY  
Together, We Heal as One

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Healing Network of Walker County is 50+ organizations working together to heal our community. Our goal is to create a comprehensive network of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery resources related to substance use and mental health disorders.

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Our history begins with our community having the courage to take on the opioid epidemic. The opioid epidemic, felt throughout the United States, has its epicenter in Walker County. Knowing this, in 2018 Capstone Rural Health Center, on behalf of the Walker County Health Action Partnership, applied for and received a national grant to create a plan to fight this epidemic. The Walker Area Community Foundation awarded local funding to hire staff to implement the plan. This plan has received national recognition for its ability to get to the heart of the matter. What began as a plan has become a highly coordinated coalition of organizations. The Healing Network has secured local, state, and national funding, implemented new practices, and grown the recovery community. Partners of The Healing Network of Walker County know that together, we heal as one.

# Snapshot of Walker County's Epidemic

# 40%

of households have at least one member who is experiencing chronic pain.

# 4 DAYS

That's how long it can take for an opioid prescription to result in continued use.

# 25%

of patients with a 12-day supply of opioids were still using one year later.

*From 2006–2012,*

# 83.5 MILLION

opioid doses legally entered Walker County. That's 178 doses per person, per year. Four out of the top 10 Alabama cities and towns for opioid prescribing rates are in Walker County.

In Sumiton:	<b>687</b>	<b>PILLS PER PERSON</b>
In Sipsey:	<b>511</b>	<b>PILLS PER PERSON</b>
In Dora:	<b>482</b>	<b>PILLS PER PERSON</b>
In Jasper:	<b>458</b>	<b>PILLS PER PERSON</b>

"When the pill mills shut down, people who never would have bought drugs on the street had no other choice because they had become unknowingly addicted."

*Comment from Walker County Individual in Recovery*

# Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Our goal is to create a comprehensive Network of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery resources related to substance use and mental health disorders.



What began as a plan has become a highly coordinated coalition of organizations.

- The Network has established a coordinated infrastructure of resources, including a 24/7 Helpline and intake and assessment hub, to assist residents dealing with addiction and mental health issues.
- There are 12 certified recovery support specialists (CRSS) serving Walker County compared to only one in 2018. CRSS use their lived experience to support individuals, families, and organizations.
- Compared to 2019, today residents are less likely to know someone in Walker County misusing drugs, and they are more likely to know someone getting treatment for drug use.
- Fewer residents today know of someone who is using drugs and either died by or attempted suicide.

"There are places you can go now and a recovery community that gives you hope. When I was using, I didn't have any place to go."

*Comment from Walker County Individual in Recovery*

# OBJECTIVE 1

## Community education on risks and resources

Educate Walker County residents and key stakeholders on the risks associated with the use of drugs and alcohol and associated mental health disorders, as well as effective prevention, treatment, and recovery options.

**STRATEGY 1:** Enhance existing, evidence-based education for youth and adults in Walker County regarding the risks of prescription drug misuse, related mental health issues, and safe disposal of medications.

- Recognizing that Walker County's opioid epidemic has evolved to include many other illicit and legal substances like heroin, methamphetamine, and benzodiazepines, educational programs targeting the county's youth need to cover the risks and resources associated with this expanded group of drugs.

**STRATEGY 2:** Conduct outreach to school-based programs, summer camps, and churches to educate these groups on ways to engage/support students, friends and family who may be facing drug, alcohol, or mental health issues and may need access to local resources and treatment services.

**STRATEGY 3:** Train and employ more peer advocates in the field of mental health and substance use as part of both the education and treatment process, prioritizing representation of the following identities: African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, male, youth.

**STRATEGY 4:** Public awareness initiatives need to be undertaken (or continued) to familiarize a wide range of demographic groups in the county of the following objectives:

- Encouraging residents to be aware of early signs that a family member or friend may be using opioids, other drugs, or alcohol.
- Promoting awareness of the county's treatment facilities for drug, alcohol, and mental health disorders.
- Publicizing partners' Helpline numbers.
- Mitigating the stigma that residents often associate with those experiencing drug, alcohol, and mental health disorders.
- Emphasizing that drug, alcohol, and mental health disorders are not just confined to certain areas of Walker County.

"I am concerned about opioid-related misuse in Walker County because it has become generational. We are seeing grandparents, parents, and children (15-16) with the same problems."

*Comment from Walker County Leader*



## OBJECTIVE 3

### Equitable and timely treatment options

Ensure equitable and timely access to quality and affordable treatment and recovery support services for residents seeking help with drug, alcohol, and mental health disorders.

**STRATEGY 1:** Ensure agencies that provide intake, assessment, and/or recovery support services are coordinating among all providers to connect individuals to the appropriate care.

**STRATEGY 2:** Recruit more not-for-profit treatment and recovery providers that strengthen a continuum of care for Walker County to help those without insurance/those who cannot afford to pay for treatment. Specifically, providers who work in the following areas:

- Detoxification programs.
- Residential treatment facilities.
- Bridge medication assisted treatment (MAT) prescription program for individuals discharged from the emergency room and/or are on a wait list for a treatment program.
- Transitional housing for people as a part of treatment and recovery for substance use and mental health issues.

**STRATEGY 3:** Identify methods and models to increase the chances that clients will stay engaged with their treatment plan.

**STRATEGY 4:** Support sustainability of public transit system, including promoting awareness that it is available at a low cost for virtually any citizen in need of transportation to receive treatment services for substance use and mental health disorders.

**STRATEGY 5:** Have a plan to conduct periodic reviews of the county's integrated system of treatment and recovery support services, focusing on the system's strengths and potential weaknesses. Priority areas include the following:

- Treatment and recovery needs of several population subgroups that were prevalent in focus group research: women, veterans, teens, seniors, those with mental health issues (co-occurring disorders), LGBTQIA+ population, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx.
- Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) program to include: (1) whether additional peers are needed, (2) places where additional peers are needed, (3) burnout and salary issues, and (4) peer group diversity considerations

**STRATEGY 6:** Given that Walker County is currently designated as a health professional shortage area for mental health and substance use are often co-occurring disorders, there is a need to work with local and state mental health officials to increase the number of mental health professionals in the county.

"I went into recovery because I wanted to be a better mom. I wanted to be someone my child deserved."

*Comment from Walker County Individual in Recovery*





## **OUR GOAL**

Create a comprehensive Network of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery resources related to substance use and mental health disorders.

## **OUR PARTNERS**

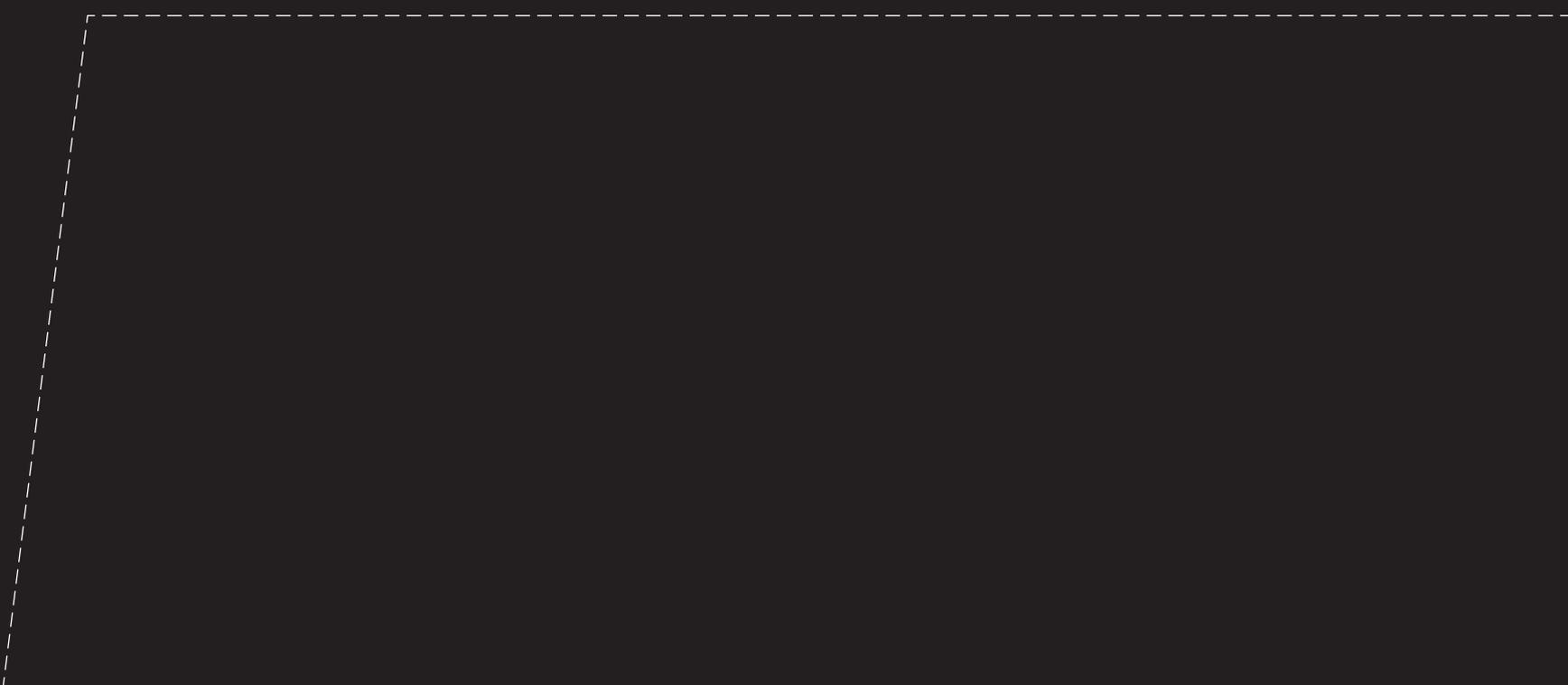
Grow resources connected by  
communication | coordination | collaboration



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