Empower Task Force Annual Report FY26



Empower Task Force members at the 2026 RX and Illicit Drug Summit in Nashville, TN.

The following pages reflect another amazing year of dedication and service to residents of Henrico County. Along with my co-chair, Leslie Stephen, it is again my honor to report on each of these efforts.

The Empower Henrico Task Force endeavors to not just save lives but to improve the quality of those challenged with Substance Use Disorders. From Peer Recovery Specialists making daily efforts to interact with members of our community to Henrico Sheriff's employees working to connect our incarcerated population with resources to our amazing Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services (HAMHDS) employees and Henrico Police and Henrico Fire staff who interact and treat with support and dignity.

This past year saw a number of significant milestones. Ground was broken on Pyramid Henrico. Simultaneously, the creation of the oversight board for the operation of the center was initiated.

This project represents a unique partnership between the private sector and local government.

However, even more significant is the agreement between Pyramid and Henrico County to ensure best practices and fair and comprehensive procedures governing both the entry and release from Pyramid Henrico. The oversight board will ensure that the inpatient clinical treatment provided at the center will be only the beginning of a recovery journey.

Working with Opioid Settlement funding, Leslie and I have been amazed by the creativity of the various projects that have been developed.

We wish we could thank every person who collaborates in and volunteers time and effort with the Empower Henrico Task Force.

To each of our committee chairs, our new data analyst and our business support, your energy and organization are amazing. We could not achieve our successes without your leadership.

FY27 is already shaping up to be the most impactful year yet as we progress toward the opening of Pyramid Henrico and as we develop new projects and continue to expand our existing ones. This newsletter provides but a snapshot of the energy and creativity that this group brings to the community. I cannot say enough how honored I am to be a part of something this great.

Mike Feinmel

HENRICO COUNTY, VA

Chairs of the Empower Task Force:
Mike Feinmel, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney
Leslie Stephen, Assistant Director, HAMHDS

Committee Chairs:
Data: Kelli Lesser, HAMHDS
Phil Lathrop, Henrico Fire
Prevention: Jacquelyn Smith-White, HAMHDS
Salvatore Mule, Police
Youth Outreach: Katherine Johnson, Henrico Public Schools
Surprize Parker, HAMHDS
Treatment: Karen Branin, HAMHDS
Megan Ortiz, HAMHDS
Grants: Mike Feinmel, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney
Laura Totty, HAMHDS
Diversion: Sara Tolentino, HAMHDS
Sarah Perkins-Smith, Recovery Court
Human Trafficking: Mike Feinmel, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney
Scott Kubicki, Police

Henrico Sheriff's Office

- Attended four STOP Community Connections Events providing support and education on substance use.
- Four Hidden in Plain Sight events, It Takes a Village hosted by Henrico Too Smart 2 Start, National Girls Symposium hosted by Sigma Gama Rho Sorority, Inc.
- Seven Student Engagement sessions were provided in collaboration with HCP addressing substance use.
- Guest Speakers David Amir, Fausto Castelano, Marco Ferrante, and Alika Gambill came to speak with our Justice-Involved Individuals behind the walls in programming.

Henrico Community Corrections

- Community Corrections provided treatment referrals to individuals with substance use disorders.
- The agency also provided specialized supervision to specialty dockets in Henrico and provides intensive supervision through the Community Alternative Program (CAP).
- Moral Reconation Therapy, a behavior modification group was facilitated for individuals ordered into CAP.
- Community Corrections oversaw the CHIRP program and approved applicants for recovery housing.

Recovery Court

- Eight total graduates for the year
- 67th graduation
- 313 graduates since inception
- Rolled out and completed two rounds of Thinking for a Change curriculum
- Began using Working Alliance Inventory to monitor therapeutic alliance per national standards

Diversion Committee

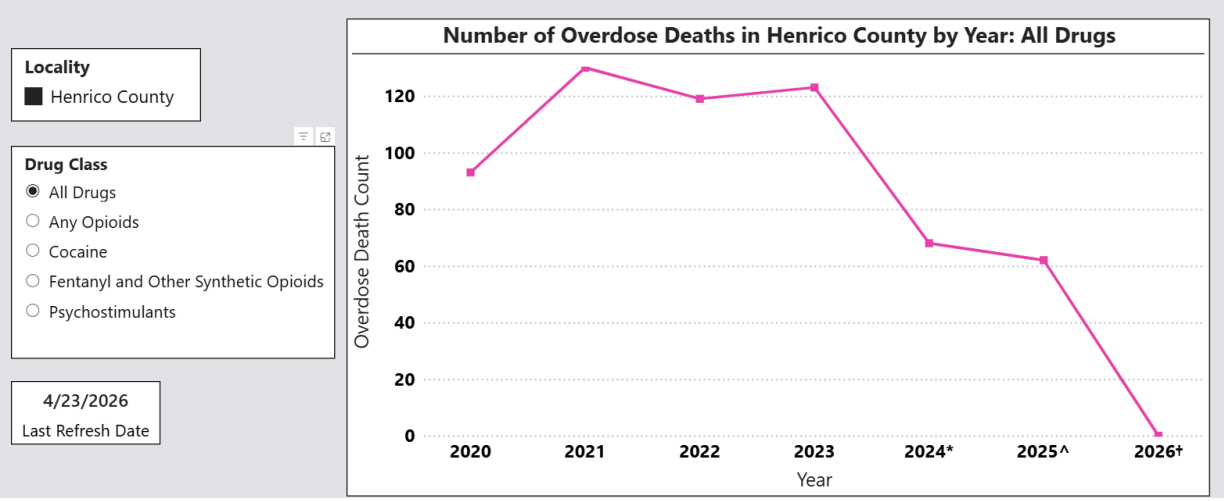
- Added resources and service provision information to inmate tablets for convenient access.
- Established a relationship with a local non-profit agency to assist with funding ID's via DMV Connect for inmates leaving incarceration.
- Invited multiple service provision partners and nonprofit agencies to educate participants on services available to inmates post release. 32 individuals utilized services at release thanks to these efforts
- Education on diversion services provided to Henrico Bench Bar to increase utilization of services
- Hosted the NACo Behavioral Health Peer Exchange in September 2025 which highlighted jail diversion. County News, a NACo publication, published an article about the Behavioral Health Peer Exchange.

Treatment Committee

- Vending installed six Naloxone cabinets in Henrico County where residents can obtain free naloxone: two at local libraries (Libbie Mill and Fairfield) and four at HAMHDS clinics (one at each clinic location)
- Vending collaborated with Henrico County PR to publicize this resource with flyers and a press release, and the stories aired on local news stations
- Additional funding was obtained for at least three more Naloxone cabinets at libraries (one for each magisterial district) and two for social services locations
- HAMHDS received and began utilizing the HAMHDS Mobile Unit, designed to provide harm reduction, substance use education, treatment and recovery services in the community.



Pictured Above: Naloxone Cabinet at one of the HAMHDS facilities; there are plans to grow this project in FY2027 and install more cabinets throughout the county.



Pictured Above: Graph depicting overdose deaths in Henrico County by year. Overdoses are on a downward trend in Henrico County; it is believed that community-based initiatives and outreach programs have contributed to this downward trend. Henrico County remains committed to providing ongoing access to quality substance use treatment, services and resources. Note: *2026 number's have not yet been reported.*

The Overdose Dashboard on the Empower Henrico website contains information from Overdose Response Strategy Reports (ORS), which is a nationally coordinated, cross-sector collaboration between public health and public safety. The mission of the ORS is to help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by connecting public health and public safety agencies, sharing informaiton and supporting evidence based interventions.

Data Committee

- Launched simple, user-friendly public facing Empower Task Force overdose dashboard.
- Initiated work on an internal dashboard to improve Countywide decision making and planning.
- Began work to improve quality of and streamlining of data collection across the County to inform leadership of local overdose trends.
- Leveraging National Overdose Response Strategy - Trends, Analysis & Threats (ORS-TAT) data and information to inform Empower Task Force stakeholders of international, national, and regional substance use trends.

Henrico County Libraries

- Shared supportive information from the library to those in recovery at Regional Recovery Day 2026.
- Henrico County Public Library's (HCPL) Director serves on the Empower Vending Subcommittee
- HCPL shares and posts printed flyers and information created by the Empower Committee at libraries
- HCPL soft-launched a pilot project with wall-mounted cabinets providing free Naloxone in the Fairfield Area Library and the Libbie Mill Library on January 21. Plan to expand these efforts in FY27.

Youth Outreach Committee

- Place based Media Advertising efforts – Messaging included: "Be Well Henrico Youth" and "Escape the Vape" and directs the viewer to resources
- Multiple community education/awareness events to include Hidden In Plain Sight and DEA Drug Take Back Events
- CATCH My Breath Vaping Prevention Lessons- Continued delivery in high schools, expanded to middle school
- TISC (Tiered Intervention School Counselors) provide classroom lessons and one-on-one supports for students providing mental health, substance use and violence prevention interventions
- YAST (Youth Ambassador Street Team) members participated in Voices for Virginia's Children for Youth Lobby Day to advocate for laws the protect youth, promote health and wellness and prevent youth substance use
- Henrico Prevention - Produced a Public Service Announcement on the importance of using OTC/RX meds as prescribed

Aging Actively

- The Aging Actively Committee participated in 13 outreach events in partnership with the mobile library to distribute medication disposal kits to the target population.
- The committee successfully published and distributed 1,000 copies of their quarterly newsletter “Aging Actively” connecting older adults with essential resources and activities tailored to their needs.
- Delivered education to the community regarding substance use among the aging population, helping residents, caregivers, and service providers to better understand risk factors, warning signs, prevention strategies, and availability of treatment and resources in the central Virginia area
- Received a NACo award for the valuable partnership with the Mobile Library and creatively addressing substance use education in the older population

Henrico Department of Social Services

- Kinship Program:
  - Substance Use Prevention and Education provided to youth: 5 & under – 42; elementary – 26; middle school – 15; & high school – 22.
  - Distributed 28 Naloxone Kits and fentanyl test kits to at risk families
  - Currently serving 17 kinship families. Services include: referrals to community resources and/or case management to promote stability for the family and children.

Too Smart 2 Start

- Partnered with HAMHDS - Prevention Services to create the Youth Ambassadors Street Team (YAST), an elite community outreach division of Prevention Services' Youth Ambassadors. These high school students planned and hosted two community town halls; spoke with legislators at the General Assembly advocating for safeguards to prevent youth from accessing marijuana; spoke with legislators at Capitol Hill advocating for safeguards that would prevent youth from purchasing synthetic products at vape stores; visited retail stores to encourage them to work to prevent youth substance misuse; and registered for a week long training at JMU to learn how to effectively advocate for sober driving. YAST highlights that in Henrico, drugged driving has surpassed drunk driving fatalities.
- Members of the Coalition Board served on the Steering and Budget Committees of Teen Summit RVA. The coalition helped to collect donations, hosted two knowledge contests at Teen Summit RVA via ThinkFast Interactive, led sober driving interactive demonstrations, and the YAST led three, well attended circle discussions on healthy decisions about marijuana.
- The Executive Director of the coalition attended the RX Summit in Nashville Tennessee. As a result of the conference, the coalition began teaching the Dangers of Fentanyl to middle and high school students in advance of hosting opioid and fentanyl knowledge competitions.
- Participated in multiple STOP/Community Connections and Hidden in Plain Sight events through the year.
- Currently, the coalition is conducting a county-wide survey on Henrico's youth views and behaviors toward substance misuse including opioids and driving under the influence of a substance.



Youth from the Too Smart 2 Smart Coalition collaborated with HAMHDS Prevention on an outreach event.



Youth from the Too Smart 2 Start Coalition participated in the ThinkFast Interactive knowledge contest at a HAMHDS Prevention Event.

Henrico Fire

- Division of Fire & EMS (DOF) Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (CPRS) successfully completed Sexual Exploitation Treatment and Training Services (SETTS), enhancing their professional development and expanding their ability to support survivors of human trafficking.
- Development and facilitation of a training for Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) that focused on recognizing signs of substance use, withdrawal and overdose indicators, and providing information on appropriate response strategies including REVIVE! training.
- Addition of a second Certified Peer Recovery Specialist to Henrico Fire.
- The CPRS program continues to support on average 50-70 clients per month with resources, education and advocacy. This includes conducting ride-alongs with various fire stations. Peers continue to provide education to DOF staff on the role and purpose of CPRS in the community.

Henrico Police

- Police continue to carry and utilize Naloxone to reverse overdoses.
- Partnership between Henrico Police, HAMHDS and local hospitals for proactive approaches to the co-occurring (mental health and substance use) population.
- STAR Team focuses on assigning resources from patrol interactions concerning substance use.
- Attended trainings: CoRCon (Co-Response Conference), 40-hour Basic CIT class and State CIT Conference



Pictured Above: A DOF member provides a presentation to the Empower Task Force.

Henrico Board of Supervisors Efforts Addressed VAPE SHOPS

- Henrico Board of Supervisors have set limitations on vape shops now.
- Vape Monitor published an article on the regulations in Henrico concerning vape shops. The new regulations require vape shops to be located at least 1,000 feet from schools and 2,000 feet from parks or other vape shops. Existing vape shops are grandfathered in unless they close for two years or more.
- WTVR published an article discussing the regulations concerning vape shops in Henrico County.

Richmond Henrico Health District (RHHD)

- Partnered with Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services' Mobile Medication Assisted Substance Use Treatment (MAT) Program to support 65 outreach events offering substance use harm reduction services, health education and connections to RHHD clinical services and other primary care options.
- Supported Henrico Department of Social Services in hosting RHHD's mobile outreach van at East End and West End locations supporting 35 weekly community engagement events with health education and harm reduction resources.
- Supported community outreach through 4 summer pop-up events with Henrico County Public Schools, 4 monthly STOP Community Connection events and 6 additional community events requested by Henrico County partners.
- Distributed 235 naloxone kits, 166 fentanyl test strips and 107 xylazine test strips to support overdose prevention and harm reduction efforts
- Released the 2025-2028 Community Health Improvement Plan, which includes mental health and substance use as a priority area. The plan is based on the 2024 Community Health Assessment, where RHHD heard from more than 465 Henrico County residents and reflects input and support from residents, community partners and Henrico County Government leadership.

Regional Recovery Day 2025

- Included approximately 100 vendors
- Over 800 attendees
- National Speaker, Dr. Stephen Lloyd presented, peer panel discussion, legal services break out and family support break out



Regional Recovery Day 2026
noon-3 p.m.

Regional Recovery Day 2026

- Regional Recovery Day 2026 will be held on October 3 at Monroe Park located at 620 W. Main Street, Richmond, from noon - 3 p.m.
- Henrico, Chesterfield, Hanover and Richmond are coming together to celebrate recovery.
- The event will include resource vendors, artisans, food trucks, a DJ, Yoga in the Park and AcuWellness.

HAMHDS - Prevention Services Unit

- Served 200+ youth in the Connect After School and Summer Programs.
- Provided prevention education on substance use, mental illness, suicide, youth violence and gambling while promoting overall wellness.
- Large focus on literacy in the Connect Programs.
- Community Partnerships include: Henrico Libraries, Omega Psi Phil Fraternity, YMCA, VCU School of Education, BEABLE, Virginia Repertory Theatre, Henrico PALS, Feedmore, Maymont, River City Dreams, Henrico Federal Credit Union, Henrico Schools, Henrico Too Smart 2 Start Coalition.
- Conducted merchant education regarding the laws around selling tobacco, marijuana and alcohol to over 325 stores.
- Distributed 1,542 drug disposal kits, 1,269 gun locks, and 2,430 lock boxes within our community.



Pictured Above: Members of the Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services Prevention Team.

HAMHDS Substance Use Services

- Expanded hours of Medication Assisted Treatment Nurse Practitioner to 40 hours per week in addition to the 20 hours per week of the Doctor.
- Implemented contingency management for group attendance.
- Served 653 distinct individuals and provided 28,204 Substance Use services.
- Continue to provide AcuWellness to assist with reducing cravings and anxiety and improving sleep.
- Added a full-time SUD case manager to the team.

Pregnant & Parenting Women

- As of May 21, 2026:
  - Referrals: 120
  - Admissions: 84
  - Discharges: 64
  - Babies Born: 10, none with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
  - Pregnant mothers served: 14
- Our funding assisted with emergency food, day care enrollment, payment of rental deposits, recovery house stays, childcare need while in programs, deposits for utilities, assistance with application fees, supporting moms get set up in their new homes with essentials to include furnishings, and assisting to resolve old judgements which were significant barrier to securing stable housing.

STOP Efforts

- Efforts funded via VOAA to address the increased overdose death rate in Henrico County of African American Males.
- Dr. Monica Manns hired to complete a comprehensive needs assessment/gap analysis and provide treatment recommendations.
- Based on the report received, five work groups developed addressing: Life Skills, Employment/Career opportunities for those with significant barriers such as felony convictions, Family Support, Naloxone Cabinets in the Community, and Community Collaboration.
- Monthly Community Connection events were held in areas with larger African American populations. DJ, free food, free barber haircuts, food pantry items, substance use resources and education, employment opportunities, free drug disposal kits, naloxone, gun locks and lock boxes provided.
- Two naloxone Cabinets placed so far: Neighborhood Resource Center and The Virginia Barber School. Students at the Barber School also trained in the use of Naloxone.



An individual receives a free haircut from a Barber at a STOP event in Henrico County.

FY2027 VOAA Awards

- Individual Awards:
  - Additional Funds for MAT Treatment
    - $173,184.00
  - Kinship Navigator
    - $ 87,449.00
  - Naloxone Cabinets
    - $ 34,175.00
  - Faith Based Project
    - $275,000.00
  - Hidden in Plain Sight Trailer
    - $ 17,000.00
  - CCP/Recovery Court Recidivism Study
    - $ 50,000.00
  - Veteran's Treatment Court
    - $ 57,000.00
  - EMS Prescribing at Overdose
    - $ 95,000.00
  - STOP
    - $397,219.34

- Collaborative Awards:
  - Hospital Liaison RNs
    - $ 44,784.22
  - Pregnant and Parenting Women's Recovery
    - $ 45,000.00
  - Mobile Unit Staffing
    - $512,496.82
  - Regional Recovery Day
    - $ 31,314.72

- **Total Amount Awarded:**
  - **$1,752,623.10**

Henrico Police Athletic League

- Successfully implemented the evidence-based Botvin LifeSkills Substance Awareness Curriculum, to over a thousand Henrico youth.
- Collected 312 youth pre- and post-program surveys to better understand substance-related perceptions, knowledge gaps, and behavioral risk factors. This data helped identify misconceptions around marijuana, vaping, and peer influence and allowed us to focus our efforts more appropriately.
- Conducted targeted youth focus groups through our Youth Leadership Council and Fairfield Middle School participants, which revealed critical concerns related to opioid awareness, marijuana normalization, vaping, gambling, and the impact of social media on youth decision-making.
- Introduced the One Circle Restorative Curriculum and training to strengthen emotional wellness, decision-making skills, and protective factors for youth participants.
- Launched development of a youth-driven social media prevention campaign in partnership with The New View Agency focused on opioid/fentanyl awareness, vaping, marijuana use, alcohol misuse, gambling prevention, and healthy coping strategies.

Central VA Resource Navigator

- Henrico County is proud to have partnered with the City of Richmond and The Richmond Opioid Task Force to launch the Central VA Resource Navigator. This resource is a free, public, online directory of mental health and substance use services serving Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield and the surrounding region. This is a simple, searchable resource guide that is maintained by staff employed by the City of Richmond.



Pictured Above: Task Force members particpating in a STOP Event.



Pictured Above: Staff from HAMHDS participate in a community outreach event.

What can YOU do to help your community?

Get trained to use naloxone - for training and free naloxone, please call 804-727-8515.

Host a naloxone training for your community organization. Call 804-727-8515 to learn how.

Lock your medications.

Safely dispose of medications that are no longer being used.

Help others to avoid peer pressure.

Encourage members of your community to seek mental health services when needed.

Learn good stress management for yourself and support it in others.

Learn how to combat the stigma of addiction.

Be an advocate.

Share your story.

Get engaged.

Spread the message that recovery works.

Talk with people in recovery.

Participate in Task Force efforts.

Henrico VIRGINIA

Empowering Recovery and Inspiring Connection

EMPOWER HENRICO

Preventing, Treating and Combating Substance Use