

Legislative Panel

February 1st, 2020

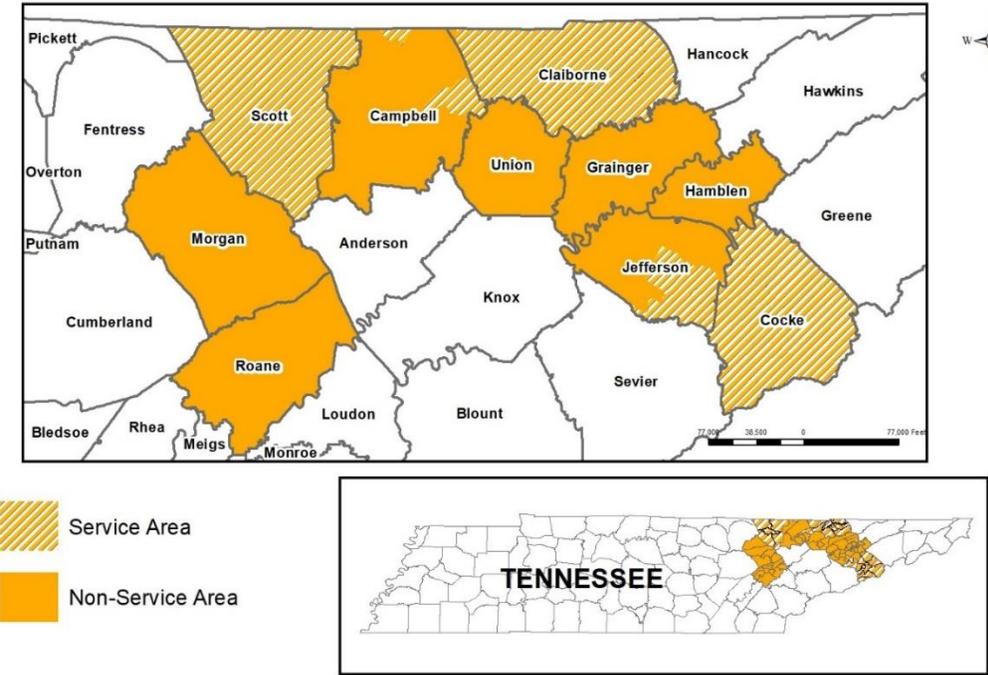
Legislative Panel

On February 1, 2020, Project HOPE hosted an event to connect the concerns of the Project HOPE 10 county area to state legislation. The two-hour event included presentations from four community stakeholders, including Marta Cogburn, Dr. Stephen Lloyd, Judge Duane Slone, and E.L. Morton. Following were small table discussions and reports with the legislators addressing policy issues, involving stigma, access to methadone assisted treatment, and access to mental health and primary and preventative services.

Attendees

Project HOPE (Healing Opioid Use Disorder Through Prevention and Expertise) region includes 5 counties in East Tennessee: Scott, Claiborne, Cocke, Jefferson, and Campbell (Figure 1). The consortium is co-led by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and over 90 community members. Invitations for the legislative panel were emailed to all consortium members and legislators were directly contacted by Dr. Carole Myers.

Figure 1. Project HOPE Service Area



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Evaluation

Altogether, of the 31 attendees, 19 completed the evaluation survey. This represents 61% response rate of all participants (n=31). The attendees work or serve in 11 counties, with the greatest representation in Cocke (n=8) and Jefferson county (n=7), moderate representation in Campbell (n=4), Claiborne (n=4), Scott (n=4), and Knox county (n=4), and one person representing Grainger, Hamblen, Roane, and Sevier.

Most attendees who responded to the survey were nonprofit professionals (26.3%), government officials (21.2%), and certified peer recovery specialist workers (15.8%). Doctors, prevention specialist, behavioral health therapist, and community-based nurses were also represented (See Table 1). Attendees heard about the legislative panel from a colleague or friend (36%), email (36%), Project HOPE/RCORP (18%), online (5%), and/or through a family member (5%).

Table 1. Attendee Occupation

Occupation	Total n= 19 (%)
Behavioral Health Therapist	1 (5.3)
Doctor	2 (10.5)
Community-based nurse	1 (5.3)
Non-profit professional	5 (26.3)
Other	10 (52.6)
Government Official (Mayor, Elected Official)	4 (21.2)
Certified Peer Recovery Specialist	3 (15.8)
Prevention Specialist	2 (10.5)
Public Health	1 (5.3)

Evaluation of Presentations, Discussions, and Activities

The experience and content of the legislative panel was regarded highly among all attendees, as 95% of attendees would recommend the legislative panel to a colleague.

Attendees indicated how important each of the agenda items were in relation to the goals for the event: (1) legislators will gain a better understanding of community perspectives regarding the opioid abuse and misuse epidemic, and (2) community stakeholders and legislators will collaborate on initial identification of policy priorities to address opioid abuse and misuse epidemic. Possible answers ranged from *not very important* (1) to *very important* (5). Overall, the average score of agenda items were ranked as important or very important (mean=4.79)

The presentations by local constituents were well received by the attendees with the average score by presenter ranging from 4.7 to 4.9 (min= 4, max=5, mean=4.78).

The small group discussions (min= 4, max=5, mean=4.88) and small group reports (min= 4, max=5, mean=4.56) were further rated effective by the attendees. There were no significant differences in reported importance by table assignments (p=0.60) and small group reports (p=0.66). As such, the table assignments were appreciated in generating important group discussions across various topics.

Suggestions from Attendees

To increase awareness and attendance of similar events, attendees recommended utilizing different advertisement platforms and reaching out to local community stakeholders. Specifically, advertising with social media, local newspapers, and personal phone calls should be considered. Further, engaging with community leaders, faith-based initiatives, local providers, and local law enforcement were also proposed strategies.

To improve next year's legislative panel, attendees recommend increasing collaboration with community stakeholders to have more legislators and members present, representing additional counties, and having further time for discussion. Attendees also identified utilization of the Health and Human Services pain management best practices interagency task force report, prioritizing recruitment and involvement of persons who misuse and abuse drugs, and integration of a strategic plan.



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