

LONG ISLAND COVENANT TO END THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

An initiative of Long Island Congregations, Associations & Neighborhoods (LI-CAN)



On April 26, nearly 1,300 people gathered at St. Anthony's High School in South Huntington to launch the LI Covenant to End the Opioid Epidemic. The Covenant, organized by the citizens' organizing group LI-CAN (Long Island Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods), is based on three simple premises:

1. All of us are called to help end this growing public health crisis, which claimed more than 500 lives on Long Island in 2016.
2. While there is no single action we can take to reverse this epidemic, and no single leader or institution with the power to fix it, *every* institution and *every* sector has a role to play, including:

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS
SCHOOLS & EDUCATORS
STUDENTS & YOUTH
RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS
CIVIC, BUSINESS & LABOR GROUPS

HOSPITALS & MEDICAL LEADERS
LAW ENFORCEMENT
PUBLIC OFFICIALS
INSURANCE COMPANIES
PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

3. To go beyond talk and to make measurable gains in saving lives and reducing opioid addiction, we will need specific goals, deadlines, and work plans - and a commitment to hold one another accountable.

Leaders of three sectors committed to specific goals by our next meeting on October 26.

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS: Leaders of 23 congregations agreed to:

- Carry out “listening campaigns” in their communities related to this epidemic.
- Educate their congregants and communities on the epidemic and what can be done to reverse it.
- Identify and evaluate prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery resources and share this information with their communities.
- Lay the groundwork for a network of addiction and mental health “navigators” in our congregations who can provide practical support for families facing difficulties in this area.

STUDENTS: 207 high school students agreed to:

- Build peer-support and peer-education networks.
- Pursue their passions and interests and recruit others to join them.
- Educate themselves about this epidemic.
- Work together to hold powerful leaders accountable.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS: Superintendents or their representatives from 6 school districts agreed to:

- Develop comprehensive, age-appropriate K-12 prevention and harm reduction plans.
- Expand the ongoing collaboration and sharing of best practices among educators across district lines on Long Island.

LI-CAN is now working with institutions and leaders in each sector to carry out these commitments. At the same time, we are approaching leaders of other institutions -- hospital CEOs, public officials, police commissioners and others -- to explore what they can do and to ask them to join this Covenant by October 26.

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