



THE MARTINSBURG INITIATIVE

A Police/School/Community Partnership
Preventing Opioid Addiction, Building Strong Families,
and Empowering Communities

A Model Solution to a National Problem

The Martinsburg Initiative is an innovative, multidimensional partnership that has developed a model solution to the problem of opiate addiction and abuse. Spearheaded by the Martinsburg Police Department, Berkeley County Schools, and Shepherd University, the new partnership includes an array of community, faith-based, health, education, and law enforcement leaders and organizations. Through a strategic focus that targets at-risk children and troubled families, the initiative will assess, identify, and eliminate the basic causes of drug abuse. Grounded in science and focused upon a family-based, school-centered, and community-building approach, *The Martinsburg Initiative* is strengthening families, empowering communities, and will provide the long-term solution to opiate abuse and addiction.

The opiate epidemic in the City of Martinsburg, Berkeley County, the State of West Virginia, and across the United States is growing at an accelerated pace. Left unchecked, it will eventually devastate our communities through crime, the destruction of families, non-sustainable social costs, and the disintegration of our social structure. In addressing the growing opiate addiction crisis nationwide and the opiate epidemic in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, a new consensus has developed among law enforcement, educators, government, public health providers, and communities that it is impossible to arrest our way out of the heroin problem.

It is now recognized that the only way out of the crisis will be to simultaneously wage the fight against heroin on multiple levels—enforcement, treatment, and prevention. In its most basic terms, the fight against drugs is an economic equation—if we don't reduce the demand for drugs, we will never reduce the supply.

Prevention is the single most effective long-term solution to drug addiction. However, while enforcement and treatment strategies are well understood, articulated, and supported—an effective prevention strategy has until now, remained elusive.

While multifaceted in scope, *The Martinsburg Initiative's* primary objective is focused on opiate prevention, most specifically, heroin. This groundbreaking effort applies the pioneering science of Dr. Vincent Felitti's Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study through an inventive community and neighborhood school-based strategy that has never been done before.

Adverse Childhood Experiences—Science and Methodology

Throughout an individual's lifespan, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) negatively impact physical and mental health, cognitive and social development, and the ability to function as a productive adult member of society. The Center for Disease Control has demonstrated that ACEs lead directly to: Disrupted Neurodevelopment; Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment; Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors; Disease, Disability, and Social Problems; and ultimately, early death.

The ACEs study categorized 10 types of traumatic experiences in childhood that increase the likelihood of physical and mental health problems, and serious behavioral disorders in adulthood. The ACEs are: Three types of **abuse**—Physical, Emotional, and Sexual; Two types of **neglect**—emotional and physical; and five types of **family dysfunction**—a mother who was the victim of domestic violence, a family member abusing drugs or alcohol, a family member suffering from mental illness, a family member incarcerated, and divorced parents.

As a child's number of ACEs increases, so does the probability of adult dysfunction. Six ACEs is indicative of extreme family and personal dysfunction and is recognized as a critically important threshold. When a person's number of ACEs reaches six, the health and behavior risks increase exponentially. For example, a child with six ACEs has been found to be 4,600% more likely to be an intravenous drug user as an adult than a person with zero ACEs. A child with six ACEs is up to 5,000% more likely to be a future suicide or an attempted suicide as an adult than a person with zero ACEs. *By reducing the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences in an individual child, we will dramatically reduce the likelihood of future heroin along with other serious behavioral risks, social dysfunction, and probability of early death.*

The ACE assessment instrument is already being used in several states' public health measurements and featured in-depth on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website. While a number of community groups and public health organizations across the country are utilizing the science—*The Martinsburg Initiative* is unique.

We are taking the science to a new level of practical and effective application through a new type of police-school-community partnership. Ours is not "crisis intervention" type of approach. We are tapping into the common thread of policing and the universality of the school in family and community-building and effecting a comprehensive program with long-term results. Importantly, *The Martinsburg Initiative* will monitor, track, and support the family during the entire course of the child's elementary school career—and beyond.

The Unique Connection between Police and Schools

The police and the school have a unique and special connection with dysfunctional families and at-risk children. For many troubled families, the police and the school are their only positive connection with hope, safety, and stability. The school environment is perfectly suited for ACEs based intervention. Regardless of the type of ACE being addressed in the child's dysfunctional family environment—domestic violence, substance abuse, physical and/or sexual abuse, incarcerated or divorced parents, etc.—the child will always be spending the majority of their day in the protection of the school environment. In this way, needs can be addressed, interventions monitored, and positive results continually reinforced.

The Local School: A Centerpiece for Anti-heroin Initiatives, Community Organization, and Learning

Neighborhood school programs will include:

- Tutoring and assistance with homework.
- GED and continuing adult education classes for parents and family.
- ESL classes for community members (where appropriate).
- Spanish and other language classes for police officers (where appropriate).
- On site junior college classes.
- Job skills and vocational training.
- Music, art, and drama clubs.
- Sports.
- Social services.
- Family counseling and parenting classes.
- Conflict resolution training.
- Community Policing meetings, problem-solving, & other police-community partnership activities.
- Provide satellite sites for juvenile court, probation, and social service programs.

The local school will serve as a centerpiece for our heroin prevention and family-building strategy. As one of the most recognizable community institutions, it is one in which many community members can easily identify and feel comfortable. Serving as mentors, coaches, teachers, and drug awareness instructors, police officers will have a means to positively connect with at-risk youth and their entire families.

Schools & Illegal Opiate Use

The importance of school in reducing heroin addiction and building families cannot be overstated. There is a causal link between the quality of the school experience and the likelihood of future illegal drug use. There is a recognized, direct correlation between positive identification with the school, valuing learning, and increased education with reduced delinquent and criminal behavior, including illegal drug use. Conversely, as neighborhood schools deteriorate, or the identification by children with positive school values and culture, the drug problem, along with associated individual, family, and community dysfunction, exacerbates.

The quality of children's experience in school is closely linked with a number of crime and drug precursors. The degree of success in learning, amount of identification with school and school-related activities, being bullied or being a bully, involvement or non-involvement with sports programs—all have been demonstrated to strongly impact the probability of delinquency, criminal activity, gang membership, developmental issues, suicide, and substance abuse.

As the different ACEs are identified, addressed, and eliminated in individual children, local public schools will more effectively provide the positive alternatives young people need to effectively resist drugs. To accomplish this, however, we must expand the mission far beyond the present one. The vision of *The Martinsburg Initiative* includes a new type of connection and networking of new and existing programs as one of the central components of our comprehensive opiate prevention plan.

Strong Schools Build Healthy Communities

Community-building will go hand-in-hand with ACE's interventions and therapies. By making the school the hub of positive community life and anti-drug activity, several important strategic objectives will be achieved. Most importantly, at-risk children will strengthen their attachment to and identification with the learning institution. A new sense of belonging, and the accompanying pride and self-respect, will in-turn positively impact children's academic interest and performance. Once this process is initiated it will become self-reinforcing and this dynamic will make these children (and entire families) more drug-resistant.

At present, drug-infested communities are fragmented—socially, individually, and politically. This isolation and absence of significant social infrastructure can render any true sense of "community" next to impossible. Without positive group identification, any meaningful anti-drug solidarity cannot be reasonably expected to occur. The neighborhood school must serve as an anchor in the community for decent families who want to deter their children from drug and criminal influences. Early childhood intervention strategically guided by the ACE assessment model is critical to successfully prevent future opiate use and addiction.

A comprehensive opiate prevention strategy will also positively impact and improve the opportunities for the economic redevelopment in an urban area where basic industries have been devastated through globalization and other economic changes. Opiate addiction is most prevalent in economically blighted and socially dysfunctional communities.

Functional schools and improved education are essential for any hope of future economic development. It is inconceivable that new industries will locate in areas where the pool of available workers is so deficient in basic education and employable skills that they cannot provide value to the business. Reclaiming schools for the benefit of children and their communities is vital for future social and economic progress.

Strengthening Families: Mutually Supported by Police, Educators, and the Community

The Vital Role of the Family

Throughout the course of human history and across diverse cultures, the family unit is recognized as the basic building block of individual morality and of a stable and productive society. The vital role played by the family in maintaining social cohesion is universally acknowledged irrespective of time, place, or society. It is vital that as we embark upon the implementation of a comprehensive opiate prevention strategy we also acknowledge this basic truth and make it central to our mission. All education begins in the home. Parents provide the most important influences in determining whether self-control is promoted or discouraged in children. It is within the family context that children build the foundation of their moral values and social responsibility. It is also undisputed that delinquency, criminal behavior, and substance abuse are transmitted from one generation to the next. We have a vested interest in promoting strong families and good parenting. Recognizing and supporting the primacy of the family is in the best interests of society and has always been an integral part of effective policing and education.

The Special Role of the Police

The Martinsburg Police Department bases its policies and operations on a community policing philosophy. Focusing additional police attention and resources on the family will be an easy transition. The police have a long tradition of defending, preserving, and strengthening the family unit. During the days when the beat cop was the iconic symbol of policing, it was expected as a matter of course that they would assist parents by helping to keep kids from straying too far from orderly behavior. Since the police were intimately familiar with the citizens on their beat, this was neither unexpected nor out of character.

This commitment to families has always been tacitly acknowledged by virtue of the proper use of police discretion and more recently in the dramatic transformation of certain laws, public policy, and police procedure. We have seen a remarkable transformation in the laws and policies regarding family related issues as domestic violence, child abuse, and animal cruelty. *The Martinsburg Initiative* is a dynamic contribution to the continual transformational change in policing.

Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Neglect, and Opiate Addiction

In Martinsburg, we find an observable nexus of multiple ACEs in dysfunctional families with at-risk and victimized children. Domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, alcohol abuse, and opiate abuse and addiction (typically heroin) are almost always directly linked. Our comprehensive opiate prevention program will develop and apply strategies that will strengthen families and reduce the factors that make children high-risk and susceptible to substance abuse and other high-risk and criminal behaviors.

Strategies to strengthen families through creating safe, stable, and nurturing environments will include:

- Immediate intervention and enforcement by law enforcement to stop illegal activities and victimization of any parent or child.
- Prenatal and early childhood health care.
- Early professional intervention.

- Early childhood home visitation.
- Public engagement and educational campaigns.
- Partnerships between school counselors, social service workers, probation officers, and police.
- A comprehensive family policy with pre-school education.
- Family treatment for troubled youth that will include drug prevention and intervention, and parent training.
- Public and private partnerships for vocational and job skills training.
- Active liaison and coordination between prosecutors, social services, and the Martinsburg Police Department's Domestic Violence Liaison to ensure vigorous enforcement of domestic violence and child abuse laws.
- Community-based justice initiatives such as peer juries for non-violent juvenile offenders and restorative justice programs. These concepts have the potential to improve community cohesion, social responsibility, and ethical behavior.
- Public service advertisements by celebrities denouncing illegal drugs gangs and discouraging drug use.

Personal responsibility by both parents and children and their resistance to opiates must be encouraged and again become an expected norm of society.

Steps for Implementation

Pilot Schools

The Initiative has been launched in two Martinsburg elementary schools—Burke Street and Winchester Avenue. Both schools serve neighborhoods and populations that have many at-risk children and families that are in immediate need of the positive intervention the initiative will deliver.

Identification

A group of high-risk children from each school has been identified by school staff for potential participation. Their parents or guardians will be contacted to solicit and encourage their participation in the voluntary program.

ACEs Education and Training

We are meeting with parents to obtain their support and voluntary participation. Parents and families will be educated on ACEs through a written, video, and oral presentation that are being developed and delivered to each prospective parent and family.

ACEs Assessment

A preliminary ACEs assessment of the parents of each family will be conducted to determine the number and type of Adverse Childhood Experience categories that have experienced. We will extrapolate the results and apply them to the children's family environment and experiences. Appropriate resources will be identified and targeted to address them. This assessment is being conducted through an ACEs questionnaire during an interview with the parents.

Workable Caseload

This size of the group will be determined according to available resources, but it is anticipated that at its outset, the pilot program will not exceed 10 to 12 children for each school during the first phase of the program.

Executive Board

A diverse leadership team provides strategic planning, overall direction, and coordination of Initiative operations and objectives. The Executive Board is composed of: Maurice Richards, Ed.D., Chief of Police of the Martinsburg Police Department; Manny Arvon, Superintendent of Berkeley Schools; Virginia Hicks, Ph.D., Assistant Provost for Academic and Community Outreach at Shepherd University; Penny Porter, CEO of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle; Katie Spriggs, Program Director of the Shenandoah Women’s Center; Rev. Julie Harris, Vice President of the Berkeley County Ministerial Association; Veronique Walker, Ed.D., Director of Diversity and Student Support Services, Berkeley County Schools; William Ihlenfeld, United States Attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia; Michael Brumage, MD, Executive Director and Health Officer of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department; and Steven Roach, Social Worker, Berkeley County Schools.

A Coordinated Police-School-Community Focus

As noted, an essential element of the strategic plan is to transform both local schools into centers for positive neighborhood organization and activity. To the greatest extent possible the schools will provide the base for counseling, adult education, and community meetings.

In conjunction with the police, businesses, community members, responsible landlords, and neighborhood churches, we will declare a four square block area around each school to be a “Heroin-Free Zone” that will be targeted for intense enforcement by police, an assessment of all properties for appropriate application of the Martinsburg Drug House Ordinance, neighborhood cleanups, targeted building code enforcement, and other appropriate environmental and infrastructure improvements. In addition to neighborhood residents, students, and families, the ACE families will be directly involved in these organizational and community-building efforts, and through the transformative process of community empowerment, create a positive connection and identification with the community and decent family values.

Additional Resources

Responding to specific ACE assessments, additional service providers and resources will include:

- Additional School Counselors, Shenandoah Women’s Center.
- Project Aware.
- Police officer mentors.
- 40 Developmental Assets Core Group.
- Burke Street Promise Neighborhood.
- Big Brothers-Big Sisters Mentors.
- Martinsburg Police and Fire Explorer Post.
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.
- Martinsburg Boys and Girls Club.
- Berkeley County Recovery Services Coordinator.
- Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce.
- Main Street Martinsburg.
- Shepherd University—School of Education & Professional Studies and Department of Social Work.

A Vital Partnership with Shepherd University—Program Development, Evaluation, and Participation

Shepherd University has partnered with *The Martinsburg Initiative* to not only provide technical services and volunteers from several departments but to also fully engage faculty, staff, students, and community members as co-creators of knowledge and learning. Shepherd will create an objective assessment and study instrument for data collection and an evaluation mechanism focusing on both methods and outcomes to monitor the Initiative’s effectiveness and guide future policy development and program implementation. Shepherd’s commitment to service-learning, engagement, and community-building advances the relationship between University and community to new qualitative levels of collaboration, partnership, and leaning.

Preventing Heroin Addiction—A New Vision and Model for Success

The opiate epidemic is undermining our entire society. It kills people, destroys families, incapacitates communities, produces crime, exhausts revenue and resources, and robs our children of futures of hope and opportunity. Despite our best efforts however, the problem has only become worse. Bold and innovative ways of thinking, organizing, and acting are called for and a new model of thinking and action is required.

The Martinsburg Initiative is original, unique, comprehensive, and on the cutting-edge of the practical application of recognized science. As a model solution it will serve not only as the most practical and effective vehicle for coordinating and maximizing family and community building resources, but also as the new paradigm for connecting the entire range of ACEs interventions that will prevent future heroin addiction and other opiate and substance abuse as children grow to adulthood.

We have been fighting the scourge of heroin —and struggling to find a long-term solution. Based upon the science of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study and connected through new partnerships, we now have the foundation and mechanism *that will result in heroin prevention*. *The Martinsburg Initiative* is a model solution to a national crisis and the groundbreaking game plan to win this fight and save our country. Linking law enforcement, schools, communities, and families, *The Martinsburg Initiative* provides an innovative and holistic vision and through a comprehensive and community-based strategy, creates the teamwork essential for success.

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