

# Opioid Summit a “really good start”

By Southeast Health Group

Southeast Health Group sponsored an Opioid Summit in La Junta on February 15th for southeast Colorado health care providers. Over 100 area providers attended the summit. “Everyone says there’s a shortage of resources in rural areas, but if you look around this room, you can see we have plenty of resources,” said JC Carrica, CEO of Southeast Health Group, in his opening statement. “What we need is more collaboration. We have to work together to put all these good resources to use.”

Southeast Health Group invited several local agencies to provide information for the event, including COMET (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) Ag Advisory

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Committee, Crossroads Turning Points, RESADA, Otero-Crowley Communities that Care, Health Solutions, Signal Behavioral Health, High Plains Research Network, and others.

Carrica highlighted SHG’s approach to pain management. “So many people get caught up in opioid addiction after an injury or

accident,” Carrica said. “Prescription opioid drugs contribute to about 40 percent of all opioid overdose deaths. The more we can do to help people recover from injuries and deal with chronic pain, the fewer people will become addicted.”

SHG offers physical therapy, Acudetox, dry needling and hydrotherapy as alternative pain treatments. They also have medication-assisted treatment (MAT), which uses a supervised medication regimen to take away the cravings and withdrawal symptoms when a person stops using opiates. The Regional Assessment Center in La Junta offers withdrawal management crisis services 24/7.

“I learned so much in one day!” said Jana Brown, LCSW and Clinician for Southeast Health Group. “I do this work every day, and there is still so much information out there that we need to know to be effective and to turn this crisis around.”

Other speakers gave an overview and shared common myths about medication-assisted treatment. Scott McFadden told the story of his own lived experience of addiction, which was a highlight of the day for many attendees. Daniel Darting of Signal



**Attendees listen to Daniel Darting during the summit.**

Behavioral Health discussed state legislation currently being drafted to address the epidemic. Marc Condojani, Director of Adult Treatment and Recovery for the State of Colorado, gave a presentation on state and federal funding and current data.

A group of local students calling themselves the “Otero-Crowley Youth Opioid Trainers” also presented. They were concerned enough about the epidemic that they started their own group to spread the word on signs, symptoms and available treatments.

“This was a really good start,” said Carrica. “I hope there will be more events like this for the general public in the near future.”

**For more information about substance use disorder services in southeast Colorado, call Southeast Health Group at 800-511-5446.**