



**PROJECT BALD EAGLE INC.**  
*Stemming the Tide of the Heroin Epidemic*  
One College Avenue, Williamsport, PA 17701  
Ph: 570-337-9986 Web: [www.ProjectBaldEagle.com](http://www.ProjectBaldEagle.com)  
[ProjectBaldEagle@comcast.net](mailto:ProjectBaldEagle@comcast.net)

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## Position Statement

The heroin/opioid epidemic is complex in that it is a Medical issue, a Law Enforcement issue, a Community Health issue and a Societal issue. The response to this epidemic can also be perceived as complex. It is for this reason that Project Bald Eagle has developed this position statement.

Project Bald Eagle is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that is leading coalition efforts to stem the tide of the heroin/opioid epidemic in Lycoming County. A coalition is defined as an “alliance for combined action”. Project Bald Eagle’s board of directors is comprised of key leadership representing each of the 12 community sectors federally recognized by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) for a Drug-Free Communities Coalition. The board is further complemented by professional with areas of expertise that strengthen our mission and organization.

The relationship between Project Bald Eagle and our coalition members is circular and complementary. Each coalition member is addressing the opioid epidemic as it uniquely presents itself within their respective sectors. Project Bald Eagle facilitates dialogue among coalition members so that we can maintain a comprehensive perspective on this epidemic, identify problems, develop solutions, avoid duplication of efforts, build support, execute strategies, benchmark data and measure outcomes.

Involvement in our coalition affords members with resources, support and comprehensive insight that they may not otherwise have. This universally inclusive approach helps minimize the potential of applied efforts in one sector having unforeseen adverse consequences in another. The collective effort of our coalition members creates an alliance that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Some of the logic that guides our organization is defined in the following tenets.

### **Addiction is an Illness**

It is a medical fact that opioid use disorder/addiction results in damaged opioid receptors in the human body. Once damaged, these receptors never heal, resulting in a medical condition that must be managed for the remainder of a person’s life. Addiction is an illness that requires treatment.

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**Education Moves Us Forward**

Aside from expanding and improving treatment for those struggling with addiction, *Education* is a major force in stemming the tide of this epidemic. Project Bald Eagle supports initiatives to educate healthcare professionals, students, families, senior citizens, treatment providers, employers, school faculty, community leaders and family members. *Education* offers the greatest potential for reducing the number of new addicts, preventing overdoses and deaths and removing stigma from those affected by this epidemic.

**Stigma Creates Barriers**

The heroin/opioid epidemic is rife with misplaced stigma. In most instances, this stigma is rooted in a lack of understanding. An epidemic of this complexity and enormity requires a comprehensive community response. Project Bald Eagle works to remove stigma by sharing factual information from reputable sources, in order to help remove barriers of communication, support and solutions.

**Awareness vs. Endorsement**

Project Bald Eagle fully recognizes that there are often differing opinions on what solutions are best in addressing this epidemic. Our board members do not always agree. Our committee members and volunteers are not always in agreement. For this reason, it is important to note that we do not “endorse” one option over another. Rather it is our responsibility to make the public aware of any and every option that has the potential to improve the trajectory of this epidemic.

**Communication is Crucial**

Project Bald Eagle strives to continually develop lines of communication with community stakeholders such as businesses, organizations, government, churches, law enforcement, treatment facilities and medical institutions. Establishing clear lines of communications and sharing information helps reduce misunderstandings and strengthens the efforts of the entire coalition.



Dr. Davie Jane Gilmour  
Chair, Project Bald Eagle



Date



Steve Murphy Shope  
Executive Director, Project Bald Eagle



Date